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Algorithmic folklore and cultural memory in Indonesia YouTube animated folk stories

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the transformation of Indonesian folk tales into digital animation on YouTube as a cultural ecosystem shaped by narrative adaptation, cultural memory, and algorithmic logic. Although recent studies have addressed digital folklore, animation, cultural memory, and platform-based cultural production, these domains are often examined separately. This study therefore analyzes animated folk tales simultaneously as narrative adaptations, cultural memory texts, and algorithmically mediated content. Using a qualitative digital cultural text analysis design, the study focuses on two YouTube channels, *Dongeng Kita* and *Gromore Studio Series*. Data were analyzed through narrative, symbolic, and digital media ecology analysis by examining story structure, characters, cultural symbols, metadata, thumbnails, audience engagement, and distribution strategies. The findings show that *Dongeng Kita* represents a pedagogical adaptation model characterized by linear plots, simplified conflicts, explicit moral resolutions, and an orientation toward children and family audiences. In contrast, *Gromore Studio Series* employs a cinematic-visual model through 3D animation, mythological atmosphere, localized cultural symbols, and stronger visual dramatization. More importantly, YouTube functions not merely as a medium for preserving folklore but as a cultural infrastructure that reshapes cultural memory through audiovisual adaptation and algorithmic visibility. Thematic consistency, keyword use, compilation formats, thumbnail design, and audience engagement are associated with observable patterns of platform visibility and circulation Thus, Indonesian folk tales are selectively remediated and recirculated according to creative and platform logics. In Indonesian language and literature education, these adaptations can support literary appreciation, cultural literacy, multimodal literacy, and critical understanding of digital narrative transformation among contemporary student audiences.

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Introduction

In contemporary digital culture, folklore increasingly circulates beyond oral performance and intergenerational transmission through digital platforms, particularly YouTube. Traditional narratives are transformed into videos, animation, social media content, and multimodal storytelling that combine narrative, visual, and technological elements. This development shows that digital folklore is not simply a digitized form of tradition, but a dynamic cultural practice in which stories are adapted, recontextualized,

and redistributed according to changing media environments and audience practices (Van, 2023). Folklore can therefore be understood as an active cultural practice in which traditions are repeatedly performed, interpreted, and reconstructed rather than simply transmitted in fixed forms (Bronner, 2019). Studies of digitally mediated oral traditions also indicate that audiovisual documentation can sustain cultural expression while simultaneously altering its functions, meanings, and modes of circulation (Niên & Ngân, 2025; Muhsyanur, 2025). Thus, the movement of folklore into digital environments involves both cultural preservation and transformation.

Animated folk tales constitute an important form of this transformation because animation integrates narrative adaptation with audiovisual representation. In digital animation, traditional stories are not merely reproduced but reorganized through changes in plot structure, characterization, conflict, visual setting, symbolic representation, and modes of storytelling. Research on Indonesian folk narratives and traditional performance in digital media shows that visual adaptation can revitalize cultural heritage through shorter, more attractive, and more accessible forms for contemporary audiences, particularly younger generations (Sari et al., 2025). Digital animation therefore functions as a process of remediation in which folk narratives are reinterpreted according to contemporary aesthetic and communicative conventions (Ndede, 2026).

This audiovisual transformation is closely related to cultural memory. Folklore carries collective representations of values, identities, historical imagination, social norms, and cultural symbols. The relationship between folklore and memory is rooted in processes of repetition, remembrance, and reinterpretation through which narrative continuity is maintained across generations (Mitchell, 2023). When folk tales are transformed into animation, these cultural elements are reconstructed through selection, simplification, reinterpretation, and visual representation. Digital animation can make cultural heritage more engaging and emotionally accessible, yet narrative simplification may simultaneously reduce the complexity of traditional meanings (Zhang, 2024). Within digital environments, cultural memory therefore becomes participatory, as audiences encounter, interpret, and recirculate mediated versions of traditional narratives. Animated folklore consequently does not merely preserve cultural memory but reorganizes how traditions are represented, encountered, and remembered in digital culture.

The circulation of animated folklore on YouTube, however, cannot be separated from the platform's algorithmic and infrastructural logic. YouTube functions as a cultural infrastructure that shapes content visibility, consumption patterns, and audience attention through recommendation mechanisms and algorithmic curation (Valtýsson, 2022). Engagement indicators such as views, likes, comments, watch duration, and audience responses are associated with patterns of content distribution and visibility, meaning that cultural narratives do not circulate under equal conditions (Siciliano, 2022). Algorithmic systems may therefore operate as cultural intermediaries that contribute to the visibility of particular narratives while others remain less prominent (Flinterud, 2023). For animated folklore, thematic consistency, metadata, keywords, thumbnails, compilation formats, and audience engagement can be examined as observable platform-oriented visibility practices associated with how stories are circulated, encountered, and remembered.

Recent scholarship has increasingly recognized relationships among digital folklore, cultural memory, multimodality, audience participation, and platform-mediated circulation. Digital folklore has been examined in relation to participation, nostalgia, interactivity, transmediality, and multimodality (Nutting, 2022; Melnyk et al., 2025), while the concept of algorithmic nostalgia demonstrates how digital platforms participate in the reproduction and circulation of memory through automated and affective processes (Kidd & McAvoy, 2023). Studies of animation and folklore likewise show that digital animation can reconstruct myths, revitalize cultural symbols, and communicate heritage to contemporary audiences (Chan, 2018; Sugihartono et al., 2024; Perera & Gunasekara, 2025). These studies suggest that YouTube should be understood not merely as a distribution channel, but as a digital cultural ecosystem in which narrative, memory, visuality, audiences, and platform mechanisms interact.

