

SONGS OF LONTAR PALM TAPPERS: SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE SABU RAIJUA COMMUNITY

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Abstract

Singing atop lontar palm trees (Alure Pa Kolo Due) is a traditional practice performed by sap tappers on Sabu Island, Sabu Raijua Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. These songs constitute a living form of oral tradition within the Sabu community. This study aims to explore the functions, meanings, and values embedded in these songs, particularly as expressions of spirituality, social relations, and cultural identity. Using a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical methods, this research examines three lontar tapping songs (Alure Due) in terms of their textual and contextual dimensions. The findings reveal that, beyond serving as a means of entertainment and alleviating solitude during tapping activities, the songs function as a medium of social communication, a vehicle for cultural preservation, and an expression of the spiritual relationship between humans and nature—especially the lontar palm, which is regarded as a symbol of life. These songs encompass themes such as longing for homeland, pride in Sabu identity, filial devotion, moral reflection, and communal harmony. Analysis of the three songs indicates shared values of gratitude, hope, and social solidarity, despite variations in specific meanings. These findings support Vansina's view that oral traditions function as mechanisms for transmitting cultural values and norms across generations.

Keywords: *oral tradition, lontar tapping songs, spirituality, cultural identity, Sabu Raijua*

INTRODUCTION

Folk songs are one form of folklore consisting of words and melodies that are transmitted orally among members of a particular community, characterized by their traditional nature and multiple variations (Danandjaja, 1994). In Indonesia, a wide variety of folk songs can be found, closely related to its multicultural cultural system. As a form of oral tradition, folk songs are important to preserve and can serve as a foundation for building culture in the future, as they embody numerous positive values. One example is the folk songs of Sabu Raijua, particularly those sung by tappers while collecting sap from lontar palm trees. Sabu Raijua folk songs can generally be classified into three types: (1) lament songs (songs for the deceased), (2) communal work songs (Hod'da), and (3) lontar sap-tapping songs (Alure Pa Kolo Due). Lament songs are performed by members of the bereaved family and consist of expressions of grief, prayers, and calls to relatives to gather and receive the deceased. Communal work songs (Hod'da) function as a source of encouragement during collective labor, such as roofing houses, farming, or pulling boats to sea. Lontar sap-tapping songs (Alure Pa Kolo Due) are sung by tappers while extracting sap from the lontar palm. This third type is the focus of the present study.

In this context, singing becomes an inseparable part of the lontar tapping practice. Beyond serving as entertainment or a way to pass time, these songs function as expressions of gratitude, prayers, supplications for blessings, and sources of motivation in carrying out a physically demanding and risky occupation. Singing while tapping also fosters emotional bonds that strengthen social solidarity and a sense of communal belonging among the tappers. Moreover, these songs function as a medium of communication that conveys social values, norms, and local wisdom of the Sabu Raijua community. Despite their significant role in community life, academic studies on lontar tapping songs—particularly those examining their textual and contextual dimensions comprehensively—remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the text and context of lontar tapping songs (Alure Due) and to interpret their meanings within the framework of oral tradition and the cultural values of the Sabu Raijua community. This paper examines the functions and meanings of the lyrics in three lontar tapping songs, both individually and comparatively, including their similarities and differences, through semiotic and stylistic analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The lontar palm plays a vital role in the life of the Sabu Raijua community. In addition to serving as an economic resource, it also symbolizes life itself. Studies on oral tradition position song as an important medium for cultural transmission. Vansina (1985) argues that oral traditions function not merely as entertainment, but also as instruments for transmitting values, norms, and ethics to subsequent generations. Furthermore, from the perspective of cultural anthropology, artistic expressions such as songs are part of a system of symbols that reflect the meanings of life within a community. In this context, lontar tapping songs can be understood as representations of the relationship between humans, nature, and their social environment. The study of oral tradition is also closely linked to the work of Ong (2002), who emphasizes that oral societies exhibit distinct modes of thought compared to literate societies. In oral cultures, knowledge is not preserved through writing but is sustained through memory, repetition, and vocal performance. Ong further highlights that oral societies think in contextual, formulaic, and communal ways, where knowledge endures through repetition and sound rather than through written archives.

