

## The Value of Children's Education in the Katoba Ritual and its Implications for Moral Education

### ***Nilai Pendidikan Anak dalam Ritual Katoba dan Implikasinya terhadap Pendidikan Moral***

**Aris Armeth Daud Al Kahar<sup>1\*)</sup>, Svetlana Nikolaevna Bogatyreva<sup>2)</sup>, Sintha Sih Dewanti<sup>3)</sup>, Mahmud Arif<sup>4)</sup>, Abroto<sup>5)</sup>**

1) Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, IAIN Manado, Indonesia

2) Moscow State University of Technologies and Management, Moscow, Rusia

3) 4) 5) Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

#### **Abstrak**

In the context of Muna society, katoba exists as an educational ritual that continues to survive and exist amidst the onslaught of modernization. This study aims to examine how children are educated in the katoba ritual and its implications for moral education. This study uses Spradley's qualitative approach, which is included in the type of ethnographic research. This approach emphasizes an in-depth study of a particular cultural group or community. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data sources were one traditional leader (LS) and one religious leader (LM) who performed the katoba ritual. The research location in this paper is in the South Wakorumba district, Muna Regency. The selection of South Wakorumba district as the research location is based on the fact that South Wakorumba sub-district still maintains authentic Muna culture, thus the implementation of the katoba ritual is still carried out continuously. The results of the study indicate that the katoba ritual has a moral educational meaning contained in each of its three main steps: the initial implementation, the main implementation, and the closing implementation. The initial stage is marked by the wearing of traditional Muna clothing, the main stage is the core procession, namely the giving of toba advice from the priest to the toba participants, and the third is the banquet, which is the final procession in the katoba ritual. This educational value is obtained from the advice expressed by the imam to the Toba participants. The educational values are morals towards Allah, morals towards others and morals towards the environment.

**Key Words:** Children Education, Katoba, Moral Education

#### **Abstrak**

Dalam konteks masyarakat Muna, katoba hadir sebagai ritual pendidikan yang terus bertahan dan eksis di tengah gempuran arus modernisasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana pendidikan anak pada ritual katoba dan implikasinya pada pendidikan akhlak. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif Spradley, yang termasuk dalam jenis penelitian etnografi. Pendekatan ini menitikberatkan pada pengkajian mendalam terhadap kelompok budaya atau komunitas tertentu. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Dengan sumber data yaitu 1 orang tokoh adat (LS) dan orang tokoh agama (LM) yang melaksanakan ritual katoba. Lokasi penelitian pada tulisan ini adalah di kecamatan wakorumba Selatan Kabupaten Muna. Pemilihan Kecamatan Wakorumba selatan sebagai lokasi penelitian didasarkan bahwa Kecamatan wakorumba selatan masih menjaga budaya muna secara otentik sehingga pelaksanaan ritual Katoba masih dilaksanakan secara terus menerus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Ritual katoba memiliki makna pendidikan akhlak yang terdapat pada masing masing tiga langkah utama yaitu pada pelaksanaan awal, pelaksanaan pokok, dan pelaksanaan penutup. Tahapan awal ditandai dengan pemakaian pakaian adat Muna, tahapan pokok adalah prosesi inti yaitu pemberian nasihat toba dari imam kepada peserta toba dan yang ketiga adalah jamuan yaitu prosesi akhir dalam ritual katoba. Nilai pendidikan tersebut didapatkan dari ungkapan nasihat yang diucapkan oleh imam kepada peserta Toba. Nilai pendidikan tersebut adalah akhlak kepada Allah, Akhlak kepada sesama dan akhlak kepada lingkungan.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Anak, Katoba, Pendidikan akhlak

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\*Corresponding author:  
E-mail: aris.kahar@iain-manado.ac.id

## INTRODUCTION

Education has two foundational aspects that cannot be separated; potential growth inside each individual and preservation of cultural values within the people. Hasan Langgulung opines that these two aspects are not only connected but also strengthen one another because of the fact they represent the goals of a nation. Education not only functions as the means to prepare an individual in order to reach their highest potential, but to also preserve and pass on cultural values that have become the identity of a nation (Langgulung, 1998).

