



Religious Meaning in Gorontalo Song Lyrics: A Barthesian Semiotic Study

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01 Revised: 2026 06-18 Accepted: 2026 06-24 Keywords: Roland Barthes Semiotics; Gorontalo Song Lyrics; Religious Meaning; Denotation; Connotation; Myth. DOI: 10.24256/ideasv14i1.10932 Corresponding Author: Arni Nuruji arninuruji20@gmail.com Indonesian Language and Literature Study Program, State University of Gorontalo	<i>This study investigates religious meanings embedded in Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics through Roland Barthes' three-tiered semiotic framework: denotation, connotation, and myth. Previous semiotic studies of Indonesian religious songs have focused primarily on national-language texts leaving a significant gap: no study has applied Barthes' tripartite analysis to regional-language religious songs, particularly Gorontalo qasida, which uniquely integrate Islamic values with local cultural wisdom rooted in the philosophy of Adat Bersendikan Syara', Syara' Bersendikan Kitabullah. This research addresses that gap by combining Barthes' semiotics with Glock and Stark's religiosity dimensions as a classification framework. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were drawn from 40 song lyrics across three albums by different Gorontalo singers, selected based on criteria of regional language use, religious theme, and symbolic content. The findings converge on three broad themes: (1) at the denotative level, lyrics function as a direct outreach medium conveying worship obligations, divine authority, and moral critique; (2) at the connotative level, they activate critiques of materialism, spiritual urgency, and Gorontalo cultural values such as respect for elders (hulawa) and communal solidarity (huyula); and (3) at the mythological level, five naturalized belief systems emerge salvation in the hereafter, faith and deeds as worth, death as homecoming, dignified death, and the prohibition of arrogance and greed. This study demonstrates that Gorontalo religious songs function as ideological texts for religious outreach, social control, and worldview formation, and offers a replicable methodological model for analyzing minority-language religious oral literature.</i>

1. Introduction

Literary works do not only function as a means of artistic expression, but also as a mirror of the values, beliefs, and worldviews of the society that creates them. From a semiotic perspective, literary works are viewed as systems of signs that

construct layered meanings, closely related to the ideology and culture of society (Sobur, 2013: 69). Among the diverse forms of literary works, song lyrics occupy a strategic position due to their proximity to everyday life. As affirmed by Triana (in Arsyad, 2022: 22), song lyrics are an art form used to express emotions or feelings based on one's experiences, stories, or observations.

The development of semiotic research on song lyrics over the past five years has shown significant growth, reflecting the recognition that popular texts possess a depth of meaning equal to canonical literary works. Research by Syahidah (2024) on the lyrics of 'Sesal' by Sabyan Gambus successfully uncovered messages of Islamic creed, law, and ethics through Barthes' three tiers of meaning, while simultaneously demonstrating the effectiveness of music as a medium for religious outreach in the era of globalization. Nurfauijah & Rambe (2025), in their analysis of the pop-rock religious song 'Pulang (Robbighfirlii)', found that a semiotic approach to death functions as a universal solution to life's anxieties.

Similarly, research on 'Stairway to Heaven' by Led Zeppelin demonstrates that denotative, connotative, and mythological analysis can uncover contemporary critical commentary. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the methodological maturity of Barthes' semiotics while also identifying a significant gap: no research has yet specifically applied Barthes' three-tiered analysis to religious song lyrics in a regional language, particularly Gorontalo qasida songs.

Among the various genres of song lyrics, religious songs hold a special place in community life. Religious songs do not merely function as entertainment, but also as a medium for delivering moral and spiritual messages. As stated by Suaib (in Arsyad, 2022: 24), religious or devotional lyrics are lyrics that are sung in relation to a person's belief in God. Triana (in Arsyad, 2022: 25) affirms that song lyrics can function as a means of socializing and preserving an attitude or value, so the messages conveyed through religious songs have a powerful influence on the formation of community values and worldviews.

The uniqueness of Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics lies in the fusion of Islamic elements with local Gorontalo wisdom. As is widely known, the Gorontalo community adheres to the life philosophy of 'Adat Bersendikan Syara', Syara' Bersendikan Kitabullah' — a philosophy affirming that customs must be grounded in Islamic law, and Islamic law must be grounded in the Qur'an. Religious values in Gorontalo oral literature, such as in the taleningo oral poetry, have been proven to contain profound religious messages to be applied in community life. In this context, Gorontalo qasida songs such as puasa songs, mongamali (practicing) songs, and tumbilotohe songs serve as effective media for conveying Islamic teachings while also preserving local cultural identity.