Malinowski's (1944) functionalist theory in the study of oral literature asserts that every cultural expression serves specific social functions, such as strengthening social solidarity, maintaining collective identity, and regulating social relationships. According to him, each cultural element functions to sustain social balance and order. Thus, lontar tapping songs cannot be separated from the social and cultural context of the Sabu Raijua community. Several previous studies have examined the tradition of singing atop lontar palm trees in Sabu Raijua, though with different emphases. Sine and Mata (2023), in *Kandai Journal*, analyzed lontar songs using a conceptual metaphor approach. Their study found that these songs contain various metaphorical mappings, such as humans as plants, social relations as containers, and life as a sea journey. This research highlights the linguistic-cognitive dimension and demonstrates that the songs reflect the lived experiences of a community closely connected to nature and maritime traditions. They further argue that lontar songs embody local wisdom and are deeply intertwined with the community's lived experiences, beliefs, and daily practices.

Another study by Seto (2023) employed an oral tradition and cultural transmission approach, examining the processes of transmission, socio-cultural functions, and the development of lontar singing practices. Similarly, Babo (2024) emphasizes that lontar tapping songs constitute an essential part of Sabu cultural identity and are transmitted across generations through direct practice. His descriptive study shows that these songs are closely associated with ritual elements, prayers, and supplications to the divine, and are sustained through everyday tapping activities. In addition, the present author has previously published an article entitled "Orang Sabu dan Tradisi Bernyanyi di Atas Pohon Lontar" in *Nusantara Institute* (June 26, 2023) and produced a documentary film titled "Nyanyian Pohon Lontar (Alure Pa Kolo Due)", which was released on the BRIN YouTube channel (2023).

Although previous studies have examined lontar songs from linguistic (conceptual metaphor), socio-cultural, and transmission perspectives, research that integrates textual and contextual analysis, stylistic approaches (such as repetition, parallelism, and symbolism), and semiotic analysis in relation to oral tradition theories (Vansina, Ong, Finnegan) remains limited. To address this gap, the present study offers a novel contribution by combining textual and contextual analysis simultaneously. It interprets the songs as a system of symbols (semiotic system), not merely from linguistic or functional perspectives, but also by linking singing practices to the modes of thought characteristic of oral societies. Furthermore, this study conducts a comparative analysis of three lontar tapping songs from Sabu Raijua, revealing variations in meaning within a single tradition. Therefore, this research approaches these songs not only as cultural products, but also as systems of meaning, communication, and knowledge within the Sabu Raijua community.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. The data consist of the texts of three lontar tapping songs (Alure Due), obtained through documentation and interviews with local informants. Data collection techniques include observation of lontar tapping practices, interviews with tappers and community leaders, and documentation of song texts. Data analysis is conducted by examining the structure and formulation of the song texts, analyzing their social and cultural contexts, and interpreting their meanings based on oral tradition theory and cultural approaches.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Sabu people, who inhabit Sabu Raijua Regency in East Nusa Tenggara, maintain rituals closely connected to their daily livelihood, particularly lontar tapping (Babo, 2024). Jacob (2023) notes that pre-tapping rituals, known as radda hubi due and poro hogo, are performed to seek strength for the tapper and their equipment, as well as to pray for favorable natural conditions, such as clear weather. Furthermore, through songs sung atop the

lontar tree, the Sabu people also invoke the flow of sap, hoping that the lontar inflorescences will be filled, producing abundant, sweet, and nourishing sap to sustain each household. The activity of tapping lontar sap provides a distinctive experience for the tappers. Paina Bara Pa (interview, 2022), a Sabu cultural figure and GMT pastor, states that singing is an integral part of Sabu life (Do Hawu). The hot and arid environment encourages people to begin their activities with song, which serves as a source of motivation, making physically demanding and risky work more bearable and even enjoyable. Singing also functions as an expression of gratitude to the Divine.

