



Leadership Wisdom in *Lontara' Duri*: Analysing Indigenous Insights for Post-Reform Leadership in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Lontara' Duri is an epic tale of Nene Matindo Dama, a Duri Community legend from South Sulawesi. The book contains noble messages from the ancestors to the Duri Community and humanity. Syukur Abdullah's *Lontara' Duri: The Origin of Tallu Batupapan Kingdom* offers valuable lessons, including messages on leadership. These messages guide leaders towards an ideal society. This research uses a hermeneutic approach to examine leadership messages in the *Lontara' Duri* texts. An analysis was conducted on the applicability of these messages in post-reform Indonesia, focusing on presidential leadership practices. This research explores the potential contribution of local wisdom to effective and meaningful leadership models in Indonesia. This study presents a systematic approach for identifying and interpreting traditional leadership values as exemplified in *Lontara' Duri* in the context of contemporary Indonesian leadership practices. By examining how post-reform leaders apply these principles, we can ascertain the continued relevance of local wisdom in guiding effective leadership.

Keywords: *Lontara' Duri*, local wisdom, tradition, hermeneutics, leadership messages .

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays a pivotal role in influencing a country's political and social dynamics. In today's interconnected world, leadership models are often judged against global standards [1][2]. Some scholars believe that local wisdom should be considered when forming an optimal leadership structure [3][4][5][6]. This robust cultural capital motivates leaders to prioritize the collective good, fostering a profound sense of cohesion and collaboration among the communities they serve [7].

Integrating traditional values into modern leadership is about more than respecting cultural heritage. It's about creating a form of leadership that's more contextual and relevant to the local community [8]. In Indonesia, traditional texts offer insights on wisdom, justice, and responsibility, which are relevant in addressing contemporary leadership challenges [9][10]. These teachings can help leaders overcome modern governance challenges and foster unity [11][12].

The *Lontara Duri*, a traditional text from the Duri community in Enrekang, South Sulawesi, offers guidance on leadership. It encapsulates teachings from Nene Matindo Dama. The principles espoused include wisdom, responsibility justice, and community welfare [13]. These values are significant in the Duri community and relevant in many leadership scenarios, including Indonesia's post-reform era.

Post-reform leadership is transforming Indonesia's politics. Decentralization and democratization have created space for new leadership [14][15][16]. Nevertheless, amidst these transformations, the crucial tasks of upholding integrity, justice, and the collective well-being of society remain paramount [17][18][19].

The post-reform period in Indonesia has seen major changes in the political and social order, including in leadership [15][20]. The 1998 political reform in Indonesia was a major step towards democracy and decentralization,

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leading to more inclusive and participatory leadership [21]. Prior research on post-reform Indonesian leadership has focused on the transition from authoritarian to democratic styles [15][20][22]. Theory has been proposed to understand this leadership pattern, including transformational, participatory, and adaptive [15][23][24][25][26].

There is a lack of scholarship on integrating traditional values into modern leadership. Local wisdom is often overlooked in discussions about modern leadership [27]. In traditional Indonesian leadership, cultural and spiritual legitimacy have been crucial. Justice, harmony, and community welfare have guided leaders in this context [28][29]. This traditional form of leadership serves not only to organize social life, but also to maintain the sustainability of local culture and identity [30][31][32].

A number of studies have underscored the significance of integrating local wisdom with contemporary leadership principles, particularly within the multifaceted context of Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape [28][29][30][31][32][33]. These studies lack a detailed framework for implementation. There's no evidence traditional Indonesian leadership values have been incorporated into modern models. In the post-reform context, local wisdom reinforces responsive leadership ethics. This research project offers an in-depth analysis of traditional leadership messages in post-reform Indonesian leadership practices.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a hermeneutic method to analyze leadership messages in the *Lontara Duri* text. Hermeneutics provides a framework for interpreting traditional texts [34][35][36]. Hermeneutics helps us grasp the meanings of texts and connect them to post-reform Indonesian leadership. This research uses critical readings to better understand how traditional leadership ideas, like wisdom and justice, can fit in today's leadership context.

This research was conducted in the following stages:

2.1. Data Collection

This research employs *Lontara Duri* texts on leadership and noble messages inherited by Nene Matindo Dama. Secondary data on post-reform Indonesian leadership were collated with the aim of integrating insights from *Lontara Duri*.