However, the depth of meaning contained in Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics is not always fully comprehensible to their audiences. The use of figurative language, religious symbols, and metaphors characteristic of local culture means that meaning cannot be grasped through literal reading alone. As

Barthes explains (in Sobur, 2013: 69), a text operates on more than one level of meaning: beneath the literal denotative meaning lies a connotative meaning influenced by cultural values and ideology, as well as myth, which is a belief system that has been naturalized so that it appears as truth within society. These three levels of meaning operate simultaneously in Gorontalo religious song lyrics, yet are rarely recognized by listeners.

To uncover this depth of meaning, a scientific approach capable of reading sign systems in a layered and systematic manner is needed. In literary studies, Roland Barthes' semiotics is the most relevant approach for this purpose. Barthes (1972: 109) views myth as a system of communication — a message that not only conveys information but represents a cultural way of thinking about something and conceptualizing it in society. Furthermore, Barthes (in Haryanto, 2014: 34) explains that connotation is a second-order signification system that operates when a sign accurately depicts the sentiments and cultural values of its audience. With this three-tiered framework of meaning — denotation, connotation, and myth — Barthes' theory serves to reveal not only what the song lyrics say, but also how they construct a system of religious belief and ideology within society.

Based on this context, this study focuses on religious meanings in Gorontalo song lyrics using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The novelty of this research lies in its dual contribution: it is the first systematic application of Barthes' three-tiered semiotic framework to a regional-language religious oral corpus in Indonesia, and it demonstrates how Gorontalo qasida songs function not merely as artistic texts but as ideological vehicles for the reproduction of religious and cultural values.

This study addresses three explicit research questions: (1) What denotative meanings are constructed in Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics? (2) What connotative meanings—including cultural values and social critiques—are activated in those lyrics? (3) What mythological meanings, understood as naturalized belief systems, are reproduced through those lyrics? The primary objectives are: (1) to describe the denotative meanings in Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics; (2) to describe the connotative meanings in those lyrics; and (3) to describe the mythological meanings that construct religious ideology in those lyrics. This research is expected to reveal the religious messages implied behind linguistic symbols and to contribute to the development of regional literary studies, particularly Gorontalo literature, which to date remains very limited in scope.

This study also employs the dimensions of religiosity (belief, practice, experience, knowledge, and consequences) as a data classification framework to categorize the religious values found in the song lyrics. However, the dimensions of religiosity are not used as the main analytical theory, but only as support in the data grouping process. Overall, this research addresses the urgency of uncovering layered meanings in regional-language religious song lyrics amid the currents of globalization that threaten the preservation of local culture. By understanding the

meanings contained therein, the community can appreciate religious songs not only aesthetically, but also critically and reflectively.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to understand and interpret meanings contained in song lyrics as symbolic texts, which cannot be measured quantitatively (Sugiyono, 2019: 241). Descriptive research aims to systematically describe the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings in Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics based on Roland Barthes' semiotic framework.

The data in this study consist of texts of Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics containing linguistic signs to be analyzed according to Barthes' three tiers of meaning. Data were collected from three albums by different singers obtained through documentation from YouTube channels: (1) Album Puasa (Fasting Songs) by Usman Mohi, published approximately 2015, accessed via the YouTube channel Lagu Daerah Gorontalo; (2) Album Mongamali (Practicing Songs) by Hj. Maryam Polapa, published approximately 2017, accessed via the channel Gorontalo Religi; and (3) Album Tumbilotohe (Lantern Night Songs) by various Gorontalo artists, a compilation published approximately 2018, also accessed via YouTube. Song lyrics were selected based on the following criteria: (1) written in the Gorontalo regional language, (2) containing religious themes, and (3) containing symbolic elements representing religious meaning. From the collection process, 40 lyrics were obtained and analyzed in depth.

Data collection techniques employed reading and note-taking techniques. The reading technique involved repeatedly reading the original song lyrics and their Indonesian translations to understand the cultural, historical, and social context underlying the creation of the songs. The note-taking technique involved systematically recording every word, phrase, clause, and stanza containing potential signs for analysis. All data were then classified into a corpus table based on the research questions and dimensions of religiosity.