Brofenbrenner in his developmental ecology theory opines that child development is significantly influenced by the environment. Interactions between individuals and their surrounding environment affects their behavior and characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The culture's sub systems have a chance to become the foundation in education. The variety of groups in an environment will likely affect the character development of children living in said environment (Mujahidah, 2015). Adding to that, interaction between children and their cultural environment significantly influences their developmental growth and progress (Fahrudi, 2022).

In the context of the Muna people in Southeast Sulawesi province, there thrives a cultural system that involves the individual life cycle (Budianta et al., 2017). The people of Muna have rituals following the typical life cycle, starting from birth rituals and ending with death. This is line with Koenjaraningrat's statement that almost all cultures in the world divides life into certain stages in anthropology called "*Stages the Along Live Cycle*," which are the transitions between infancy, childhood, teenagehood, puberty, post-marriage period, pregnancy period, and old age.

One of the rituals within the Muna people involving an individual's life cycle is the Katoba tradition (Adkar et al., 2019). *Katoba* is a cultural tradition and ritual for children entering puberty (Alifuddin, 2015) as a ritual as one of people of Muna. The *Katoba* ritual has two dimensions; first being a spoken tradition in the form of spoken advice, and second is said ritual's processing.

*Katoba*, as part of the spoken tradition, has long played the role of traditional communication between the people of Muna. This tradition has been continuously preserved by the majority of the Muna people and is still being used to this day (Dariyadi, 2022). The preservation of *Katoba*, which has been passed down from generation to generation, shows that this tradition remains relevant in the lives of the Muna people, even amid social change and the passage of time (Hesti & Ahmad, 2021). In practice, *Katoba* is still frequently performed and well received by various groups, without significant friction with religious teachings, including more conservative Islamic groups in Muna. This shows that *Katoba* has a high degree of cultural flexibility, enabling it to adapt and survive as an integral part of the identity and values of the Muna community.

Based on the explanation above, it can be inferred that the people of Muna are an indigenous community that sought to preserve their ancestral customs and traditions in their day to day lives. This includes their ways of communication and passing down traditional values that have been kept for generations.

A few authors have published their writings about the *Katoba* ritual and Education, some of them being by Wa Ode Fian in the year 2019, *Katoba Ritual in the Muna Tribe: A semiotic study*, with a descriptive qualitative research type. The results of this research reveals that the *Katoba* ritual has three stages, being; 1) preparation, 2) implementation, and 3) closing. Other than that, Wa Ode also revealed the meaning of the symbols found in the two categories of *Katoba* ritual implementation. In the process of revealing the meaning of the symbols, the author used Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis theory (Adilia & Said, 2019).

Research regarding children education had always been concocted by Sujoko which discussed character education within the people of Jawa. The goal of the article was to study the structure of education within Javanese muslim families in developing children's characteristics by studying related literature regarding the matter (Sujoko, 2012). Based on the results, it was concluded that character building should be done long before birth and continue to teenagehood. Through this education, parents are expected to nurture well mannered children. One of the common approaches Javanese muslim families employed in character building was by combining Javanese culture and religious teachings.

Zainal also did their research regarding *Hybrid Culture In Katoba Ritual Of Muna*. The results revealed that *Katoba* was a ritual for children which combined the elements

of old Muna community rituals and Islamic values (Zainal et al., 2024). Other than that, Hadirman (Gonibala et al., 2018) so conducted a research regarding the Katoba ritual as an Islamic education media towards the people of Muna. The research revealed that Katoba was a repentance and Islamization ritual towards children between the ages of 7 to 11 years old.

Few of the aforementioned authors revealed several key points in order to understand the social and culture of Muna, particularly regarding the traditions and reproduction of identity in the Katoba ritual. Despite that, this research will have a different focus compared to the aforementioned previous articles. The researcher aims to fill the research gaps not yet fulfilled by previous studies. This research will center towards children education by the spoken tradition or advice within the Katoba ritual, along with all the implications associated towards children's character education.

This research will also reveal the implications regarding children's characteristics education through the Katoba ritual. In the article by (Sugianto & Djamaruddin, 2021), *akhlak*, or morals, are divided into 3 main parts; morals towards God, Humanity, and the environment. Based on this, this research will divide morals just as so; morals towards God, morals towards other human beings, and morals towards the environment—which could be inferred from the Katoba ritual.