Similarly, Jhon Ly Dali (interview, 2022) emphasizes that singing reflects the identity of the Sabu people. It holds deep meaning and is practiced not only during lontar tapping but also in various aspects of daily life, such as farming, house construction, funerals, and marriage ceremonies. According to Dali, these songs are inherited from ancestors and are often performed spontaneously, depending on the singer's emotions and mood. They function as expressions of comfort and hope, particularly for obtaining abundant and high-quality sap. The Sabu people regard the lontar palm as a maternal figure; thus, through song, tappers symbolically appeal to this "mother" to provide the best sustenance through its sap. Pa (in Jacob, 2023) further explains that from a religious perspective, there is an awareness that the lontar palm is a divine blessing, likened to a mother's milk. Humans can only receive what it provides, without the ability to increase its yield. Therefore, songs performed atop the lontar tree (alu re) often contain supplications for the inflorescences to be filled with abundant sap.

1. Functions and Meanings of the Songs

The songs sung by lontar tappers atop the palm trees serve several primary functions: as expressions of gratitude and prayer, as a source of motivation during work, as a medium of social communication, as a means of cultural preservation, and as a form of spiritual relationship between the tappers and the lontar palm. These functions demonstrate that the songs play a multidimensional role in the life of the community. The lontar tapping songs (Alure Due) reflect spiritual values, such as reverence for nature and supplication for protection. In addition, the lyrics convey social messages related to togetherness, hard work, and aspirations for a better life. In a cultural context, these songs are not merely individual expressions but also possess a collective resonance that reinforces the identity of the Sabu community. From an ethnomusicological perspective, singing atop the lontar tree during sap tapping functions as a form of mental reinforcement—serving as a tool to cope with anxiety and physical strain while climbing. Therefore, singing plays a psychological role that is inseparable from the tapping process.

2. Texts of Three Songs by Palm Palm Tappers

The following are the texts of three songs sung by palm palm tappers in the native language of Sabu Raijua, followed by line-by-line translations into Indonesian.

Song 1:

YA DHE ANA RAI HAWU (I AM A CHILD OF SABU)

Ya dhe ana Rai Hawu, do lebhu pa rai dau
I am a child of Sabu, who has migrated to a distant land
Taga ta name ta kale, murimada do memudhe
To seek a livelihood and a better life
Ki dhai anni mad'dha, awe pehoru an'ni
When night falls, it is time to rest
Huti ai namada rede, hewene rai kowa ya
These tears fall, remembering my homeland

Wo Rai Hawu, rai ama ap'pu ya
Oh, Sabu Island, land of my ancestors
Do ta era ma, awe ya tab hale
There will come a time when I return

Mi na mi le ne memude, muri mada pa raid au
Even though life in the distant land is very comfortable
Tapulara Rai Hawu, ngad'di do ta ballo ri ya
Yet I will never forget the land of Sabu

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Muri yae ruba we dara, wie helama tona ie
O God, please help me, grant me health and long life
Mita ihi Rai Hawu, ju lo'do ju memude
So that Sabu Island may grow and prosper day by day

Wo Rai Hawu, rai ama ap'pu ya
Oh, Sabu Island, land of my ancestors
Do ta era ma, awe ya tab hale
There will come a time when I return

Song 2: RAI NAIKI (SINCE CHILDHOOD)

Rai naiki ya dai mengal'lu dara
Since childhood, I have lived in happiness
Ha'o ta pepaho ri ina ama
Cradled in turns by my mother and father
Dai ya ta kepai lodo, ya la rai liha dou
When I grew up, I went away to a distant land

Ina ama do pemetana ya
My beloved mother and father
Ne nga ke ne 'bale ri ya
What can I repay you with?
Kiri rihi nehewene
When I think and reflect deeply
Huti ei namada rede
Unknowingly, my tears begin to fall

Ina ama toi ri ya nehedui mu
Mother and father, I know your hardships
Ne ko ya para pekale
Here I am striving and searching
Hewari hine ki pe abu nga ai muikoko
Someday, if I receive blessings and fortune
Do dae ma tabale
I will return home
La la peabu la peteni ada hari ta hel'u
To meet and gather together, releasing our longing
Ina ama tana eeee
My beloved mother and father