The data analysis technique employs Roland Barthes' semiotic framework with the following steps: (1) sign identification — selecting linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses) containing religious meaning; (2) denotative analysis — determining the literal or first-order meaning of each sign based on dictionaries and the general understanding of the Gorontalo community; (3) connotative analysis — interpreting the additional meanings that emerge from the influence of cultural values, emotions, and the religious ideology of the Gorontalo community, taking into account the overall context of the songs; (4) mythological analysis — revealing the belief systems or ideologies naturalized through connotative signs, so that they appear as natural truth within society; (5) classification based on dimensions of religiosity — grouping data into Glock and Stark's five dimensions

(belief, worship, experience, knowledge, consequences) to facilitate presentation, while the meaning analysis remains based on Barthes' semiotics; and (6) description and drawing of conclusions — presenting the results of analysis systematically and summarizing the emerging patterns of meaning.

Regarding translation, lyrics were first transcribed in their original Gorontalo form, then translated into Indonesian by the first author (a native speaker of Gorontalo and trained linguist), and subsequently rendered into English with consultation from a bilingual academic colleague. Back-translation checks were performed on a random 20% sample to verify accuracy.

To ensure trustworthiness, three strategies were employed: (a) triangulation of sources, by cross-referencing lyric meanings with published Gorontalo-language dictionaries and cultural informants; (b) peer review, whereby the analytical coding was reviewed independently by a co-author and discrepancies resolved by consensus; and (c) thick description, providing full lyric excerpts and multi-step analysis in the data tables so that readers may evaluate the interpretive chain.

3. Result

This study analyzes 40 Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics grouped into three tiers of meaning based on Roland Barthes' semiotics: denotation, connotation, and myth. The following are the main findings at each tier. The analysis results are presented based on the three research questions. Table 1 presents representative data on denotative meaning.

Denotative Meaning in Gorontalo-Language Religious Song Lyrics

Table 1. Denotative Meaning in Gorontalo-Language Religious Song Lyrics

Data Code	Lyrics (Gorontalo Language)	Translation	Meaning
MLI/DRP/KMPA	<i>Dulolo ito nga'amila mokaraja parenda Liyo</i>	Let us all carry out His commands	A collective invitation to all humanity to execute God's commands directly and unconditionally
MLI/DRP/PS	<i>Isa, subu, lohoi asari wawu magaribu</i>	Isha, Fajr, Dhuhr, Asr and Maghrib	The enumeration of five daily prayers as obligatory daily worship in Islam
PO'BTG/DRB/KYTK	<i>Umuru mahe uzuru</i>	Age is already old	A factual description of the biological

			condition of a human who has entered old age
PO'BTG/DRB/KYTK	<i>Matile tile kuburu</i>	Peering at the grave	A concrete depiction of someone who begins to realize the closeness of death
MTMP/DRP/KMP	<i>Wajibu u'mo puasa</i>	It is obligatory to fast	A normative statement establishing fasting as a legal obligation in Islam

The analysis results show that at the denotative level, Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics function as a medium for religious outreach that conveys religious teachings in a clear and easily understood manner. The denotative meaning patterns constructed include: (1) a collective invitation to carry out God's commands; (2) affirmation of the source of authority (God, the Qur'an, and the Prophet); (3) detailed obligations of worship (five daily prayers, fasting, and charitable deeds); (4) factual descriptions of aging and death; and (5) critiques of excessive worldly orientation.

Connotative Meaning in Gorontalo-Language Religious Song Lyrics

Connotative meaning is a second-order signification system in which denotative signs become new signifiers that activate cultural values, emotions, and ideology.

Table 2 presents representative data on connotative meaning.

Data Code	Lyrics (Gorontalo Language)	Translation	Meaning
APTH/DRE/PCD	<i>Hipohilapita lo dunia</i>	Chasing the world	Activates a critique of materialism and an excessively worldly

			orientation; normalizes the view that fixation on the world is a deviation from religious values
APTH/DRB/KYBHTK	<i>Harata wawu panggati</i>	Wealth and rank	Activates a value system about measures of worldly success while simultaneously challenging it; wealth and rank are presented to be questioned from a religious perspective
PO'BTG/DRF/RITD	<i>Ati olo Batanga</i>	Pity oneself	Activates the value of introspection (muraqabah) and self- awareness; pity is not a passive attitude but a drive to change and

			repent
MTMP/DRE/KMW	<i>To'u ito donggo kawasa</i>	While we are still strong	Activates a sense of spiritual urgency; the word 'strong' creates tension between 'now' (while still capable) and 'later' (when that capability is gone)
ELY/DRB/KYHS	<i>To duniya ito bo melohepito</i>	In this world we are only passing through	Activates the metaphor of 'passing through' that transforms humanity's status into that of a traveller; 'only' emphasizes the world's limitations and promotes an otherworldly orientation

The analysis results show that connotative meanings in Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics construct: (1) critiques of materialism and excessive worldly orientation; (2) spiritual urgency through the repetition of the word 'selagi' (while) (tame'a); (3) Gorontalo cultural values such as respect for parents (hulawa) and unity of heart; and (4) symbolization of repentance through tears, self-reflection,

and the confession of sins.