## **METHOD**

The research method that is used as an analytical tool is the qualitative research method. This research uses Spradley's qualitative approach, which is included in the type of ethnographic research. This approach emphasizes an in-depth study of a particular cultural group or community, using a more contemporary language style. Ethnographic design is a method in qualitative research that aims to describe, analyze, and interpret patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that are owned and developed by a cultural group over time. In applying Spradley's ethnographic method, this study followed systematic operational steps to explore the cultural meaning contained in the Katoba ritual. The first stage began with the determination of key informants through purposive techniques, which involved traditional leaders (LS), religious leaders (LM), and Katoba participants as the main sources who had in-depth knowledge of the ritual procession. Once the informants were determined, the researcher conducted non-participant observation, which involved observing the entire Katoba procession in South

Wakorumba District, noting the space, time, actors, equipment, ritual language, and social interactions that occurred.

This observation was supplemented with descriptive interviews to obtain a comprehensive picture of the process, meaning, and educational values contained in the Katoba ritual. The data from the observation and interviews were then analyzed through a domain analysis stage to identify categories or areas of cultural meaning that emerged, such as moral values, the role of traditional leaders, ritual symbols, and the steps of the procession. The relationships between these elements were examined using Spradley's semantic relationships, such as part-whole, function, or sequence relationships. Once the domain was identified, the researchers proceeded to structured interviews to confirm the meaning structure that had been formed and to explore the details of the ritual elements in greater depth. Furthermore, through taxonomic analysis, the researchers compiled a more systematic hierarchy of categories so that the parent-subcategory relationships of the values and cultural components in Katoba could be seen. With this analytical tool, the author tries to dig up in-depth information about children's education in the Katoba ritual and its implications for moral education.

The location of this research is located in South Wakorumba district, Muna regency. The location was chosen in order to preserve the strong Muna authentic culture where the Katoba ritual is still being held. The data from this study were analyzed descriptively and described systematically in the form of a coherent narrative. Data analysis techniques were carried out using data recording transcripts, data classification, and description. Data or information is stated to be appropriate if it passes through a checking process. This checking serves to validate the data in order to avoid biased information. The validation of the data was carried out using a source triangulation model, meaning that the researcher provided interview questions to several parties to answer the research problem. In this study, the exploration of meaning in the Katoba procession involved competent data sources, which are traditional leaders (LS) and religious leaders (LM), who often carry out the Katoba procession. Katoba participants were also used as the main source in this article. In addition, documents that support the research results were also used as data in this study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study was conducted during the Katoba ritual in South Wakorumba District, Muna Regency. The initial step the researcher took was to interview religious and traditional leaders to uncover the meaning of the Katoba ritual. The researcher then examined its implications for children's moral education.

### ***Katoba as Children Education***

Before researchers delve deeper into the meaning of the ritual expression Katoba, they first sought to understand the etymology of the word Katoba. The following are the results of interviews with a traditional leader (LS).

*Katoba comes from the root word Toba. Toba itself means regret, which also means avoiding everything that is prohibited by Allah and doing His bidding.*

Based on the interview results, Katoba is an activity undertaken to repent or express regret. This expression of repentance can be internalized in the form of carrying out Allah SWT's commands and avoiding Allah SWT's prohibitions. This is in line with the research by (Fua, 2015), *Katoba* comes from the Arabic root word "*Tobat*" or regret. Proof of true repentance is not repeating wrongdoing and carrying out God's commands.

The main participants in the Katoba ritual are usually children, both boys and girls. This is consistent with interviews with religious leaders (LM).

*The Katoba ritual is typically performed by children in elementary school through junior high school, both boys and girls. The purpose of this ritual is to give them knowledge and life values to prepare them for the next phase of their lives: adolescence and adulthood.*

Before formal education existed, the Katoba ritual was used as a very important educational path in providing knowledge to children to enter the next phase; adolescence and adulthood. (Sinta Zakiyah et al., 2024) explained that the 6-12 year-old age range is a mature stage for learning. This stage is a relatively young age to teach compared to the stages before or after. According to Hadirman, the implementation of Katoba is carried out during childhood, namely starting when the child is around 6 years old to 11 years old (Hadirman, 2019).