Despite these developments, existing research remains relatively fragmented. Folklore studies generally emphasize cultural transmission, preservation, and heritage continuity, whereas research on digital platforms tends to focus on algorithmic literacy, self-presentation, user behaviour, and platform visibility (DeVito et al., 2018; DeVito, 2021). Studies of animation, meanwhile, commonly emphasize visual adaptation and cultural representation without systematically connecting these processes to platform-mediated circulation. Consequently, limited attention has been given to how animated folk tales simultaneously undergo narrative transformation, reconstruction of cultural memory, audiovisual aestheticization, and platform-based circulation, particularly within the Indonesian YouTube ecosystem. Furthermore, the educational implications of these transformations for Indonesian language and literature learning remain insufficiently explored. This constitutes the central theoretical and empirical gap addressed in the present study.

To address this gap, the present study examines two Indonesian YouTube channels, *Dongeng Kita* and *Gromore Studio Series*, as comparative cases of digital folklore adaptation. The novelty of this study lies in integrating narrative transformation, cultural memory, audiovisual aesthetics, algorithmic culture, and educational implications within a single analytical perspective. The comparative analysis also identifies two distinct models of digital folklore adaptation: pedagogical adaptation and cinematic adaptation. *Dongeng Kita* represents a pedagogical adaptation model characterized by linear plots, simplified conflicts, explicit moral resolutions, accessible visual presentation, and an orientation toward children and family audiences. By contrast, *Gromore Studio Series* represents a cinematic adaptation model marked by three-dimensional animation, stronger visual dramatization, mythological atmosphere, localization of cultural symbols, and cinematic representations of legendary narratives. These models demonstrate that digital folklore adaptation is not a uniform process but is shaped by different narrative, aesthetic, cultural, audience, and platform strategies.

Accordingly, this study examines the narrative and audiovisual transformation of Indonesian animated folk tales, the reconstruction of cultural memory, and their circulation within YouTube's platform ecology, while also considering their implications for literary, cultural, multimodal, and critical digital literacy. Based on the research gap and the objectives of the study, three main questions guide the analysis. First**,** the study examines how Indonesian folk tales are transformed in terms of narrative and audiovisual presentation in *Dongeng Kita* and *Gromore Studio Series*. Second**,** it explores how the different adaptation styles of the two channels shape the reconstruction of cultural memory, including the representation of cultural values, symbols, and identities. Third**,** it investigates how platform visibility practices influence the circulation of animated folklore on YouTube and considers the relevance of these practices for Indonesian language and literature education.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using digital cultural text analysis to examine Indonesian animated folk tales within the YouTube platform ecosystem. The approach combines narrative analysis and digital media ecology to investigate how traditional stories are transformed into animation, how cultural memory is represented audiovisually, and how folklore circulates through audience engagement and algorithmic visibility. Within this framework, YouTube provides a digital environment in which regional folklore can be presented to contemporary audiences while oral traditions are preserved, transformed, and circulated through audience interaction and platform mechanisms (Turhan et al., 2025; Hervansyah et al., 2025).

Data Sources and Units of Analysis

Dongeng Kita and *Gromore Studio Series* were purposively selected based on five considerations: consistency of folklore production, audience size, content popularity, diversity of folk narratives, and differences in adaptation strategies. These criteria enabled comparison of two digital production models that transform and circulate Indonesian folklore within the same platform ecosystem.

Dongeng Kita consistently produces animated Indonesian folk tales and legends for children and family audiences. At the research snapshot on 19 May 2026, the channel had approximately 3.04 million subscribers, 723 uploaded videos, and 628.73 million cumulative views. Its accessible visual style, relatively linear narratives, simplified conflicts, and explicit moral messages make it relevant for examining a predominantly pedagogical mode of folklore adaptation can be seen in Figure 1.

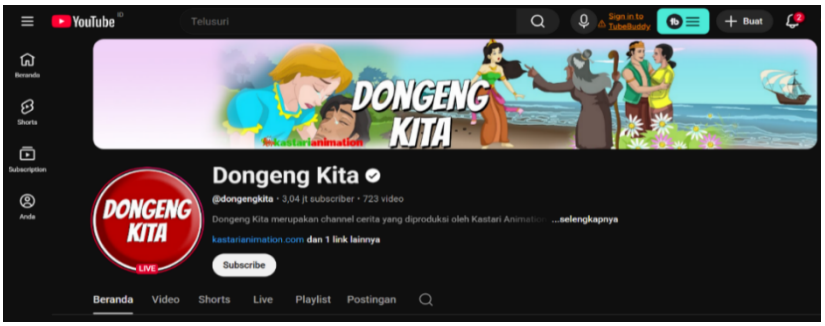


Fig. 1. Dongeng Kita Channel as Data Sources
[Source: https://www.youtube.com/@dongengkita]

Gromore Studio Series was selected as a contrasting case because it presents Indonesian folklore through 3D animation, stronger visual dramatization, mythological atmospheres, and localized cultural symbols. At the research snapshot on 11 May 2026, the channel had approximately 1.8 million subscribers

and 311.85 million cumulative views. Its audiovisual characteristics make it particularly relevant for examining a predominantly cinematic mode of folklore adaptation and the visual reconstruction of cultural memory can be seen in Figure 2.