Mythological Meaning in Gorontalo-Language Religious Song Lyrics

Mythological meaning represents the third stage of signification, where connotation develops into an ideological system that is considered natural and unquestionable. Table 3 presents representative data on mythological meaning.

Table 3. Mythological Meaning in Gorontalo-Language Religious Song Lyrics

Data Code	Lyrics (Gorontalo Language)	Translation	Meaning
MLI/DRB/KYKA	<i>Salamati to aherati</i>	Salvation in the hereafter	Naturalizes that true salvation is only in the hereafter; the world-hereafter hierarchy is accepted as collective truth that need not be debated
MLI/DRB/KYKH	<i>Alihu ito salamati</i>	So that we may be saved	Naturalizes salvation as a collective project; the use of 'we' erases the individual-collective boundary, making obedience a social responsibility
APTH/DRB/KYADI	<i>Amali wawu imani</i>	Deeds and faith	Naturalizes the definition that a good person is determined by faith and deeds, not wealth or position; reverses the wealth-based social hierarchy with a religious one
APTH/DRE/PMAG	<i>Nyawa po</i>	Stake one's life	Naturalizes the

	<i>taruwa</i>		concept of martyrdom as the highest aspiration; religion is positioned above physical life, transforming a theological choice into a survival instinct
PO'BTG/DRP/PB	<i>Lato he potobatilo</i>	Hurry and repent	Naturalizes repentance as a self-renewal that must not be delayed; creates the urgency that the door of repentance is open but human time is limited
MTMP/DRB/KSK	<i>To kuburu ito sikisa</i>	In the grave we are punished	Naturalizes the torment of the grave as a certainty; 'we' reinforces the naturalization, functioning as social control based on belief in afterlife consequences

The analysis results identify five central myths constructed in Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics: (1) salvation only in the hereafter as the highest life orientation; (2) faith and deeds as the only measure of human worth before God; (3) death as a homecoming that transforms the perception of death from fear to longing; (4) dignified death (many mourners, sincere tears) as the pinnacle of a good life; and (5) the prohibition of arrogance and greed as the two main enemies of spiritual life. These five myths are interconnected, forming a religious ideology naturalized in Gorontalo society through the medium of songs sung and repeated collectively.

4. Discussion

This discussion aims to interpret the research findings by linking them to

Roland Barthes' semiotic framework (denotation, connotation, myth) and Glock and Stark's dimensions of religiosity. Overall, Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics do not merely function as artistic works, but also as a medium for religious outreach, social control, and a shaper of the community's worldview.

Denotative Meaning: Direct Transmission of Religious Teachings

At the denotative level, Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics convey religious messages explicitly, normatively, and in an easily understood manner. Findings in Table 1 show that these lyrics contain a collective invitation to carry out God's commands (Dulolo ito nga'amila moka'raja parenda Liyo), a detailed enumeration of worship obligations such as the five daily prayers and fasting, and an affirmation of the sources of authority (God, the Qur'an, the Prophet). The denotative meaning patterns constructed indicate a systematic outreach function. The invitation 'dulolo ito nga'amila' (let us all) reflects that worship in Gorontalo society is not viewed as a purely individual matter, but as a collective responsibility. This aligns with the view of Ismail & Hotman (2013: 22) that religious outreach with an inclusive and collective approach has proven more effective in building communal religious awareness.

In addition, factual descriptions of social phenomena such as chasing the world (hipohilapita lo dunia) and neglecting religion (agama he'oloyihiya) were also found. These lyrics do not merely record reality, but simultaneously offer moral evaluations through the provision of solutions sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith. As Baidhawiy (2005: 87) argues, modern society is beginning to experience religious neglect as a consequence of the separation of spiritual values from social life, and religious song lyrics serve as a normative reminder of this condition.

Another interesting finding is the use of physical images of aging (old age, a withered face, white hair) as an effective outreach instrument. As explained by Sholihuddin & Jalil (2018: 8), physical signs of aging in the Islamic tradition are viewed as divine warnings urging humans to prepare for the hereafter. The lyric 'Matile tile kuburu' (peering at the grave), for instance, denotatively only depicts the action of someone who begins to be aware of death, but in the overall context of the song it functions as a call to introspection. Thus, at the denotative level, Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics function as a direct representation of Islamic teachings that are taklif (obligatory) in nature. This literal meaning serves as the initial foundation for deeper interpretation at the connotative and mythological levels.