In this case, the Katoba ritual is not only understood as part of a cultural tradition but also has a strong educational approach, particularly in the context of character formation. The fact that this ritual is performed for children in elementary and junior high school indicates that the Muna community recognizes the importance of the transition from childhood to adolescence as an opportune time to instill moral and spiritual values.

The age range of children undergoing Katoba is psychologically a period of significant cognitive and emotional development. The Katoba ritual serves as a process of internalizing values such as responsibility, kindness, and restrictions on bad behavior, which are expected to carry into adulthood. The equal involvement of boys and girls also demonstrates that the values instilled are universal in society, regardless of gender.

### ***Procession of Katoba***

The Katoba procession goes through several stages. These stages were explained by traditional figure LS as follows:

*Throughout the entire Katoba process, there are several steps that must be completed one by one. These include the initial stage, the main stage, and the final stage. The initial stage involves dressing the Toba participants in traditional Muna clothing. The children's immediate family members assist with the dressing. The second stage is the main stage. This stage is the core stage that must be completed by Toba participants, including testimony and advice from religious leaders. The third stage is the final stage, which involves enjoying a meal provided by the Toba organizers.*

Based on the interview results, there are at least three major stages that Katoba participants must go through: the initial stage, which involves donning traditional attire; the main stage, which involves witnessing and offering sacred advice; and the final stage, which is a banquet. This aligns with Aida's research, which found that the Katoba ritual consists of three stages: the preparation stage, the core stage, and the closing stage (Hayani & Al Kahar, 2020).

Katoba is a traditional ritual with a structured and systematic implementation, consisting of three main stages: beginning, core, and end (Kahar, 2021). Each stage has symbolic and functional significance that is crucial in shaping the spiritual and social experiences of the participants. The initial stage, which begins with the family donning traditional attire, reflects family ties and respect for the cultural identity of the Muna people. This also signifies the strong involvement of families in the moral education process through this ritual.



**Figure 1.** Donning Traditional Garments

The second stage, the main one, is the delivery of testimony and advice by religious figures. This is the heart of the Katoba program, as it contains moral, spiritual, and social messages directly imparted to participants. This marks a crucial transitional moment in a child's life and also emphasizes the role of religious figures as moral guides in society.



**Figure 2.** Core Part of the Procession

The image above shows the main process of the katoba ritual. At this stage, testimony is first given before sacred advice is given. The following is the interview with a religious leader (LM):

*Before carrying out the testimony, the religious leader will inform all Toba participants to follow what the imam says. After that, the imam will recite (Astagfirullah hal azim) and be followed by the Toba participants three times. After the istighfar, it is followed by the two sentences of the shahada, which are first recited by the imam (Asyhadu an la ilaha illallah Wa asyhadu anna Muhammadar Rasulullah) and followed by the Toba participants with the same greeting three times.*

The core activity includes testimonies from Toba participants, including the prayer of forgiveness (istigfar) and the recitation of the two sentences of the shahada (declaration of faith), symbolizing their complete entry into Islam. Katoba is not only cultural but also deeply imbued with Islamic religious elements. Furthermore, Katoba serves as a medium for internalizing Islamic values from an early age, while harmoniously linking traditional practices with religious teachings.

The recitation of the istigfar and the two sentences of the shahada try times led by a religious figure signifies the ritual's profound spiritual significance, particularly in the context of self-purification and renewed commitment to faith. The three repetitions of the istigfar serve as a request for forgiveness for sins, while the recitation of the shahada symbolizes the renewal of the Toba participants' pledge of faith to Allah SWT.

After the testimony, the Imam then provides advice. Participants are first informed that when given advice, they are instructed to answer "yes." This information was obtained from religious figures as follows:

**Tabel 1.** Katoba Advice

Imam	Child
<i>ama maitu dotehie ibara kabolosino ompu Taala</i> (Fathers must be respected because they are similar to the embodiment of God.)	<i>Umbe</i> (Yes)
<i>Ina maitu dotehie ibara kabolosino nabi</i> (Mothers must be respected for they are likened to prophets in the family)	<i>Umbe</i> (Yes)
<i>Isa maitu dotehie ibara kabolosino malaikati</i> (Older siblings should be respected as if they were substitute angels)	<i>Umbe</i> (Yes)
<i>Ai maitu doasiane ibarano kabolosino mu'mini</i>	<i>Umbe</i> (Yes)
<i>Ane miina bhe gunano kome fekamate kadadi we wite</i> (If there is no benefit, do not kill the animals on Earth)	<i>Umbe</i> (Yes)
<i>ane opoghawamo bhe sengkenapinto atawa bhari-bhari manusia bhaindo, tabea do adhatie, doniniane peda lansaringano badhanto sebadha</i> (If you meet other religions or other human beings, you must love them as much as you love yourself)	<i>Umbe</i> (Yes)

