



Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi: Educational Values and Their Relevance in History Learning in High School

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Abstract

Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi is a form of customary expression rich in life philosophy, moral values, and social guidance; however, its significance has begun to fade as younger generations increasingly struggle to understand the figurative language used in seloko. This condition has resulted in the educational values embedded within it no longer being fully internalized, including within the context of formal education. In history education, seloko holds great potential as a source of learning based on local wisdom that can connect cultural identity with the character development of students. This study aims to describe the educational values contained in Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi and to analyze their relevance to history learning at the senior high school level. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data were collected through field observations in Jambi City, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, cultural figures, and history teachers, as well as documentation studies and analysis of literature related to seloko and history education. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in accordance with the qualitative analysis model. The findings indicate that Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi contains five main educational values, namely religious, moral/ethical, social, cultural, and intellectual values. These values are aligned with the goals of character education and have strong relevance to the competencies of history learning at the senior high school level, particularly in strengthening understanding of local culture, fostering critical attitudes, and developing students' identities. Seloko can be utilized as a contextual source of history learning because it links historical material with students' real-life experiences, thereby enhancing meaning-making, cultural appreciation, and the overall quality of history learning based on local wisdom.

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Introduction

History learning at the senior high school (SMA) level is a planned and systematic educational process that is not merely oriented toward the mastery of chronological facts, dates, and major events. Rather, it seeks to cultivate students' understanding of the human dimension (who acted and why), the spatial dimension (where events occurred and how space shaped them), and the temporal dimension (how continuity and change unfold over time), while simultaneously instilling character values through the interpretation of past experiences (Fatimah & Octaviani, 2023). Through history, students are expected to develop historical thinking skills, critical analysis, empathy toward past societies, and awareness of their own cultural identity. To achieve these multidimensional objectives, history learning requires learning resources capable of presenting meaningful and contextual experiences that are closely connected to students' daily lives and socio-cultural environments (Narmi et al., 2021). Learning resources encompass all materials, tools, environments, and systems that facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills, whether specifically designed for instructional purposes or derived from real-life contexts surrounding students (Martin et al., 2022; Pujiono et al., 2022).

In practice, however, history learning at the senior high school level is still largely dominated by textbooks that emphasize national historical narratives. While national history is essential for building collective identity and civic awareness, overreliance on centralized narratives often results in learning that feels distant from students' immediate realities. The stories presented in textbooks frequently highlight political elites, major wars, and large-scale national transformations, but pay limited attention to local experiences, traditions, and cultural expressions. Consequently, history learning tends to become general, abstract, and less connected to students' socio-cultural backgrounds (Rispan & Sudrajat, 2019). Students may memorize historical facts for examination purposes without fully understanding their relevance to contemporary life or their own community identity. In such circumstances, history is reduced to rote learning rather than functioning as a medium for developing historical awareness, critical reflection, and appreciation of local heritage.

Local wisdom, in fact, holds significant potential as a rich and meaningful source of history learning. Local wisdom embodies the accumulated knowledge, values, norms, and experiences of communities that have evolved over generations. It reflects how societies interpret their past, organize social relations, resolve conflicts, and maintain harmony with nature. Integrating local wisdom into history learning can make the subject more contextual, relatable, and engaging for students. However, despite its potential, the utilization of local wisdom in senior high school history learning remains limited and has not yet been systematically integrated into curricula or teaching practices (Romadhoni & Witir, 2019). This gap creates an opportunity for research and innovation in developing locally grounded history learning resources.

One form of local wisdom with strong historical and educational value is oral tradition. Oral traditions include customary expressions, proverbs, folklore, myths, and traditional advice passed down verbally from generation to generation. These traditions function not only as cultural artifacts but also as repositories of collective memory and moral guidance. They preserve historical experiences, social norms, and philosophical reflections that shape community identity. As learning resources, oral traditions can provide contextual entry points for understanding broader historical processes, as they reflect how local communities interpret change, leadership, justice, and social responsibility (Oktaria, 2024). Therefore, oral traditions are highly relevant for history learning that emphasizes local context and character education.

