

Character Education Transfusion of the Bubuksah and Gagang Aking Stories in Building Ecological Awareness and Simplicity of Modern Life

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Article Info

Article history:

Accepted: 14 July 2026

Published: 03 Agustus 2026

Keywords:

Character building;
Open and I will do it.;
Ecological.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the character education values in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story and its relevance in building ecological awareness and simplicity of life in the present day. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach through observations at Penataran Temple, Surowono Temple, and Selomangleng Cave, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis is carried out through reduction, presentation, and concluding with triangulation of sources and techniques. The results show that the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story contains values of religiosity, responsibility, self-control, environmental concern, tolerance, wisdom, and simplicity of life. These values are relevant to be implemented through local culture-based education to strengthen character, ecological awareness, and sustainable lifestyles.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education is a crucial foundation for developing human resources with integrity, responsibility, and concern for the environment and social life. Amidst globalization and modernization, education is no longer solely oriented toward academic achievement but also directed toward character development in students, enabling them to wisely face the challenges of the times. According to Harrison (2025), character education is a systematic process for developing moral and social virtues through the continuous internalization of ethical values. Therefore, character education not only functions to shape intelligent individuals but also fosters moral awareness, social awareness, and environmental responsibility. History education plays a strategic role in instilling character values because students not only learn about past events but also gain exemplary moral values that can be implemented in their daily lives (Wiratama, 2021).

The development of modern society presents various issues that indicate a weakening implementation of character values. The phenomenon of environmental damage, increasing consumer behavior, and decreasing concern for environmental sustainability are challenges that require serious attention. Ecological awareness is understood as a form of individual understanding and sensitivity to the environment that encourages sustainable behavior in maintaining the balance of nature (Sihombi, 2025). However, the development of technology, social media, and instant culture has actually encouraged the emergence of lifestyles oriented towards excessive consumption, unwise use of

resources, and a reduced appreciation for the principles of simple living. These conditions indicate the need to strengthen character education that can instill concern for the environment while building awareness to live a simpler and more responsible life. (Afandi, 2015) emphasized that contextual learning strategies can increase student engagement in understanding the values learned, thus making character formation more effective. Furthermore, the development of history education based on field experiences through observational studies and museum internships also strengthens the internalization of character values, cultural identity, and concern for historical heritage (Widiatmoko, Budiono, & Afandi, 2024).

One alternative for strengthening character education is through the utilization of local wisdom inherited from folklore and Indonesian manuscripts. Traditional stories serve not only as entertainment but also as a medium for transmitting moral, social, spiritual, and cultural values that remain relevant to today's society. One story embodying these values is Bubuksah–Gagang Aking. This story depicts two characters with different life choices, but both teach the importance of self-control, simplicity, spirituality, and a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Bubuksah is depicted as living in harmony with nature and possessing a high spiritual awareness, while Gagang Aking demonstrates an ascetic attitude, living simply, and being able to control material desires. These values reflect the importance of building character that is oriented not only toward personal interests but also toward the sustainability of life together. Utilizing local history and cultural heritage as learning resources is considered capable of strengthening students' understanding of character values while increasing appreciation for the nation's cultural identity (Wiratama et al., 2022). Furthermore, a study on the development of the batik industry in Kediri shows that local wisdom contains values of hard work, cultural preservation, and social responsibility that are relevant for integration into character education (Widiatmoko & Wiratama, 2022).

Many studies have been conducted on folklore-based character education. (Zuhdi, 2019) explains that classical Javanese manuscripts contain teachings about honesty, responsibility, and patience that are still relevant for integration into modern education. Meanwhile, Suyatno (2020) emphasizes that Nusantara folklore has narrative power in shaping integrity, leadership, and loyalty through the exemplary behavior of its characters. Research (Nurgiyantoro, 2018) also shows that literary works can be an effective medium for moral reflection because they provide space for students to understand human values more deeply. Other research by Nurhadi (2021) shows that the use of classical literature in learning can increase students' ethical and social awareness through a reflective reading process. Taken together, these studies confirm that folklore and classical literature in general are effective vehicles for moral and character education, and they sharpen the research problem addressed in this study: whether a specific, place-bound story such as Bubuksah–Gagang Aking can be systematically read not only as a source of character values in the abstract, but as a resource that can be deliberately transfused into concrete ecological awareness and simple-living practices for present-day society, a question that the following review of Bubuksah–Gagang Aking-specific studies shows remains largely unanswered.