2.2. Hermeneutics Analysis

This research employed a hermeneutic analysis of the *Lontara Duri* text. It identifies and analyzes the following themes: wisdom, responsibility, community welfare, and justice. Each theme is then analyzed in the context of the *Duri* community.

2.3. Comparison with Post-Reform Leadership

This study compares traditional leadership principles in *Lontara Duri* with the practices of Indonesian presidents in the post-reform period. It assesses the relevance and applicability of local wisdom in modern leadership.

2.4. Development of Theoretical Framework

The final stage is developing a local leadership model for Indonesia. Findings from the analysis will inform recommendations regarding the integration of traditional leadership values reflected in the *Lontara Duri* into Indonesian leadership education and public policy.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Lontara Duri: Sources of Traditional Leadership Wisdom

Lontara Duri is a key part of the *Duri* community's cultural heritage in Enrekang, South Sulawesi. The *Duri* community has a longstanding tradition of leadership imbued with a profound moral and spiritual ethos, as evidenced by the *Lontara Duri* manuscript. The *Lontara Duri* is a guide to the community's social, political, and cultural life. It contains narratives about leadership, particularly Nene Matindo Dama, a leader (*pake*) who exemplified noble values.

3.1.1. Structure and Content of Lontara Duri Text: Leadership Messages

Lontara Duri is a narrative integrating historical accounts, moral guidance, and messages about leadership. The opening passages (pp. 38-39) describe how Nene Matindo Dama became a leader. The villagers asked Nene Matindo Dama to be their *pake*, or elder leader. They wanted a wise figure to give advice and set an example for the community. Nene Matindo Dama initially declined the position, citing the significant responsibility that accompanies leadership. However, the community insisted on a just, wise, and virtuous leader, and he accepted on the condition that he impart a series of moral teachings.

The leadership messages of Nene Matindo Dama (page 41) represent the fundamental tenets of leadership espoused in Lontara Duri. He conveys five primary tenets to his people: (1) the prohibition of theft, (2) the avoidance of causing distress to others, (3) the reverence due to elders, (4) the obligation to assist those in need, and (5) the imperative to refrain from conflict with the vulnerable. These messages serve as a moral code and guide for leaders, emphasizing the importance of upholding honor, maintaining social harmony, and ensuring justice. Leaders must also guarantee their people's well-being and prosperity.

The text structure shows that Lontara Duri leadership is not just about rule, but also about morality and spirituality. The ideal leader is one who engages everyone in decisions and prioritizes collective good.

3.1.2. *Analysis of the Role of Nene Matindo Dama as a Central Figure*

In Lontara Duri tradition, Nene Matindo Dama exemplifies wise leadership for the people's benefit. Nene Matindo Dama is a wise, benevolent leader. When asked to be chief, he responds with humility. This exemplifies a moral and socially responsible style.

Nene Matindo Dama believes leaders should guide their constituents towards moral rectitude. Pages 41 and 43 of this text are relevant to modern leadership. He emphasizes justice, social responsibility, and protecting the vulnerable.

Nene Matindo Dama shows that leadership is a team effort. It requires the help of elders and the community. His final message to his son Lambeh (p. 99) underscores the importance of collective action and seeking counsel from elders before making pivotal decisions. This exemplifies a participatory and collaborative leadership model, where leaders engage all stakeholders to guarantee decisions are made in the collective's best interests.

3.2. *Hermeneutic Analysis of Leadership Messages in Lontara Duri*

3.2.1. *Critical Reading of Lontara Duri Texts Using a Hermeneutic Approach*

The hermeneutic approach to Lontara Duri provides insights into Nene Matindo Dama's leadership messages. It allows us to understand the text literally while also interpreting the underlying meanings through narrative, symbols, and dialogue. The Lontara Duri text reflects Duri history and culture and teaches contemporary leadership.

The Duri people value collective wisdom and morality-based leadership. Each narrative in Lontara Duri is imbued with symbolic meaning rooted in Duri social and spiritual values. Nene Matindo Dama accepted the *pake* position not for power but in recognition of the community's esteem for his wisdom and simplicity. This illustrates that leadership in Duri society is not an entitlement but a social obligation.