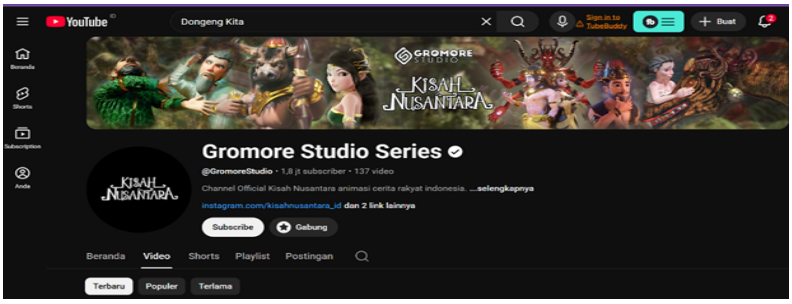


Fig. 2. *Gromore Studio Series* Channel as Data Sources
[Source: https://www.youtube.com/gromorestudio]

The two channels therefore provide contrasting but comparable cases. *Dongeng Kita* emphasizes pedagogical accessibility and explicit moral communication, whereas *Gromore Studio Series* emphasizes cinematic visualization, mythological atmosphere, and aesthetic-cultural representation. This contrast enables analysis of differences in narrative transformation, cultural memory, audience engagement, and algorithmic circulation.

Data Collection Techniques

The corpus consisted of 10 animated folk-tale videos, comprising five videos from *Dongeng Kita* and five from *Gromore Studio Series*. Videos were purposively selected based on four criteria: (1) adaptation of an Indonesian folk tale, legend, myth, or origin story; (2) animation as the primary storytelling medium; (3) identifiable narrative and cultural elements; and (4) sufficient digital circulation through views, likes, comments, or audience engagement.

Data were collected in May 2026, with platform snapshots recorded on 11 May 2026 for *Gromore Studio Series* and 19 May 2026 for *Dongeng Kita*. Each video was repeatedly viewed and documented through analytical notes, screenshots, metadata, and transcription of relevant segments. Data included story structure, characters, conflicts, cultural symbols, visual settings, views, likes, comments, and audience interaction.

The unit of analysis operated at two levels. The audiovisual-textual level included plot, characterization, conflict, resolution, narration, cultural symbols, landscapes, traditional clothing, moral values, and mythological elements. The platform level included titles, keywords, thumbnails, views, likes, comments, upload patterns, compilation formats, audience interaction, and observable recommendation-related features.

Coding was organized into four categories: Narrative Transformation, covering plot simplification, character changes, conflict modification, and resolution; Cultural memory, covering cultural symbols, moral values, landscapes, traditional clothing, and mythological elements; Platform ecosystems, covering views, likes, comments, upload patterns, and audience interaction; and Algorithmic culture, covering keywords, titles, thumbnails, thematic consistency, compilation formats, suggested videos, and visibility strategies. Coding was conducted iteratively by identifying relevant elements, assigning them to these categories, and comparing patterns within and across the two channels. The comparison subsequently revealed two dominant tendencies: pedagogical adaptation in *Dongeng Kita* and cinematic adaptation in *Gromore Studio Series*.

Data Analysis Techniques

Analytical validity was supported through repeated observation, systematic documentation, iterative coding, and cross-channel comparison. Interpretations were checked against audiovisual content, analytical notes, screenshots, metadata, and transcribed segments. The consistent use of the four coding categories also ensured that interpretations remained grounded in the empirical data.

Since YouTube metrics are dynamic, platform statistics were treated as time-specific snapshots. The reference dates were 11 May 2026 for *Gromore Studio Series* and 19 May 2026 for *Dongeng Kita*. At these dates, *Dongeng Kita* recorded approximately 3.04 million subscribers, 723 videos, and 628.73 million cumulative views, while *Gromore Studio Series* recorded approximately 1.8 million subscribers and 311.85 million cumulative views. Video-level views, likes, and comments were documented as part of the platform analysis and were retained according to the original dated research records. Numerical data reported in the text, tables, and figures therefore refer to the same research snapshots rather than later changes in YouTube statistics.

Results and Discussion

The findings identify two distinctive models of Indonesian digital folklore adaptation on YouTube. *Dongeng Kita* predominantly employs a pedagogical adaptation model, characterized by linear plots, simplified conflicts, explicit moral resolutions, and child–family orientation. In contrast, *Gromore Studio Series* predominantly demonstrates a cinematic adaptation model, characterized by 3D visualization, intensified conflict, mythological atmosphere, detailed character representation, and regional cultural localization. This distinction indicates that digital folklore transformation is not merely a transfer from oral narrative to animation but a process of cultural remediation in which narrative, audiovisual aesthetics, cultural memory, audience orientation, and platform practices jointly shape how folklore is represented and interpreted. The contribution of this study therefore lies in demonstrating that Indonesian digital folklore develops through different adaptation logics that influence not only cultural representation but also its potential use in language and literature education.

