

Representation of Disobedient Children and Replies in Archipelago Folklore: A Comparative Study of Simaranda and Si Lancang

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the representation of disobedience and retaliation in two archipelago folktales, *Simaranda* (Batak Toba) and *Si Lancang* (Riau Malay), through a qualitative-descriptive-comparative approach. The analysis focuses on forms of disobedience, counter-responses, narrative structures, and underlying cultural values, drawing on Vladimir Propp's structuralist theory and Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropology. The results show that *Simaranda* depicts disobedience as a rejection of family ties within a patrilineal social system, while *Si Lancang* portrays it as arrogance stemming from prosperity and a denial of origins. Retribution in *Simaranda* manifests as a curse that turns the perpetrator to stone, whereas in *Si Lancang*, it takes the form of a natural disaster that sinks the ship. Both stories reflect moral justice and cosmic balance according to their societies' worldviews. Thus, folklore not only serves as a means of moral education but also functions as a social mechanism for maintaining family and cultural values amid changing times.

Keywords: folklore, disobedience, Simaranda, Si Lancang, comparative literature

INTRODUCTION

Nusantara folklore is an intangible cultural heritage that holds moral, social, and spiritual values, inherited orally. According to Danandjaja (1984), in addition to entertainment, folklore functions as a means of moral education, cultural inheritance, and social control. The theme of disobedience and retribution is the dominant motif, emphasizing the ethical relationship between children and parents, humans and customs, and humans and God. Bascom (1965) affirms the four functions of folklore: entertainment, education, norm validation, and social control. This function is clearly seen in the stories of disobedient figures such as *Simaranda* and *Si Lancang*, which affirm moral values and warn the younger generation (Agustina et al., 2019; Napitu et al., 2020). Ungodliness is understood as a violation of the social and spiritual order; replies take the form of curses, physical changes, or natural disasters. Taum (2011) affirms the value system and cosmology of traditional society. Sapardi Djoko Damono (2005) emphasized that literary works are born from socio-cultural contexts and reflect the worldview of their people.

The phenomenon of "disobedient children" is universal. In Greek mythology, *Oedipus Rex* shows a divine curse due to the violation of family relationships; in Central Europe, the legend of the Ungrateful Son emphasizes a similar moral retribution (Duong & Diem, 2025; Gervas, 2019; Musaddad et al., 2025; Timofeev, 2017). In Southeast Asia, the story of *Simarandadan the Lancang* adapts this motif to local customary and religious values, suggesting that disobedience reflects intergenerational relationships of power, responsibility, and morality (Studies, 2025). The

comparison of these two stories is interesting because they share the same theme but have different cultural backgrounds, namely *Toba Batak* with a patrilineal system and ancestral spirituality, and *Riau Malays* with a maritime orientation and Islamic religiosity.

This research also highlights the gender aspect, as the main characters are both men, opening new perspectives in understanding disobedience and morality (Nyoman Kutha Ratna, 2022; Taum, 2011). The objectives are: (1) to identify forms of disobedience and retaliation, (2) to compare narrative structures, characterizations, and moral messages, and (3) to uncover local cultural values that influence patterns of retaliation and ethical meaning (Ginting et al., 2025). Theoretically, this research enriches the study of comparative literature in Indonesia. Practically, the results serve as a reference for learning regional literature and character education based on local wisdom (Silalahi et al., 2021). By combining structural (Propp) and anthropological (Lévi-Strauss) approaches, this study not only compares plots and characters but also reveals the worldviews behind their respective cultures, showing how local narratives nurture collective moral consciousness in the modern and global era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method as the main approach. The objects of study were the Simaranda folklore text from the North Sumatra Language Center (2020) and the Si Lancang text from the Riau Islands Language Center (2019). The study examined how iniquity and retaliation were represented in the two texts and compared the construction of moral values between them.

