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Narrative motifs in Indonesia and Philippines folktales: A comparative literature study

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Abstract: *This study analyzes the transformation of narrative motifs in Indonesian and Philippine folktales and explores the role of cultural localization in shaping the identity of each tale. It employs a qualitative approach grounded in comparative literature methods. The data consist of two Indonesian–Philippine tale pairs: Kura-Kura dan Monyet Rakus from Indonesia and The Monkey and the Turtle from the Philippines; and Si Monyet dan Seekor Buaya from Indonesia and The Monkey and the Crocodile from the Philippines. These tales were collected through library research and the read-and-note technique, then analyzed comparatively concerning the similarities, differences, and transformations of their narrative motifs. The findings show that both folktale traditions preserve the same narrative motifs as part of the Austronesian oral cultural heritage. Nevertheless, they differ in conflict, characterization, story resolution, and moral values. Cultural localization produces distinct identities: Indonesian tales emphasize hard work, social harmony, and character education through a linear plot, whereas Philippine tales emphasize cleverness through an episodic plot. These findings indicate that shared narrative motifs do not constitute imitation but result from cultural adaptation that shapes the local identity of each folktale tradition. This study enriches comparative literary scholarship by clarifying of narrative motifs transform as a process of cultural identity formation on the folktales of kindred societies in Southeast Asia.*

Keywords: *Narrative motifs, comparative literature, Indonesia–Philippines folktales*

INTRODUCTION

Folktales are a form of oral literature that evolves and is preserved through intergenerational transmission. As a component of folklore, they serve not only as entertainment but also as vehicles for conveying cultural values, social norms, and the worldviews of the communities that sustain them (Chang & Luh, 2022; Seban & Çelik, 2026). Consequently, the presence of similar story motifs across different societies often indicates historical connections, cultural diffusion, or shared collective experiences in the development of narrative traditions. In Southeast Asia, this phenomenon is particularly evident in the various folktales found in Indonesia and the Philippines, two countries that both belong to the Austronesian cultural sphere.

Comparative literary studies offer a framework for examining intertextual relationships that arise from diverse cultural backgrounds without privileging any single source (Walkowitz, 2009). Recent developments in comparative literature have shifted away from tracing linear influences; instead, they focus on the processes of

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transformation, adaptation, localization, and cultural negotiation that occur when a narrative motif persists across different communities. Consequently, similarities between stories are understood not merely as imitation but as the outcome of historical interactions, cultural migrations, trade, colonialism, and geographical proximity, all of which enable a story pattern to change in accordance with the sociocultural context of each society.

The cultural relationship between Indonesia and the Philippines offers a particularly compelling context for examination from this perspective. Both countries share Austronesian cultural roots, which are evident in numerous similarities in belief systems, agrarian-maritime lifestyles, and oral traditions. This shared cultural background appears in several folktales that feature similar story patterns, characters, and conflicts. For instance, Dean S. Fansler's (1965) collection, Filipino Popular Tales, includes The Monkey and the Turtle and The Monkey and the Crocodile, which closely resemble Indonesian folktales such as *Monyet dan Kura-kura* (The Monkey and the Turtle) and *Monyet dan Buaya* (The Monkey and the Crocodile). The presence of these stories suggests that certain narrative motifs are widely distributed across Southeast Asia and undergo various transformations in accordance with local cultural characteristics.

Fansler (1965) emphasizes that Philippine folktales occupy a unique position at the crossroads of global cultural currents because the Philippines' geographical location connects Malay, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and European traditions. For this reason, the relationship between a folktale and the world's narrative traditions should not be understood as a simple process of inheritance; rather, it results from adaptation, modification, and localization occurring over an extended period. Fansler also highlights the importance of viewing Philippine folk narratives as part of a global network of literature (world fiction), making comparative study a relevant approach to understanding both the origins and development of these story motifs.

Although numerous studies on Indonesian folktales have been conducted, most focus primarily on intrinsic analysis, character values, educational functions, or cultural studies within a national context. Research specifically comparing Indonesian and Philippine folktales remains relatively limited, particularly studies examining how identical narrative motifs undergo cultural transformation and give rise to distinct local identities. Magdalena Baga's (2024) research further supports this, noting that comparative studies between Indonesian literature and foreign literature remain scarce. However, this approach is crucial for showing that similarities between stories do not indicate cultural homogeneity but instead reflect each society's creativity in reinterpreting inherited narrative patterns.