Narrative Transformation: Pedagogical and Cinematic Adaptation

The findings reveal two contrasting modes of narrative transformation in Indonesian animated folklore on YouTube. Dongeng Kita predominantly employs a pedagogical adaptation model, whereas Gromore Studio Series demonstrates a more cinematic adaptation model. The distinction lies not merely in visual style but in how narrative structure, conflict, characterization, moral framing, and cultural meaning are reorganized according to different audience orientations. This supports the view that digital adaptation involves not simply transferring traditional narratives into new media but reconstructing them through contemporary narrative and audiovisual conventions (Budi et al., 2024; Ndede, 2026).

In *Dongeng Kita*, folklore is simplified through linear plots, easily recognizable conflicts, clear moral oppositions, and explicit resolutions. Values such as kindness, honesty, patience, perseverance, respect for parents, and the consequences of negative behavior are foregrounded for child audiences. In *Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul*, for example, Putri Kadita is represented as patient and forgiving despite the injustice she experiences, positioning her within a clear moral framework. The empirical statement, *"Although she felt deeply saddened, she bore no resentment toward those who hated her. She believed that God would repay everything that had happened to her"* (*Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul*, *Dongeng Kita Channel,* 2021, 8:07–8:15), illustrates how characterization is organized around moral intelligibility. As illustrated in Figure 3, the visual sequence reinforces this pedagogical simplification by presenting the character transformation in a clear and accessible form.



Fig. 3. Narrative Transformation – Visual Representation of *Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul*
(Source: *Dongeng Kita Channel*)

These findings indicate that narrative simplification functions as a pedagogical strategy rather than merely as a reduction of narrative complexity. Folklore is reorganized so that plot, characterization, conflict, resolution, and moral values become more immediately understandable to younger audiences. This interpretation is consistent with folklore-based learning, in which folktales provide narrative structures, characters, moral dilemmas, and resolutions that support moral and linguistic development, while storytelling strengthens learners' narrative competence (Saha & Chakraborty, 2026). Folklore has particular pedagogical value because its narrative structures and culturally grounded moral situations provide learners with meaningful contexts for understanding values, social expectations, and cultural identity (Saha & Chakraborty, 2026).

Previous studies similarly demonstrate that digital animation can function as a medium for transmitting cultural knowledge and moral values to younger audiences (Nurlaila, 2022; Budi et al., 2024). The contribution of the present study is to conceptualize this tendency specifically as a pedagogical adaptation model, in which accessibility, narrative clarity, and explicit moral framing become central

principles of digital folklore reconstruction. In this sense, simplification should not automatically be understood as a deficiency; rather, it can function as a deliberate adaptation strategy that increases narrative accessibility for child and family audiences.

Nevertheless, pedagogical accessibility also involves a potential cultural trade-off. Simplifying narrative structures and foregrounding explicit moral lessons may reduce ambiguity, local complexity, and alternative interpretations contained in traditional versions. Digital adaptation can therefore simultaneously increase accessibility while selectively emphasizing particular meanings and cultural representations (Zhang, 2024; Azim et al., 2024; Kamila et al., 2025). This tension is particularly relevant to literature education because students should not encounter digital folklore merely as an authoritative replacement for traditional narratives. Instead, digital and traditional versions can be compared to identify which narrative elements, cultural values, and representations have been preserved, transformed, emphasized, or omitted.

From an educational perspective, therefore, *Dongeng Kita* can be used to teach plot, characterization, conflict, resolution, moral values, and narrative retelling. Such use is consistent with the broader pedagogical role of folklore, which supports culturally grounded learning through storytelling, discussion, dramatization, and creative activities (Saha & Chakraborty, 2026). At the same time, comparative analysis between traditional and digital versions can encourage students to move beyond basic narrative comprehension toward critical literary interpretation. This orientation is important in contemporary literature education, where students increasingly encounter literary narratives through digital, visual, and multimodal forms rather than exclusively through printed texts (Milyakina, 2018).

By contrast, *Gromore Studio Series* transforms folklore through 3D animation, intensified dramatic conflict, expressive visualization, mythological imagery, and cinematic atmosphere. In *Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul*, Putri Kadita's transformation is constructed through multiple audiovisual elements, including her damaged body, movement into the sea, green attire, royal setting, lighting, facial expression, and mystical atmosphere. The statement, *"Go to the Southern Coast! ... I am your mother, my child! One day, you will meet me! Now, go first to the Southern Coast!"* (*Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul*, *Gromore Studio Series*, 2021, 13:19–13:39), functions not only as verbal narration but as part of a broader dramatic sequence. As shown in Figure 4, the three-stage visualization renders the transition from suffering to mythological identity perceptible through movement, space, color, character design, and dramatic effects.



Fig. 4. Narrative Transformation – Cinematic Representation of *Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul*
(Source: *Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul*, *Gromore Studio Series*, 2022)

This pattern suggests that Gromore does not simply retell folklore but aestheticizes and intensifies it. Narrative meaning is produced through the orchestration of verbal and visual resources, enabling mythological characters and cultural spaces to be experienced as immersive audiovisual constructions. This interpretation is consistent with multimodal perspectives that understand meaning as emerging through the interaction of multiple semiotic resources, including language, image, color, visual composition, spatial organization, and design (Nurhayani & Sugiharyanti, 2026). Consequently, visual aesthetics should not be treated merely as decoration surrounding a verbal story; rather, they actively participate in constructing narrative, moral, and cultural meaning.