3.2.2. *Identification of Leadership Themes in Lontara Duri*

The Lontara Duri text reveals key themes of leadership, including *justice*, *wisdom*, *responsibility*, and *community welfare*. These themes are evident in Nene Matindo Dama's communications and actions as leader.

Justice is central to Nene Matindo Dama's message. The initial message prohibits the appropriation of another's property. Justice is the foundation of a peaceful and orderly society. In Duri society, justice means upholding the rights of each individual without exploitation or oppression. Customary laws reflect this concept of justice, and Nene Matindo Dama serves as the guardian of these values.

The story of Nene Matindo Dama shows the value of *wisdom*. His decisions are wise, and his attitude humble and considerate. He initially declined the role but accepted it later, proving that prudent leaders think before taking power. Wisdom in the Duri community means seeing the big picture, understanding the details, and acting in a way that benefits the community.

A leader must take *responsibility* for their actions and the well-being of those they lead. Nene Matindo Dama's message (p. 41) on avoiding unnecessary difficulties and helping those in need shows the social responsibility of a leader. In Duri society, the chief is a leader, a guardian, and a mediator.

Nene Matindo Dama's focus on *community well-being* is a key aspect of Lontara Duri leadership. Welfare is about more than material prosperity. It's about social and spiritual balance too. Nene Matindo Dama says helping those in need and stopping the oppression of vulnerable individuals is key to prosperity (p. 43). This shows that prosperity depends on the whole community and leaders must create conditions for shared prosperity.

3.2.3. Discussion of Each Theme and Contextual Meaning in Duri Society

The concept of *justice* is the social equilibrium leaders maintain through impartial, rights-respecting policies. Nene Matindo Dama emphasized safeguarding property rights and upholding social norms established by ancestors.

Wisdom is not an inherited quality; it develops through experience and social interaction. In Lontara Duri, leaders are judged on their capacity to defuse tensions and lead with understanding. This interpretation of wisdom is firmly rooted in Duri society, where leaders are informed by moral considerations and the long-term impact on the community.

In Duri society, *responsibility* is a fundamental aspect of social and moral conduct. A leader who is responsible will prioritize the interests of their people. This is exemplified by Nene Matindo Dama.

A leadership policy's goal is to improve the community's *collective well-being*. In Lontara Duri, prosperity includes a sense of community, mutual cooperation, and spiritual equilibrium. Nene Matindo Dama says leaders and people must work together to ensure mutual support and care.

A hermeneutic analysis of Lontara Duri shows that traditional leadership values remain relevant in modern contexts. *Justice, wisdom, responsibility, and community welfare* are key to effective and meaningful leadership.

3.3. Comparison with Post-Reform Leadership in Indonesia

3.3.1. Leadership Analysis of Post-Reformation Presidents

After Soeharto resigned, *BJ Habibie* became Indonesia's new leader, tasked with navigating the transition to democracy. Habibie's political reform policies, including the abolition of the Subversion Law and a referendum in East Timor, reflected Lontara Duri *values of wisdom and responsibility*. Habibie's measured response and preparation for democratic elections exemplified leadership principles prioritizing *welfare* and legitimacy.

Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) was known for his visionary, pluralistic leadership and commitment to *social justice*. Nene Matindo Dama's commitment to *justice* was evident in Gus Dur's policies, which fought discrimination and advanced marginalised communities. Nene Matindo Dama showed that leaders should prioritise community interests, while Gus Dur demonstrated the need for decisive action in advocating for *justice* and equality.

Megawati's tenure was a period of significant transition, particularly in the economic and political realms. Despite political instability, Megawati demonstrated a strong commitment to accountability, ensuring the government's continuity amidst significant upheaval (*responsibility*). She also aimed to reinforce national stability, similar to Nene Matindo Dama. However, her policies lacked resolve when faced with political pressure.

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) enhanced transparency and accountability in governance. SBY's policies reflect the principles of *wisdom* and responsibility as espoused in Lontara Duri, focusing on eradicating corruption and maintaining economic stability. His cautious approach and efforts to reach consensus in decision-making reflect the wise attitude taught by Nene Matindo Dama

Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) pragmatic, results-oriented leadership prioritizes infrastructure development and community empowerment. Jokowi's focus on economic development and quality of life aligns with the Lontara Duri's emphasis on *community welfare*. Jokowi has shown that leadership means more than directing from above; it also means engaging the population in development. His approach to national development is based on cooperation and social responsibility. He has initiated programs to reduce social inequality.