Song 3: DINO MAGE IE (REMEMBER AND REFLECT)

Rimo nge mo dara eee
This journey of life
Dje do milapu delo djara
Is like a lamp that lights the path
Dje ele ri mou nge modara ee
This journey of life
Do mi lapu delo djara muri mada
Is like a lamp that illuminates the way

Lapu delo djara muri mada
A lamp that lights life
Dino mage ie roe lolo eee
Remember and reflect in life
Lapu delo djara muri mada
A lamp that lights life
Dino mage ie roe lolo eee
Remember and reflect in life
Bole pehihu, bole peja'ji
Do not engage in conflict with one another
Mi do dai la apa nga kerewe
So as not to disturb the harmony

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3. Analysis of Lontar Tapping Songs and Their Theoretical Connections

In the texts of Sabu folk songs, messages emphasizing the importance of the lontar palm for the Sabu people are consistently found. This is also evident in the three songs analyzed in this study. The following section presents interpretations of meaning and theoretical analyses of these songs. The first song, “Ya Dhe Ana Rai Hawu” (I Am a Child of Sabu), expresses the experience of the tapper/singer in migration and a strong emotional attachment to their homeland (Rai Hawu or Sabu Island). The main theme that emerges is pride in cultural identity, as reflected in the title and the opening line: “Ya dhe ana Rai Hawu.” This song clearly reinforces the collective identity of the singer as a “child of Sabu,” while also serving as a means of maintaining a symbolic connection to ancestral land, despite physical distance. The song also conveys the struggles of life in migration and a deep longing for home. Tears falling at night symbolize this profound sense of longing. At the same time, the singer offers prayers to God for health and long life, along with the hope of returning home to contribute to the development of their homeland. This reveals a clear spiritual dimension in the life of the migrant tapper.

According to Vansina (1985), oral tradition functions as a medium for transmitting identity and cultural values. From the perspective of Geertz (1973), such folk songs can be understood as a “system of symbols” through which life experiences are interpreted. Longing, tears, and prayer are not merely emotional expressions, but also symbols of cultural and spiritual attachment to one’s origins. Furthermore, based on Finnegan’s (1992) theory of oral literature, this song functions both as a personal expression (the emotions of a migrant) and a collective expression (the identity of the Sabu people). Thus, the song serves as a bridge between individual experience and shared cultural consciousness. The second song, “Rai Naiki” (Since Childhood), focuses on the relationship between a child and their parents, as well as values of filial piety and responsibility. Its main themes include parental love from childhood, awareness of parental sacrifice, a sense of moral obligation, and the determination to repay that sacrifice through hard work and success in migration. The motif of “tears,” which also appears in the first song, reflects both emotional and moral awareness. There is a transition from childhood dependence to adult responsibility.

In relation to this song, Vansina (1985) argues that oral tradition serves as a means of internalizing values and norms. This song clearly transmits values such as respect for parents, hard work, and moral responsibility. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, as explained by Koentjaraningrat (2009), these values form part of a cultural system that regulates family relationships. The song thus reinforces norms of filial piety. Meanwhile, according to Malinowski (1944), within functionalist theory, each cultural element serves to maintain social balance. In this case, the song functions to strengthen family structure and sustain intergenerational responsibility. Therefore, the song is not only emotional but also normative and educational.

The third song, “Dino Mage Ie” (Remember and Reflect), is reflective and philosophical in nature. Its main theme is guidance on how to live life as a journey. The metaphor of the “lamp,” repeated several times, symbolizes illumination or guidance in life. The use of this metaphor suggests that life requires direction and wisdom. The song also contains an invitation to self-reflection, including advice to avoid conflict, emphasizing the importance of harmony within the community. This aligns with Vansina’s (1985) view that oral traditions often contain moral messages that function as guidelines for life.