This study examines two pairs of stories with similar motifs: The Monkey and the Turtle and *Monyet dan Kura-kura*, and The Monkey and the Crocodile and *Monyet dan Buaya*. These pairs were selected because each features a clever trickster who uses cunning to navigate specific social situations, yet they present different cultural representations, moral values, and local identities. These differences illustrate how Indonesian and Philippine societies have localized similar narrative motifs, producing meanings tailored to their respective cultural contexts. Accordingly, this study aims to (1) analyze the patterns of cultural transformation in Indonesian and Philippine

folktales that share the same narrative motifs and (2) explain how the process of cultural localization shapes distinct identities in each story. Through the lens of comparative literature, this research seeks to enrich scholarship on children's literature and Southeast Asian folklore while providing insight into the dynamics of diffusion, adaptation, and cultural identity formation within the folktale traditions of this culturally related region.

Several previous studies have examined folktales through comparative literary approaches and cross-cultural analysis. Keneshbekova and Tashtemirova (2026) conducted a comparative study of tales from Kyrgyz, Turkish, European, and American traditions to identify similarities and differences in their cultural characteristics and educational functions. The study used comparative content analysis on four works of children's literature, focusing on themes, motifs, characters, and educational values. The results show that each tale contains universal themes such as justice, friendship, and moral development. However, each culture presents these themes in different forms of representation, shaped by the local values upheld by its society. Another study by Moreno Escribano (2025) compared the animal wife motif in European and Japanese folktales using Vladimir Propp's approach to the morphology of the folktale. The findings indicate that the narrative structure developed in the European tradition cannot always be fully applied to Japanese folktales because processes of cultural adaptation have produced new narrative functions. These findings underscore that narrative motifs are dynamic and undergo transformation in accordance with the cultural contexts of the communities that carry them.

Meanwhile, Safitri (2024) compared the tales of Cinderella and *Yeh-Shen* to identify similarities and differences in the intrinsic elements of the two folktales. The study employed a comparative literature approach, focusing on the analysis of theme, plot, characters, setting, and moral message. The results indicate that the two stories share a similar narrative structure but differ in characterization, cultural symbols, and of they convey moral values, reflecting adaptations to their respective sociocultural environments. Although the study successfully demonstrates cross-cultural relationships in folk narratives, it remains limited to comparing intrinsic elements. It does not explain how narrative motifs undergo processes of transformation and cultural localization. These three studies illustrate that comparative literary scholarship has been widely used to reveal similarities and differences among literary works across cultures. However, to date, no study has specifically compared Indonesian and Philippine folktales of analyzing narrative motifs to explain processes of cultural transformation and the formation of local identity in kindred Southeast Asian societies. This study therefore seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the transformation of narrative motifs in two pairs of Indonesian and Philippine folktales from a comparative literature perspective, thereby contributing new knowledge to the study of Southeast Asian folklore and children's literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, the comparative literature perspective serves as the conceptual foundation for explaining the relationships among folktales that developed in two societies with different cultural backgrounds but relatively similar Austronesian

cultural roots. Comparative literature is no longer understood merely as a field of study that traces relationships of influence (Nugraha, 2021; Vidiarama, 2025) but rather as an approach that examines how a text moves, adapts, transforms, and is reinterpreted when it enters a different cultural space. Hutomo (2019) explains that comparative literature is a field of study that transcends the boundaries of language, nation, and academic discipline to understand the dynamics of relations among literary traditions. Hutomo (2019) classifies comparative literary research in Indonesia into three domains: (1) comparative literature related to philology, (2) comparative literature focused on oral literature, and (3) modern comparative literature that examines written literature in either Malay or Indonesian. This classification shows that the object of comparative literary study is not limited to written works but also encompasses oral literature. In line with this, Damono (2026) states that one of the most common forms of comparative literary study is the comparison of folktales from various countries to identify similarities, differences, and the characteristics of the societies reflected in them, rather than merely tracing the origins of or influences among the stories. Endraswara (2013), for his part, views comparative literature as a cross-cultural study that situates literary works within processes of circulation, reception, and transformation across various reading communities. Thus, the similarity of a story does not necessarily indicate direct relationship of imitation; it may instead reflect a process of cultural dialogue that unfolds over the course of a society's history.