Specifically, research on the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story has been conducted from various perspectives. (Fuad, 2017) concluded that the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking relief at Penataran Temple contains character education values in the form of simplicity, self-control, and spirituality. The relief at Surowono Temple also shows that the two figures represent steadfastness in life, patience,

and life choices oriented towards spirituality. (As'ari, 2022) Even developed into a learning medium in the form of a comic scrapbook and has proved that the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story is effective in instilling the values of religiosity, responsibility, and simplicity in students. However, most previous research has focused on identifying character values or developing learning media, so there has been little study of how these values are transformed to address ecological and lifestyle issues in modern society.

Based on these conditions, this study offers a novelty through the concept of character education value transfusion, namely the process of transforming the values contained in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story into the lives of today's society. The study not only identifies the character values contained in the story, but also analyzes their relevance in building ecological awareness and encouraging a simple lifestyle as a response to increasing environmental damage and consumer culture. Therefore, this study aims to identify the values of character education in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story, analyze the process of transfusing these values into the lives of modern society, and explain its role in building ecological awareness and simplicity of life through an educational approach based on local wisdom. This novelty is significant because, unlike prior studies that generally stop at identifying character values or producing learning media, this research explicitly formulates and operationalizes a value-transfusion framework: a structured process of interpreting, translating, and contextualizing narrative values from the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story into concrete ecological awareness and simple-living practices applicable to present-day society, thereby offering both a conceptual and practical contribution distinct from earlier, more descriptive studies of the same story.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical approach. This approach was chosen because it can deeply reveal the meaning, values, and messages contained in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story and connect them to contemporary social conditions. The research is not oriented toward statistical measurement, but rather toward understanding social and cultural phenomena through the interpretation of data obtained from various sources.

The research locations included Penataran Temple in Blitar Regency, Surowono Temple in Kediri Regency, and Selomangleng Cave in Kediri City. These three locations were chosen because they feature reliefs depicting the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story, making them the primary sources for identifying the character education values contained within them. In addition to observing the reliefs, the research also involved resource persons with knowledge of history, culture, and character education to strengthen data interpretation.

Research data were obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted to assess the relief and environment of cultural heritage sites, while interviews were conducted with cultural experts, cultural site managers, academics, and education practitioners. Documentation in the form of manuscripts, scientific articles, photographs, and literature related to the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story served as supporting data.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. All data obtained were classified based on themes related to character education values, ecological awareness, and simplicity of life, then interpreted using a

character education approach and local wisdom. To ensure the validity of the data, the study applied source triangulation techniques, technical triangulation, and discussions with resource persons who have competence in the fields of history, culture, and education. Through these stages, it is hoped that the results of the study will be able to provide a comprehensive picture of the process of transfusion of character education values in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story as an effort to build ecological awareness and simplicity of life in the present day.

3. RESULTS

1. Character Education Contained in the Story of Bubuksah–Gagang Aking

The Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story represents character education through the depiction of two main characters who have different lifestyles, but both contain moral values that can be used as guidelines in life. The differences in the characters of the two characters do not indicate a conflict between right and wrong, but rather show that character formation can be done through various paths as long as it remains oriented towards virtuous values. In this context, this story not only functions as a traditional literary work, but also as a character learning medium that can provide reflection on how humans respond to life, others, and their surroundings. This view is in line with the concept of character education that emphasizes the process of internalizing moral values so that individuals can understand, appreciate, and apply them in everyday life (Aisyi, 2025).