The research data consisted of facts and phenomena from the Simaranda and Si Lancang texts, including relevant words, sentences, dialogues, and narrative discourse as analysis material. The analysis followed these stages: (1) close and repeated readings of the Simaranda and Si Lancang texts to identify motifs, structures, and symbolisms; (2) examination of disobedience elements, counter-mechanisms, narrative structures (Propp), and cultural binary oppositions (Lévi-Strauss) in each text; and (3) comparison of findings to identify similarities, differences, and implications of underlying cultural values. To ensure validity, the researcher triangulated sources by consulting supporting literature and other versions of similar stories, along with multiple readings during analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The folklore of Simaranda and Si Lancang both feature the character of a child who disobeys his mother. Both of these stories affirm that acts of disobedience are not only considered moral transgressions, but also as a form of imbalance in the social and cosmic order of the society in which the story lives. The punishment received by its figures is a symbol of warning so that humans do not forget their origins and human values (Yektiningtyas & Dewi, 2023). However, despite having similar moral patterns, the Batak Toba and Riau Malay communities display the concept of "durhaka" in different ways and emphasis on values. In the Toba Batak society, the violation of the child against the mother is associated with disturbance of customary harmony and social

structure (dalihan na tolu), while in Malay society, such violation is considered a spiritual sin in the context of the Islamic teachings on *birrul walidain* (filial devotion to parents) (Kusumaningrum, 2023; Parinduri et al., 2020).

Thus, Simaradadan Si Lancang reflects two different moral systems: one is based on social-customary ethics (Batak Toba), while the other is based on religious-spiritual morals (Malay). Both show that in the culture of the archipelago, the relationship between children and parents is not only a family affair, but also reflects the moral balance of society as a whole.

Analysis of Simaranda Folklore

Simaranda's story comes from the Batak Toba community and tells the story of a poor young man who lives with his mother. After marrying a rich woman, Simaranda felt ashamed of his mother's condition and then denied her mother's existence. This attitude made her mother sad and prayed that God would give a lesson to her son. The prayer was answered, and Simaranda was cursed to be stoned.

This curse has an important symbolic meaning. In Batak culture, stones are not seen as just inanimate objects, but are a symbol of the stability and balance of nature. The transformation of Simaranda into a stone depicts his return to the elements of nature as a form of restoration of harmony that has been disturbed by his iniquity. Thus, this story confirms that the act of disobedience to the mother is not only a personal moral violation, but also a violation of the social order and cosmic balance in the Toba Batak society.

Table 1. The Narrative Function of Simaranda's Story (Vladimir Propp)

No	Narrative Function	Description in Stories
1	<i>Absenteeism</i> (Departure of Figures)	<i>Simaranda</i> left her mother because she wanted to change her fate for the better. Shirley: "Mom, I'm going to do it. I want to be lucky." (Mom, I'm going to go abroad. I want to change our fate.) Mom: "Mom, my son. Enoch and his wife. "Your mother is from Sicily." (Go my son, but don't forget your mother. Always remember where you came from.)
2	<i>Interdiction Violated</i> (Prohibition)	His mother advised not to forget the origin and not to be arrogant, but the advice was ignored. Mum: "Mummy, first of all, I'm going to have to go through the motions. "A lot of people are going to be, even if it's just a kiss or a kiss." (Simaranda, never be ashamed of our situation. Stay humble even if you become rich someday.) "Yes, Mom. "Your Majesty's advice is to be advised." (Okay, Mom. I'll remember Mom's advice.)
3	<i>Violation</i> (Violation)	<i>Simaranda</i> refused to acknowledge his mother in front of his wife and wealthy people. Mother: "Simaranda! My! "How many mothers are going to be!" (Maranda! My son, I finally met you!) Wife: "What's the matter with you, Daddy?"

No	Narrative Function	Description in Stories
		(Who is the old woman, my husband?) Shirley: <i>"It's a bit of a bummer. it! Old beggar!"</i> (I don't know the woman. Go away, old beggar!)
4	<i>Punishment</i> (Penalty)	The mother's prayer was answered, Simarandadikut became a stone. And she said, <i>"O my God, I am a rock and a stone, and I am a rock and I am a stone."</i> (O Lord, if it is true that he is my disobedient son, make him a stone!) Shirley: <i>"Mom! "my body! "me, Mom!"</i> <i>"Mom, my body is hardened! "Forgive me, Mom!"</i>
5	<i>Recognition</i> (Acknowledgment or Questioning)	Regret came too late <i>Simaranda</i> realized after the sentence was handed down. Simaranda: <i>"Mother... I'm sorry. And I am not going to stand up for it... Mother..."</i> (<i>"Mom... forgive me... I'm sorry to have deny you... Mom..."</i>) <i>(Simaranda's body turns to stone completely)</i>

The pattern of narrative function in Simaranda's story shows a classic moral plot: transgression → punishment → remorse (regret). The plot confirms the view of the Toba Batak people that iniquity against mothers is a form of violation of social balance based on *dalihan na tolu*. In this system, the relationship between children and parents is the main pillar of the moral order, so that the curse that befell Simaranda is not only understood as an individual retaliation, but also as a mechanism for restoring social and cosmic harmony.