In Jambi Malay culture, one prominent form of oral tradition is Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi. Jambi Malay culture itself is the product of a long historical process involving interactions between indigenous traditions, Islamic influences, trade networks, and regional political developments. This historical trajectory has shaped a distinctive cultural identity reflected in language, oral literature, customary institutions, ceremonial practices, and social values (Indriyani & Syuhada, 2020). Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi, as part of oral literature, consists of proverbs, rhymes, symbolic expressions, and aphorisms that convey life philosophies, ethical principles, and social norms (Rahma, 2022; Sinaga, 2023). Through poetic and metaphorical language, seloko encapsulates the worldview of the Jambi Malay community.

Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi carries moral, ethical, social, and educational functions that contribute to shaping individual and communal character (Putri et al., 2024). The values embedded in seloko include religious devotion, respect for elders, communal solidarity, justice, honesty, responsibility, and social harmony (Rustam, 2015). These values serve as guidelines for behavior within family, community, and customary institutions. In historical terms, seloko reflects how the Jambi Malay community conceptualized authority, leadership, law, and social order. Thus, seloko can be understood not only as literary expression but also as a cultural document that records collective values formed through historical experience.

However, contemporary understanding of seloko has shown signs of decline, particularly among younger generations. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon. First, the figurative and symbolic language used in seloko requires interpretative skills and familiarity with cultural metaphors, which are not always easily understood by modern youth (Jannah et al., 2022). Second, rapid social change, urbanization, and the influence of digital culture have reduced opportunities for intergenerational transmission of oral traditions. Traditional forums where seloko was once recited such as customary ceremonies, community gatherings, and family discussions are less frequent today. As a result, the meaning and function of Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi have gradually shifted, and in some cases diminished, within everyday social life (Uluum et al., 2025).

The integration of Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi into history learning at the senior high school level offers a strategic response to these challenges. By incorporating seloko as a learning resource, teachers can connect historical material with local cultural values in a reflective and dialogical manner. For example, when discussing historical topics such as traditional governance systems, social stratification, or the spread of Islam in Jambi, educators can use relevant seloko expressions to illustrate how historical values were

internalized within society. This approach encourages students to analyze the relationship between historical events and cultural expressions, thereby deepening their understanding of both.

Moreover, using seloko in history learning can foster character development. The values embedded in seloko such as integrity, mutual cooperation, and respect—align with the broader objectives of national character education. Through guided discussion and contextual analysis, students can explore how these values emerged from historical experiences and how they remain relevant today. Such learning not only enhances cognitive understanding but also supports affective and moral development.

In addition, integrating seloko into classroom activities can promote active learning strategies. Students can be invited to interpret selected seloko texts, relate them to historical themes, conduct small research projects on local traditions, or compare local wisdom with national historical narratives. These activities encourage critical thinking, creativity, and appreciation of cultural diversity. By engaging directly with local cultural sources, students develop a stronger sense of belonging and historical identity.

Therefore, research on the educational values contained in Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi and their relevance to history learning at the senior high school level is both academically and socially significant. Such research can reveal the pedagogical potential of seloko as a source of contextual history learning while contributing to the preservation and revitalization of local culture. Ultimately, integrating local wisdom into history education not only enriches the learning process but also strengthens students' cultural awareness and historical consciousness as members of a diverse and dynamic nation.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was chosen to explore in depth the meanings and educational values contained in Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi and their relevance to history learning. Qualitative research enables researchers to understand cultural and educational phenomena contextually through the description of verbal data based on the natural conditions of the research object. The study was conducted in the Malay cultural area of Jambi City as the main research site, involving customary institutions and several senior high schools in order to obtain both cultural and educational perspectives. The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from traditional leaders, seloko narrators, cultural figures, and history teachers, while secondary data were derived from books, scientific articles, customary archives, and journals relevant to Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi, educational values, and history learning.