The author's interpretation suggests that Bubuksah's character embodies the values of independence, courage in making decisions, and consistency in one's chosen beliefs. Bubuksah is not portrayed as a dependent figure, but rather as an individual who lives his life based on the principles he believes in. This attitude reflects that a person's character is built through the ability to make life choices while being responsible for the consequences of those choices. This value of independence has high relevance in character education because it can shape individuals who are not easily influenced by environmental pressures or cultural developments that tend to prioritize short-term interests. Thus, the character of Bubuksah illustrates that character education teaches not only compliance with rules, but also the courage to uphold life's principles responsibly (Fuad, 2017).

Meanwhile, Gagang Aking emphasizes the values of simplicity, self-control, discipline, and asceticism. Gagang Aking's life choices demonstrate his ability to limit his desires and avoid material pursuits as his primary goal. The author interprets this attitude as a form of character education that emphasizes self-control as the foundation for wise behavior. In modern life, when society is faced with a consumerist culture and a lifestyle oriented toward fulfilling unlimited desires, the character demonstrated by Gagang Aking is highly relevant to instill in the younger generation. Simplicity does not mean rejecting progress, but rather the ability to use resources proportionally according to need. This value also forms the basis for developing an environmentally conscious character because individuals who are able to control their desires tend not to over-exploit resources. The use of local historical and cultural heritage as learning resources also strengthens the internalization of character values through students' contextual experiences in understanding their regional cultural heritage (Bustami, Afandi, & et al., 2022).

In addition to depicting the characters of each character, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story also shows that character education is built through respect for diverse ways of thinking. The

two characters choose different paths in life, but both are still directed towards the same goal, namely achieving virtue. The author interprets that these differences teach the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and the ability to accept diverse perspectives in social life. These values are important because character education is not essentially aimed at standardizing individual behavior, but rather forming people who can respect differences without losing their moral identity. Thus, the Powdersah–Gagang Aking story provides an understanding that diverse life choices can be a learning tool for building a more inclusive and harmonious society (Nurgiyantoro, 2018).

Furthermore, the author views that character education in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story is not only oriented towards interpersonal relationships, but also towards the relationship between humans and the environment. The simplicity of life, self-control, and the ability to limit needs depicted through the two characters form the basis for the birth of ecological awareness. These characters teach that humans are part of nature and therefore have a responsibility to maintain environmental balance. Wise use of resources and the ability to restrain consumptive attitudes are forms of character education implementation that not only produce moral individuals but also individuals who have a concern for environmental sustainability. The study of spices in the Warunggahan Inscription shows that local knowledge of the Indonesian people reflects a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, so that cultural heritage can be used as a medium for character learning as well as ecological awareness (Alkari, Afandi, & Wiratama, 2024). Therefore, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story shows that character education based on local wisdom has a broad scope to address various ecological issues faced by modern society (Sihombi, 2025).

Based on this interpretation, the author argues that the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story has great potential as a source of contextual character education. Values such as independence, responsibility, simplicity, self-control, tolerance, and concern for the environment are characteristics that remain relevant even though the story originates from the past. The story's strength lies in conveying values through the characters' experiences, so that character learning takes place reflectively, rather than through direct delivery of norms. This approach allows students to understand the reasons behind an action and connect it to various contemporary life issues. This is in line with the view (Wiratama & et al., 2021) that the study of history and the dynamics of thought in society not only function to explain past events but also serve as a means of developing critical thinking, national values, and character in students. Thus, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story serves not only as a cultural heritage but also as a medium for character education that can bridge local values with the character development needs of modern society (As'ari, 2022).

2. Implementation of Character Education in the Story of Bubuksah–Gagang Aking

The application of character education contained in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story shows that local cultural values still have high relevance in modern society. This story not only conveys moral teachings conceptually, but also provides concrete examples of how a person behaves towards themselves, others, and the environment. The author interprets that character education in the story can be applied through habituating behavior that reflects independence, responsibility, self-control, simplicity, and concern for others and nature. Thus, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story can be a source of learning that supports the formation of community character in a sustainable manner, both in the family environment, education, and social life (Aisyi, 2025).