If analyzed through the framework of Lévi-Strauss's (1963) structuralism, Simaranda's narrative forms a series of binary oppositions that become the basic structure of Batak myths, such as poor-rich, low-high, and human-nature. Such opposition is not merely a story-building element, but reflects the ideological tension between social aspirations and cosmic attachments. Simaranda's journey from a life of poverty to a world of luxury marked a transgression of the stable cosmic order; he moved from the "lower realm" to the "upper realm", a hierarchical shift that in Batak cosmology is considered to shift the spiritual balance. His rejection of the mother serves as a rupture that shakes cosmic harmony, and the curse becomes a further stone acting as Lévi-Strauss's (1978) mythical mediation that restores that balance. The transformation of the body into stone affirms the return of the disobedient subject into the ecological and spiritual system, a form of ritual reintegration that reinforces the Batak view of man's existential attachment to the universe (Nanda et al., 2021; Sul-toni et al., 2023).

From a functional and semiotic perspective, the story of Simaranda serves as a moral text that articulates the collective values of the Batak people through an archetypal narrative structure. Malinowski (1948) called this kind of function the charter function of myth, namely the social legitimacy of the norms and moral order that live in a community. Within this framework, the *dalihan na tolu* tradition forms the ethical foundation that governs the relationships of individuals, families, and communities (Pitri & Michaelidou, 2025). Simaranda's rejection of his mother not

only damaged blood relations, but also fractured the symbolic network that underpinned the social order. In Barthes's (1972) semiotic perspective, the mother's curse prayer acts as a mythic signifier that contains cultural and ideological significance regarding the moral consequences of social transgression. Thus, this story functions not only as an ethical legend, but also as a local knowledge system (indigenous epistemology) that unites ethics, spirituality, and ecology in a complete and continuous narrative structure.

Analysis of Si Lancang Folklore

The story of Si Lancang originated from Riau and is one of the most famous Malay folktales. The character, Si Lancang, is a poor young man who migrates in search of wealth. After his success, he returned to his hometown in a magnificent ship. However, when his mother came to greet him, Si Lancang felt embarrassed and kicked his mother out of his ship. God then sent down a great storm that destroyed the ship and drowned the Lancang into the sea. This story reflects the moral values in Malay culture which are strongly influenced by Islamic teachings. In Islamic teachings, devotion to parents (especially mothers) is the main obligation, and disobedience is a great sin. The sea storm that destroyed the Si Lancang ship symbolized God's wrath against self-forgetful and arrogant humans. The sea, in the Malay tradition, is also seen as the power of God that cannot be controlled by humans, a symbol of God's power over His creatures.

Table 2. The Narrative Function of the Story of the Man (Vladimir Propp)

No	Narrative Function	Description in Stories
1	<i>Absenteeism</i> (Departure of Figures)	<i>Si Lancang</i> left his hometown to migrate and seek wealth. The Lancang: "Mom, I want to go on a trip to another country. I want to be a rich merchant." (Mother, I am going to migrate to another country. I want to be a rich merchant.) Mother: "Be careful my son. May your journey be safe, your sustenance will be made easier." (Be careful my son. May your journey be safe and easy for you.)
2	<i>Interdiction Violated</i> (Prohibition)	Before leaving, his mother advised him not to forget his origin and to still respect him; That advice was ignored after he was successful. Mother: "My son, remember your message. Don't forget to take a shower, even if you're at sea. Don't forget your hometown and your mother." (My son, remember your mother's message. Don't forget the land even if you're already in the ocean. Don't forget this hometown and your mother.) Lancang: "Yes, Mom. I will never forget my mother and our hometown." (Yes, Mom. I will never forget Mom and our hometown.)
3	<i>Violation</i> (Violation)	When he returned, Si Lancang kicked his mother out of his ship because he was ashamed to admit his poor origins. Mom: (runs to the dock) "! My son! I miss you!" (Sigh! My! Mom misses you!) Guys: "Skipper, there's an old lady calling you." (Skipper, there is an old lady calling you) Si Lancang: "I don't know those old people! Get him off my ship! Don't let that dirty beggar go up!" "I don't know that old lady! Get him off my ship! Don't let that dirty beggar go up!"