Data collection was carried out through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies. Observation was used to examine the context of seloko usage in community life, interviews were conducted to explore the meanings and educational values embedded in seloko, and documentation was used to trace and analyze manuscripts and archives of Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation to maintain the credibility and consistency of the data. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive qualitative methods through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data were classified according

to themes of educational values and then analyzed to explain the relevance of Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi as a source of history learning at the senior high school level.

Results and Discussions

Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi is an oral cultural heritage that functions as a medium for the transmission of values and the formation of community character. Oral tradition is understood as intangible cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation through spoken expressions that contain stories, advice, and social teachings as a means of preserving cultural identity. Seloko appears in the form of petatah-petitih, pantun, and customary metaphors which not only possess linguistic aesthetic value but also serve as life guidelines for the Jambi Malay community in shaping attitudes and behavior. Seloko functions as a means of integrating Malay customs with Islamic teachings, so that customary values do not contradict religious values but instead reinforce one another. In this sense, seloko acts as an instrument of social ethics that instills politeness, wisdom, and harmony in social life.

Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi contains comprehensive educational values. Educational values are understood as all elements that guide humans toward maturity and usefulness in life (Putri, Darmuki, & Setiyono, 2021). Within seloko, educational values include religious, moral, social, cultural, and intellectual values (Rustam, 2015; Aziz, 2021:3). This affirms that seloko functions as an effective form of informal education in shaping the personality of the Jambi Malay community. The religious, moral, social, cultural, and intellectual educational values embedded in seloko collectively strengthen community character.

Religious educational values are understood as a deep human awareness of living life in accordance with religious teachings (Aziz, 2021). Religious values in seloko can be seen in the seloko "Titian teras betanggo batu," which is interpreted as a symbol of the Kitabullah (the Qur'an) and the Hadith of the Prophet. These primary sources of Islamic teaching are regarded as a "stone staircase" that is firm and stable, serving as a foundation for life. This seloko contains religious educational values in the form of acknowledgment of the oneness of God and obedience to His teachings. Religious values related to belief in destiny are reflected in the seloko "Rezeki elang tidak akan sampai kepada musang," which teaches that the sustenance of every creature has been determined by Allah and cannot be exchanged. Furthermore, religious values related to gratitude appear in the seloko "Tebing runtuh tepian beranjak, tanjung putus teluk beralih," which conveys the message that every event brings change according to Allah's decree; therefore, humans should be grateful and accept life's changes sincerely.

Moral educational values function to shape an individual's ability to distinguish between good and bad behavior (Fadhila & Tazkiah, 2024). Moral values are reflected in humility, as illustrated in the seloko "Pakailah ilmu padi, kian berisi kian runduk," which conveys that the more knowledgeable a person becomes, the more humble their attitude should be. Politeness is reflected in the seloko "Berkembang lapik berkembang tikar, berperiuk besar betungku jarang," which emphasizes the importance of adjusting one's behavior in welcoming guests. Patience is illustrated in the seloko "Sesak rumah tidak apa, asal jangan sesak di hati," which teaches that inner spaciousness is more important than physical conditions.

Social educational values guide individuals to understand their role as social beings who live in togetherness (Nurunnisa & Husni, 2016). Social values are evident in various seloko, one of which is “Alim sekitab cerdas secendikio, betino semalu jantan basopan,” emphasizing that social harmony can only be achieved when each individual fulfills their role properly. This seloko implies that knowledge, intelligence, a sense of shame, and politeness are not merely personal traits but social capital that strengthens communal life. The seloko “Kasih sayang antar dek banyak, sayang bajengok dek yang tuo” emphasizes the importance of affection across generations, highlighting that care and love should exist not only among peers but also be strengthened through guidance from elders. Exemplary conduct in social education is reflected in the seloko “Berguru kepada yang pandai, mengambil tuah kepada yang menang, mengambil contoh kepada yang sudah,” which teaches the importance of learning from knowledgeable and experienced individuals.