The value of independence represented by the figure of Bubuksah can be applied in society through the ability to make responsible decisions without relying entirely on others. The author interprets that a society with an independent character will be better able to face social change, technological developments, and various life challenges without losing moral principles. Independence also encourages the emergence of self-confidence, responsibility for every decision, and the ability to solve problems wisely. These values are important to be instilled from an early age so that individuals not only have intellectual intelligence but also character maturity to face the dynamics of modern life (Harrison, 2025).

On the other hand, the value of simplicity demonstrated by Gagang Aking can be realized through a lifestyle that prioritizes needs over desires. The author views simplicity as a form of self-control that is highly relevant amidst the growing consumer culture. People who can practice simplicity will be wiser in utilizing resources, avoid excessive behavior, and demonstrate a concern for environmental sustainability. Simplicity also teaches the importance of gratitude, living in moderation, and not using material possessions as the primary measure of success. Therefore, this value not only shapes individual character but also contributes to the creation of a more balanced and sustainable social life.

The application of character education in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story can also be realized through strengthening the culture of cooperation, tolerance, and respect for differences. The two characters in the story show that each individual has different life choices, but can still walk towards the same goal, namely virtue. The author interprets that this message is very relevant in the lives of Indonesian society, which has diverse ethnicities, religions, cultures, and worldviews. Character education based on the value of tolerance will shape a society that can appreciate differences, avoid conflict, and develop an attitude of mutual respect in community life. The development of learning media based on local wisdom also shows that regional cultural values can be an effective means of instilling character while increasing students' awareness of the environment and local identity (Permana & Afandi, 2023). These values also strengthen social cohesion as an important capital in building a harmonious life (Nurgiyantoro, 2018).

Furthermore, the application of character education values in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story is closely related to the formation of ecological awareness. The author interprets that a simple lifestyle, the ability to control desires, and respect for nature are the foundation for the emergence of environmentally friendly behavior. The implementation of these values can be realized through the habit of maintaining environmental cleanliness, reducing the use of disposable items, utilizing resources wisely, and instilling concern for environmental sustainability in everyday life. Thus, character education not only produces individuals with good morals, but also individuals who have responsibility for environmental sustainability. Strengthening political education based on national values also shows that internalization of character through community-based activities can increase social responsibility, participation, and awareness of citizens in community life (Wiratama, Afandi, & Budianto, 2024). This is in line with the view that ecological awareness is part of character formation that must be developed sustainably (Sihombi, 2025).

Based on this interpretation, the author argues that the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story has great potential to be implemented as a medium for character education in society because it contains universal values that remain relevant today. The values of independence, responsibility, simplicity,

tolerance, self-control, and concern for the environment are character traits needed to face the various challenges of modern life. Therefore, preserving the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story is not only important as an effort to preserve cultural heritage, but also as a strategy for building a society with character, culture, and strong social and ecological awareness. Through a continuous process of internalizing values, this story can be an alternative for strengthening character education based on local wisdom amidst increasingly complex societal developments (As'ari, 2022). A more critical reading, however, must acknowledge that transplanting these values into the context of modern formal education is not automatic or unproblematic. Modern education operates under standardized curricula, measurable competency targets, and time-constrained instructional formats that differ fundamentally from the reflective, experience-based transmission of values found in oral and relief-based storytelling traditions. Values such as self-control and simplicity, which in the story emerge gradually through lived choices and consequences, risk being reduced to normative slogans if simply inserted into textbooks or moral lessons without a pedagogical strategy that preserves their reflective and experiential character. Furthermore, the consumerist and digitally mediated environment faced by today's students presents pressures that did not exist in the world depicted by the story, so implementation requires deliberate pedagogical mediation, such as guided discussion, case-based reflection, or project-based learning connecting the story to real environmental and consumption dilemmas, rather than direct transfer of the narrative's moral content. Without such critical adaptation, there is a risk that the values conveyed remain at the level of cultural appreciation rather than being genuinely internalized as character.