Building on these views, this study positions comparative literature as an analytical approach for uncovering the transformation of narrative motifs in Indonesian and Philippine folktales. The study does not seek to trace the origins of the stories or prove the influence of one tradition on the other; instead, it focuses on how similar narrative motifs undergo localization and thereby give rise to different representations of characters, conflicts, moral values, and cultural identities. This perspective allows the analysis to go beyond identifying similarities and differences between the stories and to explain the processes of cultural negotiation that shape the distinctiveness of each folktale tradition (Aytaş, 2026; Kokbas et al., 2026). The comparative literature approach is therefore considered relevant for explaining the dynamics of the diffusion of narrative motifs while also revealing the cultural creativity with which Indonesian and Philippine societies reinterpret story patterns handed down through generations.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a comparative literature research design (Damono, 2026; Endraswara, 2013). This approach was selected because the research focuses on interpreting intertextual relationships to identify similarities, differences, and transformations of narrative motifs in Indonesian and Philippine folktales. The analysis did not trace genealogical relationships of influence; instead, it explained how similar narrative motifs adapt and localize, producing distinct cultural representations. The data sources comprised four folktales grouped into two pairs with similar narrative motifs: The Monkey and the Turtle paired with *Monyet dan Kura-kura*, and The Monkey and the Crocodile with *Monyet dan Buaya*. The Philippine tales were taken from Dean S. Fansler's (1965) *Filipino Popular Tales*, while the Indonesian tales were obtained from various anthologies of folk narratives documented

and recognized as representative of the oral tradition of the Indonesian archipelago (Nusantara). The units of analysis included narrative motifs, event structure, characterization, conflict, story resolution, and the cultural values that emerge in each folktale. Unless otherwise indicated, all English renderings of passages from Indonesian-language sources are the author's own translations.

The authors collected data through library research and the read-and-note technique (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2017). The author read all folktales intensively to identify passages with comparable narrative motifs. The author then recorded, classified, and grouped the relevant data according to similarities in story pattern, characterization, conflict, resolution, and accompanying cultural elements. The study analyzed the data comparatively in four stages. First, the study identified the narrative motifs in each folktale. Second, the study compared similarities and differences in narrative motifs between paired folktales. Third, the transformations occurring in characters, plot, conflict, resolution, and cultural messages as a result of adaptation within each society were analyzed. Fourth, the results of the comparison were interpreted from a comparative literature perspective to explain how cultural localization shapes local identity in each story. The trustworthiness of the interpretation was strengthened through theoretical triangulation (Purnomo et al., 2025) by comparing the research findings with relevant concepts from comparative literature and folklore studies, as well as with previous research, ensuring that the analytical results possess consistency and academic validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Transformation in Indonesia and Philippines Folktales

The tale pair *Kura-Kura dan Monyet Rakus* (The Turtle and the Greedy Monkey) (Indonesia), compiled in book form by Sri Kristina (2018), and *The Monkey and the Turtle* (Philippines), compiled by Fansler (1965), demonstrate that both stories are built on the same narrative motif: a friendship that turns into conflict because of the monkey's greed and ends with the turtle's victory. This similarity is also evident in the Kancil (mouse-deer) tales of Indonesia and Malaysia, which have endured across generations as stories rich in cleverness (Nurhayani & Sugiharyanti, 2026). The shared motifs point to a narrative pattern that lives on in the oral traditions of Austronesian societies. However, as the motif developed in different cultural spaces, it transformed and gave rise to story forms that are no longer identical. The first transformation appears in the opening motif of the story. In both tales, the friendship is the starting point of the conflict. However, the cause of the conflict is constructed differently. In the Philippine version, the conflict begins with the division of a banana stalk found in the river. The turtle asks for the roots, while the monkey takes the leafy upper part because he considers it more advantageous.

After the diligent turtle had successfully borne the banana stalk to the shore, the cunning monkey swiftly claimed the verdant upper leaves for himself, leaving the turtle with naught but the humble roots.

> The monkey agreed to the arrangement, yet when the prize was finally brought to land, he reverted to self-interest, seizing the lush foliage and offering the turtle only the meager remnants below (Fansler, 1965).

This choice proves ironic, because the roots in fact thrive and bear fruit, whereas the upper part chosen by the monkey dies. The story's structure builds conflict through a misjudgment born of greed. By contrast, in the Indonesian tale, the conflict begins not with a dispute over a banana stalk but with a contest to plant banana trees. Both characters have the same opportunity from the outset. The turtle tends his plant diligently, whereas the monkey is portrayed as lazy, so that his tree bears no fruit.