The findings support a cinematic adaptation model in *Gromore Studio Series,* where folklore is reconstructed through visual dramatization, mythological atmosphere, character design, and audiovisual immersion. This extends previous research showing that 3D animation can reinterpret Indonesian folklore through cinematic representation (Budi et al., 2024). In contrast, Dongeng Kita emphasizes readability, moral clarity, and pedagogical accessibility, indicating that digital folklore adaptation involves selective choices about what is simplified, emphasized, or visualized.

Educationally, the two models offer complementary learning opportunities. *Dongeng Kita* supports narrative comprehension, moral interpretation, characterization, and retelling, while Gromore provides

richer material for literary and multimodal analysis. This aligns with contemporary literature education, which increasingly recognizes digital and multimodal forms of literary experience (Milyakina, 2018), as well as culturally informed digital storytelling that integrates textual, visual, audio, and audiovisual resources (Handayani et al., 2026). Animated folklore therefore can bridge narrative learning, literature education, cultural literacy, and multimodal literacy by helping students interpret cultural identity, local wisdom, and social values while critically examining how these meanings are reconstructed through digital media (Sari et al., 2023).

Cultural Memory: Preservation through Selection and Reconstruction

The cultural-memory findings show that both channels preserve key elements of Indonesian folklore, including local characters, landscapes, moral values, geographical references, and mythological motifs, but reconstruct them through different representational strategies. Narrative structure, imagery, and patterned representation are important resources through which oral traditions are remembered and transmitted (Rubin, 1995). In *Dongeng Kita, Legenda Batu Gantung, Batu Gantung, and Lake Toba* a relatively simple narrative and visual sequence. This structure makes the relationship between legend, place, and local identity easy to recognize, suggesting that cultural memory is organized primarily for accessibility and pedagogical communication.

This interpretation is supported by the narrative evidence: "*A large stone appeared, resembling the body of a girl...* The community believed that the stone was the incarnation of Seruni, and they named it Batu Gantung... *'Parapat, Parapat,' became the name of the area"* (Legenda *Batu Gantung*, Dongeng Kita Channel, 2021, 7:43–8:12). As illustrated in Figure 5, the visual association among Seruni, the cliff, Batu Gantung, and Parapat reinforces a place-based form of cultural memory in which geographical space becomes inseparable from the remembered narrative.

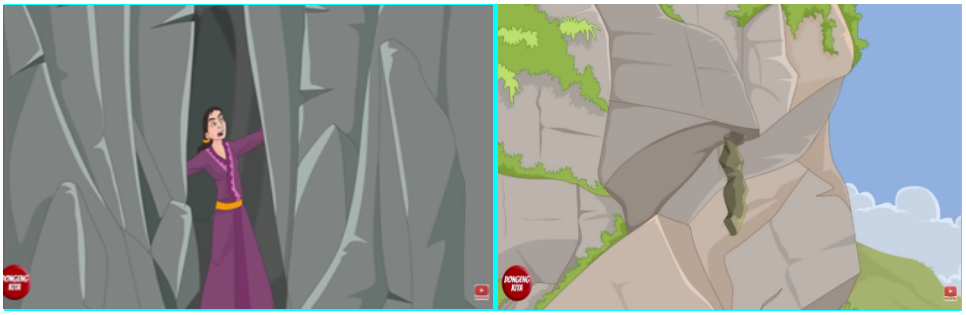


Fig. 5. Seruni and Batu Gantung in Parapat, North Sumatra
(Source: Legenda Batu Gantung, Dongeng Kita Channel, 2021

By contrast, *Gromore Studio Series* reconstructs cultural memory through stronger mythological dramatization and visual spectacle. In *Asal Usul Danau Toba*, the flood, the transformation of Toba's wife into a fish, and the formation of Samosir Island and Lake Toba are represented as a dramatic sequence that visually connects mythology with landscape formation. The statement, "The hill later became known as Samosir Island, while the vast flood that inundated the area came to be known as Lake Toba" (*Asal Usul Danau Toba*, Gromore Studio Series Channel, 2022, 16:11–18:38), demonstrates how geographical memory is embedded within a mythological narrative. Figure 6 further reinforces this interpretation by transforming the origin of Lake Toba and Samosir Island into a visually reconstructed cultural memory.

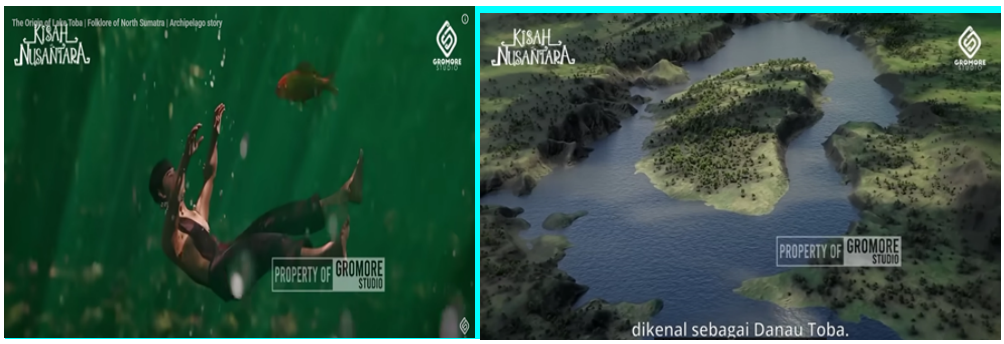


Fig. 6. Mythological Visualization of the Origin of Lake Toba and Samosir Island
(Source: Asal Usul Danau Toba, Gromore Studio Series Channel, 2022)