No	Narrative Function	Description in Stories
		Mom: (<i>crying</i>) "Sassy... I Am Your Mother... Why did you deny me?" (Lancang... I Am Your Mother... "Why did you deny me?"
4	<i>Punishment</i> (Penalty)	God sent down a great storm that destroyed the ship and sank it into the sea. Mother: (<i>raising her hands to the sky</i>) "O Allah, if this is indeed my disobedient son, drown him and his ship!" (O Allah, if this is indeed my disobedient son, sink him with his ship!) (<i>The sky suddenly darkened, the wind was blowing, the big waves were crashing</i>) Lancaster: "What?! A big storm! Save the ship! Take it ashore!" (What is this?! A big storm! Save the ship! Drive to land!) Guys: <i>Skipper! The ship is about to sink!</i> (Shattered! The ship will sink!)
5	<i>Recognition</i> (Acknowledgment or Questioning)	No time to regret; His death became a symbol of God's justice against disobedient people. The Lancang: (<i>as the ship begins to sink</i>) "Mom... Ibuuu...! (<i>The ship sank in the big waves, Si Lancang didn't have time to apologize</i>) Narrator: "The Lancang ship sank to the bottom of the sea, serving as a warning to those who disobey their parents."

From the table above, it appears that the narrative structure of Si Lancang also follows the classic pattern of Propp. However, the main difference lies in motivation and form of punishment. Si Lancang transgressions are rooted in material pride and loss of spiritual value, while Simaranda is triggered by social shame. The punishment in Si Lancang is more theocentric (centered on God's justice), while in Simaranda it is cosmocentric (centered on the balance of nature).

The location of Si Lapreck's iniquity is evident when he refuses to acknowledge his mother in front of the crowd and even kicks her out of the ship. This action shows that he cares more about social honor than affection for his parents. In the view of the Malays, such an attitude is not only a form of insult to the elderly, but also a rejection of the basic values of virtue and customs. This iniquity shows the loss of self-awareness as a child who is supposed to be submissive and respectful to his mother. By rejecting his mother, Si Lancang also rejects his origins and identity as part of a society that upholds respect, manners, and obedience to religious teachings.

When viewed from a deeper meaning side, the story of Si Lancang depicts the conflict between two worlds that are very important in the life of the Malay people, namely the sea and the land. The sea in Malay beliefs is considered to be God's territory is vast, deep, and cannot be controlled by humans. Meanwhile, the land is a place where humans live, have families, and build social relationships. When the Lancang becomes rich and rejects his mother, he has actually crossed over from the orderly moral world to the world of pride and negligence. The storm that destroyed his ship was not just a punishment, but a symbol that God was restoring the balance that had been broken. The message that this story wants to convey is that power and wealth will be meaningless if people forget their parents and God who gives sustenance (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

In addition, the story of Si Lancang can also be understood as a reminder about the importance of maintaining conscience and conscience. In Malay culture, a virtuous person means a person who is able to balance thoughts, feelings, and faith. The presumptuous man loses that balance because he is too busy chasing wealth and honor. As a result, he forgets the origins and values of kindness that his mother taught. The death of the Lancang at sea depicts the destruction

of a person who loses the direction of life due to pride. This story also becomes a moral message that disobedience to the mother is not only a fault against the family, but also a great sin against God. When compared to Simaranda, the story of Si Lancang shows that in Malay culture, God is the center of justice and the giver of retribution, while in Batak culture, nature is the intermediary to restore moral balance.

Binary Opposition Analysis (Claude Lévi-Strauss)

To understand the cultural significance of the two stories more deeply, the Lévi-Strauss structural approach is used through binary opposition, which is a pair of meanings that are opposite and explain each other.

Table 3. Binary Opposition Story of Simaranda and Si Lancang

Opposition	<i>Simaranda</i>	<i>Si Lancang</i>
Mother vs Child	Social and emotional conflict due to shame of social status.	Spiritual and material conflicts due to pride and loss of faith.
Natural vs Social	Stone is a symbol of the balance of nature and customs.	The sea became a symbol of God's power and wrath.
Poverty vs Wealth	Poverty is considered a social disgrace.	Wealth is a source of pride and sin.
Tradition vs Modernity	Rejecting Batak customs because they are ashamed of their social status.	Rejecting the value of Islam because it is lulled by worldly splendor.
Balance vs Chaos	Customs as a regulator of social harmony.	Religion as a moral and spiritual regulator.