3.3.2. Case Studies on the Implementation of Wisdom and Justice Values within National and Regional Policies Frameworks

Lontara Duri's wisdom and justice have influenced post-reform era policies. The decentralization policy distributes power and ensures regions manage their resources. This aligns with Nene Matindo Dama's distributive justice principles, which advocate for equal distribution of power and opportunity. Policies like the Village Fund demonstrate

leaders' accountability to their constituents. These policies aim to empower local communities and reduce development gaps.

In post-reform Indonesia, governors and regional leaders have applied the principles of wisdom and responsibility in line with Lontara Duri teachings. The South Sulawesi Governor's policy of preserving local wisdom and empowering indigenous communities aligns with Nene Matindo Dama's values of cultural heritage and social welfare.

A comparison of Lontara Duri and post-reform Indonesia shows that traditional leadership values like wisdom, justice, responsibility, and community welfare are still relevant today. Leaders in Indonesia can draw on traditional values in Lontara Duri to develop a more just, inclusive, and responsible leadership model.

3.4. Implications of Lontara Duri's Leadership Values for Modern Leadership Models

In the modern era, Indonesian leaders face many challenges. They must balance modernization with the safeguarding of local cultural values. Lontara Duri offers insight into a responsive global leadership style rooted in traditional values.

Lontara Duri's tenets of leadership, including wisdom, justice, responsibility, and community welfare, remain relevant. In a globalized world, these principles provide an ethical foundation for sustainable leadership. Nene Matindo Dama's wisdom is informed by meticulous deliberation and a long-term perspective. It encompasses an understanding of contextual factors influencing community needs and a prudent response to global challenges.

Justice is key to ensuring modernization and economic development benefit everyone, including the vulnerable and marginalized. Justice in leadership can help mitigate the effects of globalization and promote a more equitable allocation of resources.

3.4.1. Development of a Theoretical Framework for Local Wisdom-Based Leadership Models

A hermeneutic analysis of Lontara Duri allows the creation of a theoretical framework for modern Indonesian leadership. This framework integrates local wisdom values into contemporary leadership practices, creating leaders with ethical and moral values.

The theoretical framework is based on four main principles set forth in Lontara Duri:

3.4.1.1. Thoughtful and Contextual Leadership

In an era of rapid change, leaders must make prudent, considered decisions. They must consider the social, political, and economic implications of each decision. Community participation, non-authoritarian approaches, and long-term community welfare are key.

3.4.1.2. Justice as the Foundation of Leadership

Those in positions of leadership must protect social justice, ensuring all segments of society are included in the developmental process. Justice goes beyond legal rights, encompassing fairness in the distribution of economic, educational and social resources.

3.4.1.3. Social and Moral Responsibilities

A responsible leader is one who cares for their constituents and is accountable for their group's well-being. This means leaders must be ready to justify their policies and actions to the public.

3.4.1.4. Community Welfare as the Main Objective

Leaders should implement policies that enhance society's well-being. In Indonesia, this means alleviating poverty, improving access to education and healthcare, and fostering harmony and collaboration.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusions

This research shows that the leadership tenets of Lontara Duri are still relevant in today's Indonesian leadership. Nene Matindo Dama's messages on wisdom, justice, responsibility, and community welfare show that traditional leadership principles are relevant in the Duri community and can be integrated into modern Indonesian leadership. Lontara Duri offers a moral foundation for leadership that is results-oriented and prioritizes social welfare, harmony, and justice.

This research shows that local wisdom in Lontara Duri is key to creating a context-based, ethical, and responsive leadership model for modern society. Indonesian leaders can use these values to ensure that development efforts improve quality of life and social welfare.

4.2. Recommendations for Further Research

More research is needed to understand local leadership wisdom in Indonesia. Indonesia has a rich, diverse cultural heritage. Every region has a different approach to leadership. Further studies are needed on traditional leadership values in other Indonesian regions. These can help us understand more about the evolution of contextual and pertinent leadership models.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors of this article have fulfilled their respective duties and functions in accordance with the requirements of their roles.

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