These contrasting representations indicate that digital cultural memory is not simply preserved in unchanged form but is selected, simplified, visualized, and reconstructed according to the narrative and aesthetic orientation of each channel. *Dongeng Kita* tends to make cultural memory communicative and pedagogically accessible by emphasizing recognizable characters, places, and moral meanings, whereas *Gromore Studio Series* aestheticizes cultural memory through visual localization, mythological atmosphere, and dramatic representation. Thus, the two channels do not merely transmit the same cultural past in different visual styles; they foreground different dimensions of what should be remembered.

This distinction is theoretically important because digital cultural memory is shaped through selection: some characters, landscapes, symbols, and values become more visible, while others recede. Digital adaptation can therefore revitalize folklore and expand accessibility, but it may also simplify cultural depth and local context (Azim et al., 2024; Kamila et al., 2025; Senoprabowo et al., 2021). This process is consistent with the concept of cultural memory as a socially mediated form of remembering through which cultural knowledge and identity are maintained and transmitted across generations (Assmann, 2011).

The two channels illustrate different modes of cultural remembering. *Dongeng Kita* emphasizes clarity and moral accessibility, whereas *Gromore Studio Series* strengthens visual and affective engagement through mythological dramatization. In both cases, cultural memory is reconstructed rather than simply reproduced. Educationally, this enables students to compare traditional and digital versions of folklore, identify what is preserved, transformed, or omitted, and critically examine how cultural identity is represented. In this way, animated folklore can support cultural literacy and critical understanding of cultural memory.

Audience Reception and the Negotiation of Cultural Meaning

Audience comments reveal distinct reception patterns across the two channels. On *Dongeng Kita*, responses to *Batu Menangis*, *Legenda Batu Gantung*, and *Asal Usul Pohon Kelapa* are predominantly moral-reflective, emphasizing respect for mothers, filial devotion, usefulness, and personal transformation. This pattern suggests that audiences tend to reproduce the ethical framework already foregrounded by the channel's pedagogical adaptation.

By contrast, reception on *Gromore Studio Series* is more heterogeneous. Comments on *Asal Usul Ikan Duyung* interpret the narrative through parental responsibility, while responses to *Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul* focus on the storyboard, detailed settings, character design, and representation of Indonesian legends. *Asal Usul Danau Toba* generates interest in Indonesian history, culture, and natural landscapes, whereas *Timun Mas dan Buto Ijo* prompts intertextual comparison with the Japanese narrative of *Kaguya*. The corpus also shows associations between *Awang Sukma* and *Jaka Tarub*. These responses indicate three dominant forms of reception: moral-reflective, visual-cultural, and cultural/intertextual reception.

Analytically, these patterns show that audiences do not merely consume animated folklore but actively negotiate its meaning through prior ethical values, cultural knowledge, aesthetic expectations, and remembered narrative repertoires. The contrast between the two channels is significant: *Dongeng Kita* tends to elicit responses aligned with explicit moral messages, whereas *Gromore Studio Series* generates broader engagement with visual aesthetics, cultural representation, and intertextual recognition. This suggests that adaptation strategy influences not only how folklore is presented, but also the kinds of meanings audiences foreground in their responses.

The contribution of this study lies in linking audience reception with cultural memory. Comments function as textual traces of how viewers reactivate, compare, and recirculate cultural meanings across stories and cultural traditions. Educationally, these comments can be used as authentic materials for reception analysis, enabling students to classify audience responses, compare interpretations, and critically examine how moral, cultural, visual, and intertextual meanings are negotiated in digital folklore.

Platform Ecosystem and Algorithmic Culture

Platform data show substantial circulation for both channels. *Dongeng Kita* recorded approximately 3.04 million subscribers, 723 uploaded videos, and 628.73 million cumulative views in the May 2026 research snapshot. Several videos achieved particularly high circulation, including *Batu Menangis* with approximately 7.2 million views, *Asal Usul Pohon Kelapa* with about 5 million, and *Legenda Batu Gantung* with approximately 4.45 million. *Gromore Studio Series*, meanwhile, recorded approximately 1.8 million subscribers and 311.85 million cumulative views, with videos such as *Asal Usul Ikan Duyung*, *Legenda Nyi Roro Kidul*, and *Asal Usul Danau Toba* reaching millions of viewers. These figures demonstrate that animated folklore is not merely preserved as digital content but circulates within a highly visible platform environment.

However, these metrics should be interpreted as indicators of platform visibility and circulation rather than as evidence that particular content features directly cause algorithmic recommendation. Platformized cultural production is shaped by discoverability, visibility, engagement, and content-format conventions, but these relationships should not be treated as mechanically deterministic (Valtýsson, 2022; Siciliano,

2022; Hellyani et al., 2026). In this study, the observable data show that *Dongeng Kita* consistently uses folklore-related titles and keywords such as *cerita rakyat*, *dongeng anak*, and *legenda Nusantara*, together with compilation formats and thematic continuity. *Gromore Studio Series* similarly constructs a recognizable identity through the *Kisah Nusantara* series, 3D visual differentiation, and recurring regional narratives. These practices suggest that both channels organize their content in ways that increase thematic legibility within the platform environment without implying direct causal control over recommendation systems.