3. Ecological Value in the Story of Bubuksah and Gagang Aking

The Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story not only contains character education values, but also represents ecological values that are still relevant to various environmental issues today. The ecological values in the story are reflected through the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, which is manifested in simple living behavior, self-control, and wise use of resources. The author interprets that nature in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story is not merely a setting where events take place, but an inseparable part of human life. Therefore, the relationship between humans and the environment is depicted as an interdependent relationship, so that the balance of nature must be maintained through responsible behavior. This view is in line with the concept of ecological awareness that places humans as part of the ecosystem, not as rulers who are free to exploit nature (Sihombi, 2025).

The author's interpretation suggests that ecological values are most strongly reflected in the principle of living in moderation practiced by both characters, particularly Gagang Aking. This attitude illustrates the ability to limit one's needs so as not to overuse natural resources. The simplicity demonstrated is not a form of poverty, but rather an awareness of using only what is truly needed. In the context of modern life, this value is crucial given the increasing consumption patterns that contribute to various environmental damages, such as waste accumulation, natural resource exploitation, and increased carbon emissions. Thus, the story of Bubuksah and Gagang Aking teaches that environmental preservation can begin with changes in individual behavior through controlling desires and using resources responsibly (Sutadi, 2023).

In addition to simplicity, ecological values are also evident in the attitude of respecting nature as part of life. The author views the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story as demonstrating a non-

exploitative relationship between humans and the environment. Nature is positioned as a living space whose balance must be maintained because human survival depends on its preservation. This view reflects the Javanese philosophy that views humans and nature as a unity that influences each other. Therefore, preserving the environment is not only understood as an ecological obligation but also as a form of moral responsibility towards life. This value is relevant to the concept of sustainable development, which emphasizes the importance of balance between human needs and natural preservation (Zhang, 2024).

The author also interprets that the ecological values in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story are closely related to the ability to control desires. Environmental damage is essentially caused not only by technological advances, but also by humans' desire to continue to increase consumption without considering its impact on nature. Through the character of Gagang Aking who chooses an ascetic life and the character of Bubuksah who lives in harmony with the environment, this story reflects that self-control is an important foundation in building environmentally friendly behavior. Individuals who can control their desires will be wiser in using energy, reducing waste, and utilizing resources according to their needs. This value shows that ecological awareness actually begins with the formation of individual character before being manifested in broader social actions (Toncev, 2025).

Furthermore, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story demonstrates that environmental preservation is inseparable from the preservation of local culture. The author argues that folklore is an effective medium for transmitting ecological values because it conveys messages through characters, symbols, and storylines that are easily understood by the community. A local culture-based approach has the advantage of being closer to the community's social experiences than conveying theoretical environmental concepts. Therefore, utilizing the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story as an educational medium can strengthen ecological awareness while fostering a sense of ownership of the archipelago's cultural heritage. This demonstrates that cultural preservation and environmental preservation are two mutually supportive aspects in building a sustainable society (Adikusuma, 2021).

Based on this interpretation, the author argues that the ecological values in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story have a very strong relevance to environmental challenges in the modern era. The values of simplicity, self-control, respect for nature, and wise use of resources are principles that can be the foundation for building ecological behavior in society. This story not only conveys a moral message about the relationship between humans and nature, but also offers the view that environmental sustainability can only be achieved if humans can control their desires and view nature as a partner in life that must be protected together. Thus, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story deserves to be seen as a form of local wisdom that contributes to strengthening ecological education and building the character of a community that cares about the environment.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story is one of the Indonesian cultural heritages that contains character education values that are still relevant to modern society. These values are reflected through the characters of the two figures who show different ways of life, but both lead to the formation of a person with integrity. Bubuksah represents

an independent, responsible, and brave character in defending his beliefs, while Gagang Aking depicts a simple lifestyle, self-control, discipline, and the ability to limit life's needs. These character differences show that character education is not only built through one form of example, but can be realized through various life choices as long as it remains based on moral values, responsibility, and virtue. Thus, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story has the potential as a character learning medium that can instill the values of religiosity, responsibility, tolerance, simplicity, and concern for the environment.