> Days flowed into one another, each one a gentle passage of time for the turtle as he carefully nurtured his beloved *Palkon* banana tree.... And the monkey's banana trees grew large but bore no fruit (Sri, 2018).

This change reflects a transformation of the motif from a dispute over rights into a contrast between hard work and laziness. The Indonesian version thus places greater emphasis on work ethic as the cause of a character's success. The second transformation is evident in the development of the conflict. Both stories depict the monkey using his ability to climb trees to take all the bananas, to the turtle's detriment. The narrative motif remains the same: the abuse of physical advantage to exploit a weaker character. However, the manner of presentation differs. The Philippine version shows the monkey deliberately humiliating the turtle by throwing banana peels at him, whereas the Indonesian version emphasizes verbal insults. This change demonstrates that cultural transformation does not alter the core of the motif but changes the form in which the conflict is expressed. The next transformation is most apparent in the resolution of the story. In the Indonesian tale, retribution is carried out: the turtle shakes the banana tree until it topples and falls on the monkey.

> With a vigorous shake, he seized the trunk, and in an instant... thud! The banana tree succumbed to gravity's relentless embrace. The monkey fell, crushed beneath the banana tree. "Mercy, turtle, help me! I am truly sorry!" said the monkey (Sri, 2018).

This resolution is brief and direct. The conflict ends once the monkey suffers the consequences of his actions. The story then closes with regret over the loss of a friend. The Philippine version, by contrast, expands into a far more complex narrative. After a sharpened stick pierces the monkey, the story does not end. The monkey still tries to take revenge but is repeatedly outwitted by the turtle through a series of ruses, such as chili peppers called the king's fruit, a snake mistaken for a royal sash, and a voice from inside a coconut shell that leads the monkey to beat himself to death. This series of episodes shows that the Philippine story develops the motif of cleverness more prominently. The turtle does not merely retaliate against the monkey's treatment; he becomes a clever character able to defeat his opponent through mental acuity. In another version, the conflict continues even after the monkey's death, when the

monkeys try the turtle for selling the flesh of a fellow monkey. The turtle again escapes through cleverness, pretending to fear being thrown into a lake, so that the monkeys unwittingly set him free. Another difference appears in characterization. In the Indonesian tale, the turtle is portrayed as patient and diligent, whereas the monkey is cast as greedy and lazy. Consequently, the turtle's success is understood as the result of hard work that ultimately earns justice. In the Philippine version, by contrast, the turtle is not only patient but also highly manipulative. He retaliates against the monkey's treatment with a strategy full of deception.

These findings demonstrate that both tales preserve a universal narrative motif: the weak character who triumphs over a strong and greedy adversary. However, cultural localization produces distinct forms of representation. The Indonesian version simplifies the conflict, thereby emphasizing character education through themes of hard work, patience, and remorse for greed. In contrast, the Philippine version expands the story into a series of episodes that showcase cleverness, portraying the turtle as a trickster who repeatedly overcomes threats through strategy and wit.

A similar transformation of narrative motifs is evident in the tale pair *Si Monyet dan Seekor Buaya* (The Monkey and the Crocodile) from Indonesia and The Monkey and the Crocodile from the Philippines. Both stories share the same basic motif, in which the protagonist confronts the threat of death through verbal cleverness. In each tale, a character who initially occupies a weak position reverses the situation by relying on mental acuity rather than physical strength. This similarity suggests that the motif of the clever escape is a widely distributed narrative pattern within the oral traditions of Southeast Asian societies. However, as the motif evolved in different cultures, each society introduced variations in story structure, conflict development, and cultural orientation.

In the Indonesian tale, the conflict is straightforward and unfolds in a single sequence of events. The story begins when a monkey wishes to cross a river and accepts help from a crocodile. Midway, the crocodile reveals his true intention: to eat the monkey's heart. The monkey immediately responds with a ruse. He claims that his heart has been left behind in a tree and asks the crocodile to return to the riverbank. Once safely in the tree, the monkey reveals that he has tricked the crocodile.

> "Hey, crocodile, foolish creature. Your wit is as shallow as the waters I dwell in. My heart does not reside in some distant realm; it beats steadfastly within me, and I have no desire to become part of your banquet." "I was merely jesting, dear crocodile, just a playful trick!, Hahaha," answered the monkey. The crocodile left the impish figure behind, full of frustration at having been outsmarted (Putri, 2021).