The visual data reinforce this interpretation. *Dongeng Kita* employs bright colors, large titles, recognizable characters, and explicit labels such as *Legenda* and *Asal Usul*. As shown in Figure 7, these thumbnails establish a consistent child–family visual identity and make the folklore theme immediately recognizable. Rather than interpreting thumbnail design as a direct cause of virality, this study treats it as an observable platform-oriented visibility practice. This interpretation is consistent with research on platformized cultural communication, which shows that visual identity, content-format conventions, audience engagement, and strategic visibility contribute to how cultural content becomes recognizable and discoverable in digital environments (Hellyani et al., 2026).



Fig. 7. Thumbnail Strategy of the Dongeng Kita Channel
(Source: Dongeng Kita YouTube channel)

Gromore Studio Series adopts a contrasting platform-facing visual strategy. As illustrated in Figure 8, its thumbnails emphasize 3D characters, cinematic lighting, mythological figures, and dramatic compositions. These visual features distinguish the channel aesthetically while reinforcing the identity of the *Kisah Nusantara* series. Combined with recurring titles, keywords, serialization, thematic consistency, and audience engagement, they can be understood as observable indicators of platform legibility and cultural branding rather than as proof of direct algorithmic causation. This distinction is important because algorithmic visibility operates within broader systems of platform curation, user interaction, and content organization rather than through a single identifiable content variable (DeVito et al., 2018; DeVito, 2021; Flinterud, 2023).



Fig. 8. Thumbnail Strategy of the Gromore Studio Series Channel
(Source: Gromore Studio Series YouTube channel)

The comparison between the two channels therefore reveals that algorithmic culture is not only a matter of technical distribution but also involves how cultural content is formatted, categorized, visually framed, and repeatedly circulated within platform infrastructures. *Dongeng Kita* emphasizes accessibility, recognizable folklore labels, compilation formats, and thematic continuity, while *Gromore Studio Series* emphasizes cinematic differentiation, serialized identity, mythological imagery, and visual spectacle. These

differences demonstrate that cultural visibility on YouTube is shaped by the interaction between creative strategies, platform conventions, audience engagement, and recurring content organization (Valtýsson, 2022; Flinterud, 2023; Hellyani et al., 2026).

From a cultural-memory perspective, YouTube functions not simply as a repository of folklore but as a platform environment in which certain narratives become more visible, recognizable, and repeatedly encountered. Platform practices therefore contribute to the circulation and cultural prominence of particular stories without directly determining cultural memory. Educationally, this provides material for critical digital literacy. Critical digital literacy requires learners to move beyond operational technology use toward critical awareness of digital affordances, semiotic choices, interaction, and the social contexts that shape online meaning-making (Bilki et al., 2023).

Students can examine how titles, keywords, thumbnails, metrics, playlists, and serialized content shape the visibility of cultural material, while recognizing that discoverability is influenced by platform conventions, visual identity, and audience engagement (Hellyani et al., 2026; DeVito, 2021). This also encourages learners to distinguish platform visibility from cultural value by comparing digital adaptations with traditional versions and identifying what has been preserved, simplified, dramatized, or marginalized.

Multimodal Construction of Folklore Meaning

The findings show that digital folklore functions as a multimodal cultural text. Multimodal analysis similarly recognizes that communication operates through combinations of image, sound, music, gesture, bodily posture, and spatial organization rather than through language alone (Jewitt, 2014). In *Dongeng Kita*, verbal narration, simple visuals, bright colors, and explicit moral framing support pedagogical readability, whereas *Gromore Studio Series* constructs meaning more intensively through 3D visualization, movement, lighting, character expression, music, and mythological settings. The transformation of Putri Kadita illustrates how narration, bodily expression, seascape, green attire, and dramatic lighting work together to construct mythological meaning. Visual elements such as composition, modality, spatial organization, and representational choices also contribute systematically to the construction of meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021).

This interpretation is consistent with multimodal discourse analysis, which emphasizes that meaning is produced through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes, including language, image, color, spatial composition, and visual design (Nurhayani & Sugiharyanti, 2026). From a social-semiotic perspective, communication extends beyond language and involves the orchestration of multiple modes through which meaning is designed and interpreted (Kress, 2010). In this study, meaning also emerges through auditory and kinetic resources such as music, sound, and movement. Thus, *Dongeng Kita* uses multimodality mainly to strengthen clarity and accessibility, while *Gromore Studio Series* uses it to intensify atmosphere and mythological immersion.

Educationally, these findings support multimodal literacy by enabling students to analyze how words, images, movement, sound, music, color, landscape, and character design collaboratively construct literary and cultural meaning. Developing multimodal literacy therefore requires learners to recognize how different semiotic resources interact in the production and interpretation of meaning (Jewitt et al., 2025). This moves literature learning beyond text-centered interpretation toward critical analysis of contemporary digital storytelling.