The application of character education values in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story also shows high relevance in today's society. The values of independence, self-control, simplicity, and responsibility can be implemented in daily life through behavioral habits that reflect the wise use of resources, the ability to make responsible decisions, and an attitude of respect for others and the environment. This story proves that local wisdom not only functions as a cultural heritage that needs to be preserved, but also as a source of education that can answer social challenges in the modern era. Through a continuous process of internalization of values, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story can be an alternative in strengthening character education based on local culture, both in educational environments and in community life.

In addition to containing character education values, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story also contains ecological values that have strong relevance to various environmental issues today. These values are reflected in the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, a simple lifestyle, the ability to control desires, and the proportional use of resources. This story provides an understanding that environmental preservation does not only depend on technological advances or government policies, but is also influenced by an individual's character in viewing and treating nature. The ecological awareness contained in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story teaches that humans are part of the ecosystem and therefore have a moral responsibility to maintain environmental balance. Therefore, the ecological values in the story can be a foundation for building environmentally friendly behavior and supporting the realization of a sustainable life.

Overall, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story not only has historical and cultural value, but also makes a real contribution to the development of character education and ecological awareness based on local wisdom. The values contained therein remain relevant to address the challenges of modern society faced with a moral crisis, an increasing consumer culture, and declining concern for the environment. Therefore, the preservation and utilization of the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story as a learning resource needs to be continuously developed so that the noble values inherited are not only part of the past, but can also be actualized as guidelines in forming a society with character, care for the environment, and can live a simple and responsible life.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Based on the research results, several recommendations can be used as considerations for various parties. For educators, the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story can be used as a learning resource based on local wisdom to strengthen character education, particularly in instilling the values of independence, responsibility, simplicity, self-control, tolerance, and environmental awareness. Integrating the story into the learning process is expected to provide a more contextual learning experience while introducing cultural heritage to students.

For educational institutions, the results of this research can serve as a basis for developing teaching materials and learning media that utilize folklore as a means of internalizing character values. The development of modules, educational comics, instructional videos, animations, and other digital media can be an alternative way to increase student interest in learning while broadening their understanding of local cultural values.

Local governments, cultural institutions, and cultural heritage site managers need more intensive efforts to preserve and promote the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story as part of their cultural heritage with educational value. This preservation is achieved not only through the conservation of temple reliefs, but also through various educational programs, cultural festivals, exhibitions, and the use of digital platforms to increase the story's awareness among the wider public, especially the younger generation.

For the community, the values contained in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story are expected to be applied in daily life through the practice of simple living, wise use of resources, and increased awareness of environmental sustainability. Implementing these values is expected to support the formation of a society with strong character and sustainable ecological awareness.

This study also has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The research was conducted at only three cultural heritage sites in the Kediri and Blitar area, so the interpretation of the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story and its values may not fully represent variations of the story found in other regions or manuscript versions. The analysis relies primarily on qualitative interpretation of reliefs, interviews, and documentation, which is inherently influenced by the researchers' subjective reading of the narrative; the study does not empirically measure the actual impact of value transfusion on students' character or ecological behavior in a classroom or community setting. Consequently, the conclusions regarding the relevance and effectiveness of these values for character and ecological education remain conceptual and interpretive rather than empirically tested.

For future researchers, this research is still limited to the study of character education, the application of character values, and ecological values in the Bubuksah–Gagang Aking story. Therefore, future research is suggested to develop studies on other aspects, such as semiotic analysis of reliefs, philological studies of manuscripts, implementation in school curriculum, development of learning media based on local culture, and the influence of folklore on the formation of students' character. Thus, research on Bubuksah–Gagang Aking can provide a broader contribution to the development of science, education, and the preservation of Indonesian culture.

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