

# *Marsialapari* As A Tradition of Mutual Cooperation in Relationship with National Characters for The Angkola Mandailing Community

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**Abstract.** The local wisdom of *marsialapari*, a mutual assistance activity in the Angkola Mandailing community, represents a form of local wisdom that remains prevalent today. This study aims to examine the values embedded in the local wisdom of *marsialapari* and their relevance to character education for the Angkola Mandailing community. This study employs a research and development method. The findings reveal that *marsialapari* as local wisdom is a mutual assistance activity that characterizes the Angkola Mandailing community as an expression of the philosophy of *holong* (compassion) and *domu* (togetherness) within the framework of the local wisdom encapsulated in *dalihan na tolu*. The tradition of *marsialapari* in the Angkola Mandailing community is closely linked to the development of the national character in Indonesia, which is founded on noble principles such as solidarity, the spirit of mutual cooperation, ethics, religiosity, and respect for diversity. These principles have the potential to create a generation that is moral, of high integrity, and of high quality, a tradition that remains well-maintained and practiced to day.

**Keywords:** *Marsiadapari, Mutual Cooperation, Angkola Mandailing, Local wisdom, National character*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this uncertain era, commonly referred to as the era of disruption, marked by significant changes due to technological innovation, it plays a role in influencing various aspects of human life, including social and cultural behavior of society (Schwab and Davis, 2018 and Danuri, 2019) see also Hermawan, 2019), Technology not only transforms the technical aspects of human life but also redefines individual and community identities, as well as our relationship with the natural world (Rosnay, 2000).

Rapid technological innovation can transform social behavior by communicating across geographical boundaries that impact perceptions of social issues. Technology raises new ethical challenges, such as data privacy, misuse of information, and responsible use of technology. Rosnay (2000) emphasized the importance of integrating ethics and responsibility in technology development.

On the micro scale, technological innovation can be seen in the agricultural sector. This change is especially visible in the agricultural management sector, where the use of modern technology, such as plowing machines, planting machines, and rice cutters, allows farmers to work individually without the need for collective labor. The tradition of mutual cooperation, a

characteristic of the Indonesian nation, has begun to erode with the emergence of various tools that can replace human labor.

Furthermore, Febriyanti (2022) asserts that, in this era, Indonesian culture struggles to filter the influx of foreign cultures that are incompatible with local values. This has resulted in a decline in the moral character of students, alongside an unstoppable surge in smartphone usage, equipped with advanced features such as cameras, video, and Internet access. This phenomenon is exacerbated by changes in fashion that no longer uphold the values of modesty, collectively posing a concerning impact on the resilience of national identity.

National identity, also known as national identity, is the personality or identity of a nation (Astawa, 2017). This identity distinguishes one nation from another. In the context of nationality, national identity refers to a country's culture, customs, and unique characteristics. In the context of statehood, national identity is reflected in state symbols such as Pancasila (Astawa, 2017).

Considering these impacts, concrete solutions are necessary to address these challenges. One of the proposed solutions is to explore learning resources aligned with the expectations of the Angkola Mandailing community, located in the South Tapanuli region (hereafter referred to as Tabagsel). Character building for the nation can be achieved by selecting educational materials relevant to fostering national character. These materials must be aligned with local wisdom.

In the Tabagsel region, these noble values are deeply embedded in local wisdom (Amal and Siregar, 2023), rich in educational significance. Utilizing this local wisdom can serve as a strategic effort to strengthen the national character. Furthermore, Law No. 32 of 2004 (a revision of Law No. 22 of 1999) concerning Regional Government grants authority to local governments to regulate and manage various aspects, including education.

This authority affects the management of education, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. With this autonomy, educational institutions (schools) can self-regulate through the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM). This approach aims to enhance schools' capacity to be more professional and of higher quality in delivering education tailored to local needs.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used research and development methods. Borg and Call (1984), Huitema (1990), Fraenkal and Wallen (1990), and Hasibuan (2010) stated that this R&D is oriented towards a cycle that begins with the collection of preliminary information, followed by the process of developing a product and its development process. Product development is tested and revised based on trial results, and a model is obtained that can be used to improve the learning process and results.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the *marsiapari* tradition in the Angkola Mandailing community is closely linked to the character building of the nation within this group. Mandailing culture, which is rich in local wisdom, serves as a model for character development in Indonesia, grounded in noble principles such as solidarity, a spirit of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), ethics, religiosity, and respect for diversity (Rahayu, 2024). By applying these values in daily life, Indonesia has the potential to foster a generation that is moral, highly integrated, and of excellent quality, traits that remain preserved and well implemented to this day.