Implications for Indonesian Language and Literature Education

The findings collectively indicate that animated folklore can function as a productive resource for Indonesian language and literature education because it integrates narrative, cultural, multimodal, and digital dimensions. The pedagogical model of *Dongeng Kita* is particularly relevant for basic narrative comprehension, characterization, conflict analysis, moral interpretation, and cultural-value learning, whereas the cinematic model of *Gromore Studio Series* provides richer opportunities for interpreting audiovisual representation, cultural symbolism, and multimodal meaning-making. These differences indicate that animated folklore should not be treated merely as supplementary entertainment, but as a learning resource that enables students to examine how traditional narratives are reconstructed in contemporary digital forms. Recent research also demonstrates that digital folklore can function as a culturally grounded learning resource that supports literacy development while connecting students with cultural heritage and identity (Ansoriyah et al., 2026).

The educational contribution is particularly significant in five areas. First, students can compare traditional and digital versions of folklore to identify narrative selection, simplification, and transformation. Second, they can analyze literary elements such as plot, character, conflict, and resolution. Third, folklore provides culturally grounded material for examining moral values, local wisdom, cultural identity, and indigenous knowledge. In this respect, literary texts rooted in local culture can strengthen cultural literacy by helping learners interpret cultural values and identities represented through narrative

(Sari et al., 2023). Fourth, animated folklore supports multimodal literacy because meaning is constructed through the interaction of language, image, sound, movement, color, setting, and character design. Fifth, it can support critical digital literacy by encouraging students to analyze how titles, thumbnails, metadata, engagement metrics, and platform visibility frame and circulate cultural content. Digital literacy in education encompasses a range of interconnected competencies and should not be reduced to technical proficiency alone (Audrin & Audrin, 2022).

Thus, the educational significance of digital folklore extends beyond making traditional stories more attractive to younger audiences. Animated folklore can serve as a bridge between literary education and cultural literacy by enabling learners to interpret local wisdom, cultural identity, and indigenous values embedded in narratives (Sari et al., 2023). However, educational engagement with folktales should move beyond treating them as fixed representations of culture and encourage learners to critically interpret how cultural meanings are constructed and negotiated (de Bruijn, 2019). At the same time, its digital and audiovisual characteristics provide opportunities for developing multimodal and critical digital literacy, as students learn to examine not only what a story means, but also how cultural meaning is visually constructed, digitally circulated, and selectively represented. In this way, folklore learning can move from basic narrative comprehension toward a more critical understanding of how culture is adapted, represented, interpreted, and remembered in contemporary digital environments.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the analysis focuses on only two YouTube channels and 10 animated folklore videos, so the findings may not fully represent the wider variety of digital folklore content available online. Second, YouTube metrics such as views, likes, and comments were recorded at specific points in time and may change as audience activity develops. The study also examines visible indicators of platform visibility without direct access to YouTube's recommendation algorithm. Therefore, the findings should be understood as showing relationships between content practices and circulation, rather than direct evidence of algorithmic causation. Future studies could include more channels and digital platforms, use longitudinal data to examine changes in visibility over time, explore audience responses through qualitative or mixed-method approaches, and investigate more directly how animated folklore can be used in Indonesian language and literature education.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the digitalization of Indonesian folklore through YouTube produces a dual process of preservation and transformation. Animated folk tales preserve the circulation of traditional narratives, moral values, cultural symbols, mythological figures, and regional identities, while simultaneously reconstructing them through narrative simplification, audiovisual visualization, audience orientation, and platform-based circulation. The comparative analysis identifies two distinctive adaptation models: *Dongeng Kita* represents a pedagogical adaptation model characterized by linear narratives, simplified conflicts, explicit moral messages, accessible visuals, and child–family orientation, whereas *Gromore Studio Series* represents a cinematic adaptation model characterized by 3D animation, dramatic visualization, mythological atmosphere, detailed character design, and stronger audiovisual immersion. Theoretically, these findings extend digital folklore and cultural memory studies by showing that cultural transmission on YouTube is shaped through the interaction of narrative adaptation, audiovisual aesthetics, audience reception, cultural memory, and platform visibility. Cultural memory is therefore not merely preserved but selectively reconstructed, visualized, popularized, and recirculated within digital culture. The findings also contribute to Indonesian language and literature education by positioning animated folklore as a resource for literary, cultural, multimodal, and critical digital learning. Students can compare traditional and digital versions of folk narratives, analyze plot, characterization, conflict, moral values, and cultural representation, and critically examine how cultural meanings are maintained, simplified, or transformed. The combination of language, image, movement, sound, music, color, landscape, and character design supports the development of literary literacy, cultural literacy, and multimodal literacy, while the analysis of titles, thumbnails, metadata, audience comments, and platform visibility can strengthen critical digital literacy. Thus, YouTube not only expands younger generations' access to Indonesian folklore but also reshapes how folklore is learned, interpreted, imagined, and remembered, making digital folklore an important bridge between cultural preservation, literary education, and contemporary digital literacy.

Declarations

Author contribution	:	Mutiarani is responsible for the entire research project. she also led the writing of the manuscript and collaborated with the second author. Irpan Ali Rahman, Agus Sulaeman, and Kim Dong Hoon participate in the data collection, transcription, and analysis. He also revised the manuscript. All authors approve the final manuscript.
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