Analysis of the binary opposition in both stories shows that Simaranda and Si Lancang both contain moral messages born from two different cultural systems. In Simaranda's story, the relationship between humans and nature becomes the center of moral balance. The transformation of Simaranda into stone is not only a punishment, but also a symbol of the reunification of humans with nature. Stone is a symbol of tranquility and eternity, depicting how the Batak people see nature as part of the order of life that must be maintained in balance. Thus, justice in this story does not come from God directly, but from the laws of nature and customs that govern social harmony. In contrast to that, in the story of Si Lancang, the sea functions as a symbol of God's power. The storm that sank Si Lancang illustrates God's wrath against arrogant and disobedient humans. Nature, in this context, becomes God's tool for upholding justice. This story confirms that the moral balance in Malay society is very closely related to faith and obedience to God.

These two stories show that the traditional people of the archipelago have their own way of upholding moral values. Simaranda emphasizes the importance of customs and social harmony, while Si Lancang emphasizes the importance of faith and humility before God. Through this story of disobedience and retaliation, the Batak and Malay people are actually teaching the same thing: that pride and rejection of parents are great offenses that will bring destruction, both socially and spiritually.

Moral and Social Values

Both stories affirm the importance of universal moral values: being devoted to parents, not being arrogant, and not forgetting one's origins. In Batak society, mothers are a symbol of family honor and a guardian of traditional balance. Meanwhile, in Malay society, mothers are a symbol

of God's love. Thus, hurting the mother means opposing the highest values in each of the belief systems.

Table 4. Moral Values and Their Relevance in the Modern Era

Aspects	Traditional Values	The Relevance of the Present
Devotion to the elderly	Family loyalty and respect.	Character education and social ethics.
Arrogance & ambition	The prohibition of greed and arrogance.	Criticism of modern materialism.
Identity & origin	Pride in local culture.	Efforts to fight the identity crisis of the younger generation.
Social balance	Harmony of customs and society.	Social ethics in the digital and global era.

Analysis of the story of Simaradadan Si Lancang shows that the two not only convey moral teachings about devotion to parents, but also reflect the understanding of the people of the archipelago on the order of the world through the relationship between humans, nature, and God. In an anthropological perspective, both stories serve as collective moral texts that uphold the principle of balance. Violations against mothers are not just personal actions, but disruption to the social and spiritual system of society. In the Batak community, the mother represents the center of kinship ethics from the curse in Simaranda to the "restoration of the cosmos" through the symbol of nature, which is to become an eternal stone.

In The Lancang, pride in the mother is articulated theocentrically: social rejection as well as opposition to divine principles. The storm of the sea that sank the ship became a symbol of the divine power that restored spiritual order. The opposition of man–God, land–ocean, wealth–destruction reflects the moral dialectic in Malay culture. Both stories work as a system of cultural reinforcement, ensuring that social and spiritual norms live in collective consciousness.

In the modern context, the moral messages of both stories are relevant in the face of ethical crises: the fading of respect, the disintegration of the family, and the glorification of materialism. Simaranda and Si Lancang reminded that true human development requires moral wisdom and respect for original values, not just economic progress. The rock and the sea become a metaphor for the power that transcends the natural man and the God who upholds justice when man loses his way. Thus, both legends are not merely literary legacies, but ethical narratives that reconstruct human relationships with their moral and spiritual roots in the midst of a rapid and fragmented modernity.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of *Simaranda* from Batak Toba and *Si Lancang* from Riau Malays revealed that both folktales represent core *Nusantara* moral values prohibiting disobedience to parents and affirming its consequences, featuring similar narrative patterns: violations of mother-child bonds, curses as moral reactions, and cosmic/spiritual retaliation. In *Simaranda*, disobedience stemmed from social shame over poverty, culminating in a stoning curse symbolizing eternal regret; in *Si Lancang*, arrogance and material ambition led to destruction as divine punishment. Key differences lay in cultural foundations—Batak's *dalihan na tolu* social balance versus Malay *birrul walidain* religious principles—yet both underscore universal themes of parental respect, loyalty to

origins, and human-cosmic interconnectedness, serving as mechanisms for moral education, norm reinforcement, and ethical awareness in modern contexts. Future research could extend this comparative approach to gender dynamics in these stories or explore digital adaptations of such folktales for contemporary character education in Indonesia.

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