After carrying out the main stages, the next step is to move on to the final stage in the form of eating together, a show of celebration and social acceptance of participants who have gone through the ritual process, emphasizing that Katoba also strengthens social relations within the community.

### ***Moral Education in Katoba***

The value of moral education can be analyzed through the steps and also the meaning of the advice contained in the Katoba ritual. Moral education is studied into three types, namely morals towards God, morals towards fellow humans, and morals towards the environment.

The first is morality towards Allah. Morality towards Allah can be interpreted as the actions or attitudes that humans should have towards the Creator (Anriani et al. 2023). Morals towards Allah are clearly reflected in the main activities of the katoba procession, especially in the part of the testimony uttered by the children participating in Toba.

The recitation of istigfar is a symbol of awareness and remorse for mistakes that have been made, as well as a direct plea for forgiveness from Allah. This is in line with the results of interviews with religious leaders (LM)

*That the recitation of istigfar by children should be repeated three times so that participants can understand the meaning of the words in their hearts and show their sincerity in carrying it out.*

Through the recitation of istigfar, children are taught to understand that every human being has shortcomings that need to be corrected. Reciting istigfar also fosters humility before Allah, as children learn to acknowledge their mistakes and sincerely ask for forgiveness. This attitude of humility and self-awareness is at the core of good character towards Allah, which is hoped to be instilled in children from an early age.

Based on observations, after reciting the istigfar, the children continued by reciting the two sentences of the shahada. This is an important part that marks their steadfast faith and commitment to improving themselves. The shahada is the most fundamental statement of faith in Islam, and its recitation shows the children's sincere intention to return to their natural state as obedient servants of Allah.

In addition to asking for forgiveness, the recitation of the shahada by the participating children is also an important part of their faith, signifying their steadfastness and commitment to self-improvement. The shahada is the most fundamental statement of faith in Islam, and its recitation demonstrates the children's sincere intention to return to their natural state as obedient servants of Allah.

In this context, morality towards Allah is not only interpreted as a spiritual relationship, but also as the formation of a consistent attitude in living the values of monotheism. Through these two forms of pronunciation, the process of internalizing morals towards Allah becomes stronger and more meaningful in children's daily lives.

The second value is moral education for humans. Morals towards humans are good manners, external manners and the foundation for humans to act towards others (Suryani et al., 2021). Moral education for humans in the context of the Katoba ritual can

be divided into three broad lines, namely morals towards parents, morals towards siblings, and morals towards fellow human beings.

Morals towards parents can be seen in the expression of Toba advice in the main procession of the Katoba ritual. The phrase, "*ama maitu dotehie ibara kabalosino ompu Taala* (Fathers must be respected because for they are similar to the embodiment of God). The phrase "*ama maitu dotehie ibara kabalosino ompu Taala*" which means that fathers must be respected because they are like the embodiment of God, reflecting the noble values in local culture that highly uphold respect for parents, especially fathers. In the context of the Katoba ritual, this advice becomes an important foundation in shaping children's morals, especially in fostering their awareness of the role of parents in life. The father is seen not only as the social head of the family, but also as a figure who represents authority, affection, and protection, as are the divine qualities taught in religion.

Not only fathers, mothers are also the main focus in katoba ritual education, this is reflected in the advice *Ina maitu dotehie ibara kabolosino nabi* (Mothers must be respected for they are likened to prophets in the family). Mothers are likened to prophets because of their enormous role in educating, guiding, and instilling moral and spiritual values in their children, like a prophet who brings messages and forms his people.

Next is morals towards brothers. Morals towards brothers can be seen through the expression "*Isa maitu dotehie ibara kabolosino malaikati*" (Older siblings should be respected as if they were substitute angels) This reflects the noble values of a culture that places older siblings as figures worthy of respect and role models. Likewise, younger siblings must be loved and nurtured to bring harmony to the nuclear family structure. These three pieces of advice are also interpreted by (Zainal et al., 2024) as follows: In Catholic teachings, the father is likened to the manifestation of God, the mother is likened to the manifestation of the Prophet Muhammad, and older siblings are likened to angels.