Within Geertz's (1973) framework, the metaphor of the "lamp" can also be interpreted as a cultural symbol carrying profound meanings related to morality and life direction. The song functions both as a "model of" reality (a reflection of life) and a "model for" action (a guide for behavior). Based on these perspectives, the third song explicitly teaches self-reflection, emotional control, and the maintenance of social harmony. Furthermore, from Durkheim's (1912) perspective, values of togetherness and the avoidance of conflict are fundamental to social solidarity. Thus, the song serves to strengthen social cohesion by instilling norms of peaceful living within the community.

4. Comparative Analysis of the Three Songs

The three songs above share several similarities. First, all of them contain moral and spiritual values. In the first song, these values are reflected in the sincere intention to return and contribute to the development of one's homeland after striving for a better life in migration. In the second song, moral and spiritual values are expressed through the longing to show devotion to one's parents, while in the third song they appear in the form of advice to avoid conflict in order to maintain social harmony. Second, all three songs function as a medium for emotional expression among the tappers who sing them, both at the individual and collective levels. Third, they all serve as a means of cultural transmission. In addition to these similarities, the songs differ in their primary focus. While "Ya Dhe Ana Rai Hawu" emphasizes pride in Sabu identity and longing for the homeland, "Rai Naiki" highlights family relationships and moral responsibility. Meanwhile, "Dino Mage Ie" focuses on life reflection and social harmony. Within the framework of Vansina's (1985) theory, these songs demonstrate that oral tradition not only preserves narratives but also shapes the ways of thinking, values, and behaviors of a community.

5. Stylistic Analysis of Lontar Tapping Songs

Stylistic analysis focuses on linguistic features, structure, and distinctive styles within oral tradition. Several stylistic elements found in the three songs include (1) repetition, (2) parallelism, (3) metaphor and symbolism, (4) emotive diction, and (5) the formulaic structure of oral tradition. According to Vansina (1985), repetition is a formulaic feature that facilitates oral transmission across generations. A closer examination shows that repetition in several stanzas functions to reinforce emotional meaning, aid memorization (a key characteristic of oral tradition), and emphasize core messages. Ong (2002) also identifies key characteristics of thought in oral cultures, including: contextual and situational thinking rather than abstract; formulaic and repetitive patterns to support memory; communal and participatory orientation rather than individualistic; and reliance on sound as the primary medium of meaning. Ong further argues that in oral cultures, utterances are ephemeral, and therefore must be continuously sustained through performative practices such as singing. In this sense, lontar tapping songs can be understood as a form of "living knowledge," rather than merely textual artifacts.

In terms of repetition, all three songs demonstrate strong usage at the level of words, phrases, and stanzas. In the first song, repetition appears in what seems to function as a refrain: "Wo Rai Hawu, rai ama ap'pu ya / Do ta era ma, awe ya tab hale" (Oh, Sabu Island, land of my ancestors / There will come a time when I return). In the second song, repetition is less structurally fixed, although the phrase "ina ama" (mother and father) recurs across different stanzas. In the third song, repetition appears in the lines: "Lapu delo djara muri mada / Dino mage ie roe lolo eee" (A lamp that illuminates life / Remember and reflect in life). Regarding parallelism, sentence structures in the songs tend to be parallel, particularly through repeated syntactic patterns. For example: "Bole pehihu, bole peja'ji / Mi do dai la apa nga kerewe" (Do not engage in conflict with one another / So as not to disturb the harmony) in the third song. This parallelism creates rhythmic harmony, reinforces meaning through repetition, and provides aesthetic balance. It also reflects a systematic and collective pattern of thought characteristic of oral cultures.