The preservation and implementation of the *marsiapari* tradition underscores its philosophical and practical benefits. By upholding the principles of *marsiapari*, the sense of solidarity and unity continues to grow, fostering the development of a harmonious societal order.

Marsialapari is a cultural heritage site that represents the local wisdom of the Mandailing community. This tradition illustrates the practice of mutual assistance, particularly in farming activities, that are carried out on a rotational basis. Marsialapari follows a specific pattern in which each member of the group takes turns according to a schedule known as "taking turns by day." On the first day, the turn is given to one member of the group, and on the subsequent days, the turn shifts to other members until all members of the group have had their opportunity (Harvins, 2013). Owing to its rotational nature, this tradition is also referred to as rotational mutual cooperation (*gotong royong bergiliran*) (Wikipedia Bahasa Indonesia, the free encyclopedia).

Initially, marsialapari was intended to ease farming, but now its application has expanded to various types of work, such as building houses, houses of worship, and village infrastructure. This tradition has survived because of its benefits for communal life.

According to Harvins (2013), the term *marsialapari* is derived from the words *alap* (to call) and *ari* (day), with the addition of the prefix *mar* meaning "mutual" and *si* as a conjunction, forming the meaning "mutually taking a day." This tradition has been passed down through generations, and remains an integral part of Mandailing's local culture.

The marsialapari tradition contains deep philosophical values in Mandailing culture. This tradition reflects the spirit of unity and voluntary mutual assistance, as expressed in the proverb "weight is carried together, light is carried together." In the context of local wisdom *dalihan na tolu*, marsialapari emphasizes the principle of mutual assistance and works together, according to the Batak proverb "Tampak na do tajomna, rim ni tahi do gogona", which means that a heavy burden will feel light because it is carried out together with the spirit of mutual cooperation (Hilda, 2016; Oktavia, 2013).

Why does the local wisdom of Marsialapari survive today? The *marsialapari* tradition continues to endure because it has a profound philosophical meaning, reflecting values such as unity, brotherhood, and mutual assistance. According to the 2017 edition of the *Online KBBI* (Indonesian Dictionary), "brotherhood" refers to a state of very close friendship akin to a sibling relationship or family like bond. Similarly, unity and togetherness represent forms of collective harmony that foster a strong sense of solidarity among community members.

In *marsialapari*, mutual assistance involves helping one another alternately, thereby offering numerous advantages. For instance, tasks become easier and completed faster when performed collectively. Furthermore, the costs of farming can be significantly reduced because there is no need to hire additional laborers (Batubara, 2023).

By adhering to the principles of *marsialapari*, the spirit of mutual cooperation, unity, and solidarity thrives, fostering the creation of a harmonious society. This philosophy provides a strong foundation for social cohesion, ensuring its continued relevance even amidst societal changes and modernization.

The essence of **holong** (love and affection) and **domu** (unity) is reflected in cultural values that are an integral part of the Mandailing community's way of life. Harvina (2013) explains that love and unity have become a distinctive identity of the Mandailing people, embodied through the *adat dalihan na tolu*.

In the *dalihan na tolu* network, relationships between *Kahanggi* (siblings), *Mora* (in-laws), and *Anak Boru* (the party receiving marriage) foster solidarity, a sense of togetherness, and collective responsibility within community life. These relationships create strong social bonds, reinforcing mutual support and cooperation among members of the Mandailing community.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the tradition of mutual cooperation known as *marsialapari*, a form of local wisdom of the Angkola Mandailing community, has remained well preserved to day. This preservation is a blessing that should be appreciated, given that the *marsialapari* tradition carries profound philosophical values deeply rooted in the Mandailing community's culture.

This tradition reflects the spirit of unity and voluntary mutual assistance, as expressed in the proverb "*berat sama dipikul, ringan sama dijinjing*" (literally: "the heavy is carried together, the light is shared together"). Furthermore, *marsialapari* as a tradition of mutual cooperation can serve as an example of fostering Indonesia's national character development, grounded in noble principles such as solidarity, mutual cooperation, ethics, religiosity, and respect for diversity.

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