Cultural educational values function as markers of identity and differentiation of a community (Aziz, 2021). The seloko “Adat nan idak lokang dipanas dan idak lapuk dihujan, Titian teras betanggo batu...” emphasizes that custom holds a firm position and does not change despite the passage of time and changing circumstances. This seloko not only illustrates the permanence of custom but also shows that adat serves as the foundation that preserves the existence and identity of the Jambi Malay community. In addition to strengthening cultural identity, Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi also reflects cultural educational values in distinguishing between different communities through the seloko “Cupak diisi, gantang diratakan, adat diturut.” This seloko reminds that every region has its own customs and norms that must be respected and followed.

Intellectual educational values play a role in developing reasoning ability and intelligence through life experiences and local traditions (Sanjaya, Sanjaya, & Wulandari, 2022). Intellectual values in seloko are evident in the development of critical thinking, as reflected in the seloko “Ukur mato jangan dilihat sajo, ukur telingo jangan didengar bae, kurang sisik tunas menjadi, kurang siang rumput tumbuh.” This seloko teaches caution in judging something, as what is seen by the eyes or heard by the ears often does not represent the whole truth. It emphasizes the importance of reasoning, considering alternative possibilities, and avoiding hasty conclusions.

Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi, as part of oral tradition, contains social, cultural, moral, religious, and historical values that are relevant to be passed on to younger generations. Oral tradition functions as a medium for character education and moral formation because it conveys life messages across generations (Hasanah & Andari, 2021). Seloko is not merely a cultural heritage but also a source of educational values that reflect the identity of the Jambi Malay community and serve as life guidance conveyed through refined and aesthetic language.

The educational values contained in seloko have strong relevance to history learning at the senior high school level, which requires students to understand the past, interpret change, and draw lessons for present life. Seloko contains petatah-petitih and proverbs that function as rules, laws, and philosophies of life for the community, aligning with the objectives of history learning in developing critical thinking skills, historical attitudes, and awareness of both local and national identity. Seloko can be utilized as a contextual learning resource within the Merdeka Curriculum.

Seloko demonstrates its connection to key historical concepts. The seloko “Tebing runtuh tepian beranjak, tanjung putus teluk beralih” teaches that change is an inherent part of life and a decree of God, encouraging humans to be grateful and to draw wisdom from every event. This value aligns with history learning, which emphasizes understanding change and continuity in social life. History is understood not merely as a sequence of events but as a process of change imbued with social, cultural, and religious meaning.

The seloko “Jangan becupuk begantang dewek” contains a moral value related to justice and objectivity, which is relevant to historical thinking skills. This message teaches that judgments of events or historical figures should not be based on personal interests but on fair consideration and sufficient evidence. This value aligns with the demands of history learning at the senior high school level, which requires students to evaluate historical events critically and avoid subjective bias in historical interpretation.

Seloko that contains social, cultural, and intellectual values emphasizes the importance of social harmony, the preservation of customs, and prudence in thinking and evaluating matters. The seloko “Ukur mato jangan dilihat sajo, ukur telingo jangan didengar bae” shows that custom and critical reasoning are foundational to community life. These values are relevant to history learning because they help students understand that the traditions and ways of thinking of past societies shape identity and social dynamics up to the present. Thus, integrating seloko into history learning enriches students’ understanding of local history while simultaneously shaping character in accordance with the Profile of Pancasila Students.

Conclusion

Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi is a form of local wisdom with a strong pedagogical function, supported by a value structure that substantively contributes to the formation of community character. Seloko does not merely function as an expression of oral culture, but rather as a traditional knowledge system that embodies educational values including religious, moral, social, cultural, and intellectual values constructed through advice, analogies, and metaphors. Seloko serves as a living value system that actively influences the socio-cultural awareness of the Jambi Malay community.

The relevance of these values to history learning at the senior high school level is evident in their contribution to strengthening students’ cognitive, affective, and character dimensions. History learning within the Merdeka Curriculum is oriented not only toward the mastery of factual knowledge but also toward the development of historical thinking skills, critical literacy, and character formation in accordance with the Profile of Pancasila Students. Therefore, the educational values contained in Seloko Adat Melayu Jambi possess significant pedagogical relevance and are worthy of being utilized as learning resources and a foundation for character strengthening in history learning at the senior high school level.

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