Metaphor and symbolism are evident in several key expressions, such as "lamp" as a symbol of life guidance (third song), "tears" as a symbol of longing and inner suffering, and "Rai Hawu" (Sabu land) as a symbol of identity and origin. From Geertz's (1973) perspective, these symbols form a system of meaning that reflects how a community understands life. Emotive diction, or highly expressive word choice, appears in phrases such as "tears falling," "land of my ancestors," and "beloved mother and father." These expressions are deliberately chosen to evoke emotional closeness and to connect individual experience with collective feeling. In terms of the formulaic structure of oral tradition, the three songs display a similar pattern: an opening (introducing identity or life experience), a body (describing journey, conflict, or reflection), and a closing (expressing hope or prayer). This structure aligns with the concept of oral formulaic tradition described by Finnegan (1992), which refers to recurring patterns (formulas) used in the creation and performance of oral works. These formulas may take the form of fixed phrases, repeated lines, or rhythmic patterns. In the context of lontar tapping songs, examples include repeated invocations (e.g., "Wo Rai Hawu"), parallel sentence structures, and recurring themes or metaphors, as discussed above.

Thus, the practice of singing atop the lontar tree (Alure Due) reflects the cognitive patterns of the Sabu people, which rely on repetition, emphasize concrete experiences (migration, family, labor), and construct meaning collectively through vocal performance. This reinforces the view that the singing tradition of lontar tappers in Sabu is not merely an aesthetic expression, but also a cognitive and social system within an oral culture.

6. Semiotic Analysis (Deepening Symbolic Meaning)

Semiotic analysis aims to reveal how signs, symbols, and meanings operate in the songs of lontar tappers. This approach views the songs as a system of signs that represent cultural reality. Regarding signs, Geertz (1973) argues that culture is a system of symbols that gives meaning to human life. The songs of lontar tappers can be understood as symbolic texts containing signifiers, such as words, metaphors, and expressions within the songs, and signifieds, namely cultural meanings, values, and life experiences. Thus, each element in the songs carries deeper layers of meaning beyond its literal sense. Furthermore, in analyzing the main symbols in the three songs, it can be observed that the first song emphasizes the phrase or term “Rai Hawu” (Land of Sabu), which represents identity and origin. In the song “Ya Dhe Ana Rai Hawu,” the term “Rai Hawu” does not merely refer to a geographical location, but serves as a symbol of origin, collective identity, and genealogical ties to ancestors. This symbol reflects what Durkheim (1912) refers to as “collective consciousness,” namely the sense of togetherness that binds individuals within a community.

Moreover, in the first and second songs, “tears” function as a symbol of collective emotion and sacrifice. “Tears” in these songs are not merely a personal expression, but also symbolize the suffering of migration, longing for family and homeland, and sacrifices made for a better life. In cultural semiotics, this symbol connects individual experiences with the collective experiences of migrant communities. In addition, in the third song, the word “lamp” (pelita) becomes a symbol of morality and direction in life. Here, the metaphor of “lamp” holds significant meaning as a guide for life, representing wisdom and moral values. This symbol functions as a “model for reality” (a guide for living), in accordance with Geertz’s concept (1973). The song not only depicts life but also directs how life ought to be lived. Another prominent symbol appears in the word “journey” in the third song, representing life itself. The concept of journey in “Dino Mage Ie” serves as a universal metaphor for life—as a process, with goals and direction, and requiring guidance (the “lamp”). This symbol illustrates how the Sabu people interpret life as a dynamic and meaningful process. Structurally, the three songs exhibit a semiotic pattern that moves from individual experiences (longing, sadness, hope) toward collective meanings (identity, norms, cultural values). This indicates that the songs function as a mechanism for transforming personal meaning into social consciousness.

On a deeper level, the songs of lontar tappers reflect the worldview of the Sabu people—that humans are always connected to their homeland and that life is a struggle requiring direction. Another aspect of this worldview is that social harmony is a central value, and that one’s relationship with God serves as a source of strength. From the perspective of Malinowski (1944), these symbols function to provide a sense of order and meaning in a life full of uncertainty. Overall, the songs of lontar tappers can be understood as a system of cultural signs. These cultural signs encompass cultural texts, symbolic systems, and media for the transmission of meaning. Through recurring symbols, these songs teach moral values, shape identity, and preserve cultural continuity. In line with Vansina (1985), such oral traditions not only preserve the past but also actively shape the present and the future of the community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis indicate that the songs of lontar tappers have multidimensional functions, encompassing emotional, social, spiritual, and cultural aspects. These songs serve as a medium for expressing life experiences, particularly in the context of migration, family relationships, and reflections on life. The song “Ya Dhe Ana Rai Hawu” highlights cultural identity and attachment to the homeland, while “Rai Naiki” emphasizes the value of filial devotion to parents. Meanwhile, “Dino Mage Ie” functions as a philosophical reflection on life and social harmony. These findings reinforce Vansina’s (1985) view that oral traditions function as a medium for transmitting cultural values and identity.