This story structure demonstrates that the conflict is resolved through a single clever act that immediately eliminates the threat. Accordingly, the narrative pattern of the Indonesian version is linear, concise, and focused on conveying the moral message that cleverness can overcome deceit and violence. In contrast, the Philippine version develops the motif into a more complex narrative structure. The threat to the protagonist is not a single conflict; instead, it triggers a series of events that showcase a

contest of wits between the two characters. In other words, while the Indonesian version presents cleverness as the story's final resolution, the Philippine version portrays cleverness as a force continually tested throughout the plot. This pattern reflects the more episodic nature of Philippine folktales, which allows greater scope for the development of the clever character. Putri and Kartikasari (2024) explains that these kinds of transformation patterns are common in story characterization and plot.

The next transformation appears in the characterization. In the Indonesian tale, the monkey serves as a clever protagonist, while the crocodile is the antagonist who relies on physical strength. When the crocodile declares his intention to eat the monkey's heart, the monkey is seemingly helpless, perched on the crocodile's back in the middle of the river. However, this situation is reversed through the monkey's verbal wit. In other words, the protagonist's victory is achieved not through strength but through the ability to think quickly in a critical situation. This characterization reflects a transformation of cultural values that regard reason as a means of survival. The clever character is not portrayed as one who attacks his opponent but as one who escapes danger by negotiating and exploiting his adversary's weaknesses. Ultimately, the crocodile fails to achieve his goal not because he is weaker, but because he readily falls for the monkey's ruse.

When compared with the tale pair *Kura-Kura dan Monyet*, an intriguing pattern of transformation emerges. In the first story, the turtle is the clever character, whereas in the second, the monkey takes that role. This change in character function demonstrates that, in Southeast Asian folktale traditions, the identity of the clever figure is not tied to any specific animal. What is preserved is not the character itself but the narrative function, that is, a character who overcomes a threat through cleverness. Accordingly, the process of cultural transformation operates at the level of character representation without altering the underlying structure of the narrative motif.

These findings reinforce the perspective in comparative literature that similarities between stories across countries do not indicate a direct relationship of imitation. Instead, they show how a narrative motif is inherited, adapted, and reinterpreted according to each society's sociocultural context. In the Indonesian and Philippine contexts, this process of transformation produces stories that retain a shared narrative framework as part of the Austronesian cultural heritage while presenting distinct cultural expressions through character development, conflicts, resolutions, and an emphasis on moral values.

Table 1. Synthesis of Cultural Transformation in Indonesian and Philippine Folktales

Comparative Aspect	*Kura-Kura dan Monyet* (Indonesia) – *The Monkey and the Turtle* (Philippines)	*Monyet dan Buaya* (Indonesia) – *The Monkey and the Crocodile* (Philippines)	Pattern of Cultural Transformation
Narrative Motif	A weak character (the turtle) defeats a greedy character (the monkey) through cleverness.	A weak character (the monkey) saves himself from a threat (the crocodile) through cleverness.	The basic story motif is preserved but interpreted in different conflicts.
Development of Conflict	The Indonesian version presents a simple conflict, whereas the Philippine version develops it into several episodes of retaliation and trickery.	The Indonesian version presents a single main conflict, whereas the Philippine version develops it across several stages.	Philippine folktales have a more complex (episodic) structure, whereas Indonesian folktales are linear.
Character Roles	The turtle becomes the clever character who defeats the monkey	The monkey becomes the clever character who outwits the crocodile	The *trickster* function is preserved, but the identity of the character may change according to local tradition
Story Resolution	The Indonesian version ends with a simple punishment, whereas the Philippine version presents a longer and more dramatic retribution.	The Indonesian version ends once the monkey is safe, whereas the Philippine version extends the sequence of conflict resolution.	The transformation appears in the expansion of the resolution structure.
Cultural Values	The Indonesian version highlights hard work, patience, and honesty; the Philippine version more strongly highlights cleverness as a strategy for confronting injustice.	The Indonesian version emphasizes intelligence as a means of saving oneself, whereas the Philippine version highlights cleverness that is continually tested in various situations.	A shift in the emphasis of moral values occurs conforming to the cultural context of each society.