Morality towards followers of other religions is also a subject of education in the katoba ritual. This is evidenced by the expression "*ane opoghawamo bhe sengkenapinto atawa bhari-bhari manusia bhaindo, tabea do adhatie, doniniane peda lansaringano badhanto sebadha*" (If you meet other religions or other human beings, you must love them as much as you love yourself). According to the results of an interview with LS, it was revealed that:

*In Toba advice, compassion must be spread not only among fellow Muslims, but also to fellow human beings from different backgrounds. This advice also contains values of tolerance.*

Which means that children should not only have noble morals toward God and their families, but also toward other human beings, regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural background. Children are taught to tolerate each other. The cultivation of tolerance among religious communities is particularly suitable for local policy initiatives. According to (Pajarianto et al., 2017), in order to foster tolerance, the world today needs to apply moderate religious values and local wisdom that teaches peaceful coexistence. This approach is important so that people can live in peace and respect each other. Strengthening interfaith relations is also very necessary because religious issues are sensitive and can cause problems if not handled properly.

The third value is moral education towards the environment, this is indicated by the expression, "*Ane miina bhe gunano kome fekamate kadadi we wite* (If there is no benefit, do not kill the animals on Earth). This means that morally upright children must be able to refrain from destructive behavior, including harming the lives of innocent animals. Through this kind of education, children are shaped into individuals sensitive to the importance of ecosystems and natural sustainability. This is in line with the findings (Børresen et al., 2023) that teaching children about caring for and protecting animals will increase their knowledge about how to care for and preserve animals. This statement emphasizes that protecting the environment, in this case by not killing animals indiscriminately, is part of noble character that must be instilled from an early age, as a form of gratitude and responsibility for God's creation on earth.

Therefore, the findings in this article show that cultural traditions such as Katoba are not only a cultural heritage but also an active educational tool in instilling moral values in children. This study confirms that the Katoba procession plays a role in internalizing moral values towards God, fellow human beings, and the environment through a series of rituals, advice, and cultural symbols that are rich in meaning. An important implication of these findings is that moral education in schools and families can be strengthened by utilizing local wisdom as a contextual learning resource that is close to children's lives (Kadir & Asma, 2023). Thus, this study enriches the field of education by positioning local culture as a relevant, sustainable, and effective approach

to shaping children's character, while also opening up opportunities for the integration of cultural values into the curriculum and moral learning practices in the modern era.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the katoba ritual is a means of education for children that remains alive and enduring. Katoba is the imparting of knowledge to children through the Muna traditional ritual, which contains educational values for children that should be preserved. The Katoba ritual has moral educational significance in each of its three main stages, namely the initial stage, the main stage, and the closing stage. These educational values are obtained from the advice given by the priest to the Toba participants. After going through the Katoba ritual procession, the educational values contained therein are obtained. These educational values are morality towards Allah, morality towards others, and morality towards the environment. Morality towards Allah is clearly reflected in the core procession of Katoba, especially through the recitation of testimonies and istigfar by the Toba participants. The recitation of istigfar is not only a symbol of awareness and remorse for past mistakes, but also a form of direct apology to Allah that fosters humility before the Creator as the core of morality towards Him. In addition, Katoba also instills morals towards fellow human beings, which includes three main points, namely morals towards parents, morals towards siblings, and morals towards fellow human beings, so that children are guided to build harmonious social relationships. Not only that, this tradition also emphasizes morals towards the environment, where children are taught to refrain from destructive actions, including preserving innocent animals. Thus, Katoba becomes a means of comprehensive moral formation, covering relationships with Allah, fellow human beings, and the surrounding environment. Through these findings, this study makes an important contribution in showing that the instillation of educational values is not only obtained through formal education at the school level, but can also be strongly shaped through local cultural practices such as the Katoba ritual. This study confirms that cultural traditions play an active and significant role in instilling moral values, whether towards God, fellow human beings, or the environment. This research enriches the field of education by positioning local culture as a relevant and effective source of moral learning in shaping children's character.

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