The stylistic analysis shows that the three songs exhibit characteristics typical of oral tradition, namely repetition, parallelism, metaphor, and formulaic structure. The use of repetition serves not only an aesthetic function but also acts as a means of preserving the continuity of the tradition. Parallelism reflects a structured pattern of thought, while metaphors (such as “lamp”) reveal the depth of symbolic meaning. This aligns with Geertz’s (1973) perspective, which positions symbols at the core of culture. Furthermore, the formulaic structure of the three songs demonstrates the concept of oral formulaic tradition, referring to recurring patterns (formulas), namely the opening, body, and closing.

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From a semiotic perspective, key symbols such as “light,” “tears,” and “homeland” convey deeper meanings related to guidance in life, emotional attachment, and cultural identity. These findings support Vansina’s (1985) argument that oral traditions serve as a vehicle for transmitting values and norms across generations. Moreover, the songs reflect what Geertz (1973) describes as a system of symbols through which societies construct and interpret meaning. In terms of social dimensions and collective solidarity, the songs of lontar tappers also play a role in building and strengthening social cohesion. Values such as togetherness, respect for parents, and the avoidance of conflict are reflected in the song texts. From Durkheim’s (1912) perspective, these values are part of social solidarity that maintains societal cohesion. The songs function as a means of internalizing norms that reinforce social integration.

From the perspective of Malinowski’s functionalism (1944), the songs of lontar tappers also serve to fulfill the social and psychological needs of the community. These songs provide emotional reinforcement for individuals, maintain social relationships, and sustain cultural stability. Thus, the songs are not merely aesthetic expressions but also social mechanisms that function to maintain the balance of community life. When synthesized, the three songs form a unified meaning that reflects the life of the Sabu Raijua community: the relationship between humans and their homeland, the relationship between children and their parents, and the relationship among fellow human beings. Altogether, these meanings demonstrate that the songs of lontar tappers represent a holistic expression of the community’s cultural value system.

CONCLUSION

The songs of lontar tappers performed atop lontar trees constitute an important part of the oral tradition of the Sabu Raijua community, carrying social, cultural, and spiritual functions. These songs are not merely a form of entertainment, but also serve as a medium for expressing gratitude, facilitating social communication, and preserving cultural values. The analysis of the three songs shows that, despite variations in form and meaning, they share the same fundamental values: spirituality, solidarity, and a harmonious relationship with nature. The three lontar tapper songs represent a comprehensive reflection of the life of the Sabu Raijua community, encompassing dimensions of identity, family, spirituality, and social harmony. These songs function as expressions of life experiences, as a means of transmitting values, and as a medium for cultural preservation. From the perspectives of oral tradition theory and cultural anthropology, it can be concluded that lontar tapper songs are not merely aesthetic practices, but living systems of meaning that continuously shape the collective consciousness of the Sabu people.

The stylistic analysis demonstrates that the three songs exhibit characteristics typical of oral tradition, namely repetition, parallelism, metaphor, and formulaic structure. The use of repetition serves not only an aesthetic purpose but also functions as a tool for sustaining the continuity of the tradition. Parallelism reflects a structured pattern of thought, while metaphors such as “lamp” reveal the depth of symbolic meaning. This aligns with Geertz’s (1973) perspective, which positions symbols at the core of culture. The semiotic approach shows that lontar tapper songs are not merely artistic expressions, but complex systems of meaning. Within them are symbols that represent identity, morality, social relations, and the worldview of the Sabu Raijua community. Therefore, lontar tapper songs serve as an important representation of the cultural identity of the Sabu people.

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