Cultural Localization as a Shaper of Identity in Indonesia and Philippines Folktales

The analysis addressing the first research question reveals that shared narrative motifs in Indonesian and Philippine folktales do not produce identical story identities. Although both countries inherited relatively similar story patterns as part of the Austronesian folktale heritage, each society engaged in a process of localization, resulting in tales that reflect distinct cultural worldviews. Thus, the identity of a folktale is shaped not only by the narrative motifs it employs but also by the cultural values emphasized during storytelling. This perspective aligns with comparative literature, which views the transmission of story motifs as a process of adaptation and cultural negotiation rather than mere imitation between societies.

The first form of cultural localization is evident in the orientation toward moral education that each tale constructs. This orientation typically embodies ethical values such as honesty, courage, and loyalty, among others (Rahmawati et al., 2026). In Indonesian folktales, conflicts primarily serve as vehicles for character development.

Diligent characters achieve success, while greedy or dishonest characters face the consequences of their actions. Accordingly, story resolutions tend to be brief, as the primary function of the folktale is to convey a moral message directly to the reader (Kosimova et al., 2026) . This structure demonstrates that Indonesian folktales treat the narrative as a means of internalizing social values such as hard work, patience, honesty, and responsibility. In contrast, Philippine folktales exhibit a different orientation. Moral values are conveyed not through a simple resolution of conflict but through a sequence of events showcasing the protagonist's cleverness in confronting various threats. The clever character has ample opportunity to test strategies, assess situations, and exploit opponents' weaknesses. As a result, the story becomes longer and more episodic. This storytelling mode suggests that Philippine society regards cleverness not merely as a character trait but also as a cultural capacity for surviving in uncertain situations.

Another form of localization appears in how the stories portray social relationships. In Indonesian folktales, relationships between characters begin with cooperation or mutual assistance but later break down because of violations of social norms, such as greed or betrayal. Consequently, conflict reminds readers that social relationships can be maintained only if every individual respects others' rights. This perspective suggests that the constructed cultural identity emphasizes social harmony rather than competition among characters. In contrast, Philippine folktales depict more dynamic social relations. Friendship is not always a safe haven but rather an arena for negotiating interests, rivalry, and cleverness. The protagonist does not rely on the help of others but depends on the ability to read situations to protect himself. Therefore, a character's success is determined more by individual skill than by the quality of social relationships with others. This localization reveals that cultural identity in Philippine folktales places greater emphasis on the capacity to adapt to a competitive social environment.

Localization In also evident in how each society interprets cleverness. In Indonesian folktales, cleverness is portrayed as a means of escaping danger or achieving justice. Once this goal is accomplished, the conflict is promptly resolved, and social equilibrium is restored. In contrast, Philippine folktales depict cleverness as a defining character trait that is consistently demonstrated across multiple episodes. The clever character does not cease after solving a single problem but encounters new challenges that require different strategies. This difference illustrates that while both societies value cleverness, they assign distinct cultural meanings to its function.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Indonesian and Philippine folktales retain the same narrative motifs as part of the oral traditions of Austronesian societies but undergo transformation as they develop in different cultural contexts. These transformations appear in the development of conflict, characterization, patterns of story resolution, and the emphasis of moral values, without altering the underlying structure of the narrative motif. At the same time, the process of cultural localization shapes the distinctive identity of each tradition. Indonesian folktales place greater emphasis on hard work, social harmony, and character education through a simple, linear story structure. In contrast, Philippine folktales develop more complex narratives by positioning

cleverness as a strategy of adaptation in the face of varied situations. These findings affirm that shared narrative motifs do not indicate a direct relationship of imitation but reflect processes of adaptation, transformation, and cultural negotiation that yield different local representations. The study thus contributes to the development of comparative literary scholarship, particularly by explaining how the transformation of narrative motifs serves as a mechanism of cultural identity formation in the folktale traditions of kindred societies in Southeast Asia.

This study has limitations, as it analyzes only two pairs of Indonesian and Philippine folktales and therefore does not fully represent the diversity of narrative motifs that circulate in Southeast Asia. In addition, the analysis focused on the transformation of narrative motifs and cultural localization. It thus did not examine the distribution of motifs according to international folklore classification or the networks of cultural transmission underlying their emergence. Future research is therefore advised to expand the data corpus to include folktales from other Austronesian countries, such as Malaysia, Brunei, and Thailand, so that patterns of narrative motif transformation can be mapped more comprehensively.

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