Connotative Meaning: Social Criticism and Spiritual Urgency

At the connotative level, Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics activate cultural values, emotions, and ideologies that transcend their literal meanings (Barthes, 1972: 109). Findings in Table 2 show that connotation operates through three main mechanisms: (1) critiques of materialism, (2) the construction of spiritual urgency through the word 'selagi' (while) (tame'a), and (3) the

actualization of Gorontalo cultural values.

Critiques of materialism are evident in the lyrics 'Hipohilapita lo dunia' (chasing the world) and 'Harata wawu panggati' (wealth and rank). Connotatively, the metaphor of 'chasing' depicts a frenzied and insatiable activity, while the pairing of 'wealth and rank' represents two dimensions of power (economic and socio-political) that are precisely challenged from a religious perspective. The lyric 'Dila mowali pongaku' (cannot be acknowledged) explicitly reverses the value hierarchy prevalent in society. This finding aligns with Sakinah (2024: 29), who argues that Islam does not prohibit the possession of wealth, but forbids making it the highest life goal, as this would shift one's orientation from otherworldly to material values.

The most intense construction of spiritual urgency is evident in the repetition of the word 'selagi' (while) (tame'a) in various phrases: 'Tame'a donggo kawasa' (while still strong), 'Tame'a donggo to dunia' (while still in the world), 'Tame'a dipo o'dungga liyo' (while not yet encountered by Him). Connotatively, the word 'while' creates temporal tension that promotes a sense of positive urgency: time is limited, opportunities will not recur. This activates the Islamic value of utilizing five things before five others (health before illness, youth before old age, wealth before poverty, ease before hardship, life before death). As explained by Rahman (2004: 17), regularly remembering death (dzikrul maut) is the most important spiritual therapy for preventing religious negligence.

The actualization of Gorontalo cultural values is reflected in the lyric 'Mongowutata mongodula'a' (brothers and parents), which connotatively activates the value of hulawa (respect for elders) and huyula (mutual cooperation). The lyric 'Popoliyatuwa hilawo' (unite hearts) activates the value of ukhuwah (brotherhood) as part of worship itself. This finding reinforces the view of Ridwan et al. (2025: 345) that the social dimension of religiosity (muamalah) cannot be separated from ritual worship, as Islam views interpersonal relationships as a mirror of one's relationship with God.

Connotation also operates through emotional symbols such as tears ('Ponu'u biyo biyuhuto') and self-reflection ('Lo tolo ela lo batanga'). In religious tradition, tears shed during repentance hold a special position as a sign of spiritual authenticity. As explained by Istiqomah (2023: 5), tears during repentance are a sign of devotion and a softened heart, which in Islam is considered one of the signs of accepted prayers and repentance.

Mythological Meaning: Naturalized Religious Ideology

At the mythological level, Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics construct a belief system accepted as natural truth within society. Findings in Table 3 identify five central myths that are interconnected, forming a coherent religious ideology. The first myth: salvation only in the hereafter ('Salamati to aherati'). This myth naturalizes the world-hereafter hierarchy, wherein true salvation is impossible to achieve in this world. As explained by Fudhla et al. (2025: 1855), the concepts of

this world and the hereafter in Islam are not only understood as theological teachings, but become a worldview that shapes patterns of values, attitudes, and behavior. In the lyrics, this belief is not presented as a doctrine requiring proof, but as a collectively understood fact (*doxa* in Barthes' terms).

The second myth: faith and deeds as the only measure of worth ('*Amali wawu imani*', '*Uwito u'dihimalo*'). This myth radically reverses the wealth-and-power-based social hierarchy with a piety-based religious hierarchy. The lyric '*Ja'o huna liyo wanu ja'o imani*' (of no use if one has no faith) makes faith a universal value filter applicable to all aspects of life. Aligned with Zainuddin (2020: 6), faith and deeds in Islam are two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated: faith without deeds is weak, and deeds without faith are worthless.

The third myth: death as homecoming ('*Mohuwalingo asali*', '*Mohuwalingolo asali*'). The repetition of this metaphor in different songs reinforces its naturalization. Death is no longer viewed as a frightening end, but as a journey back to one's true homeland. This myth has a dual function: reducing anxiety about death while simultaneously strengthening the motivation to prepare for it. As explained by Nurfauijah & Rambe (2025: 145), the quality of one's death is often considered to reflect the quality of one's life.

The fourth myth: a dignified death as the pinnacle of a good life, marked by many mourners ('*Dadata ta momilohu*') and sincere tears ('*Hibuyuhuta lo ponu*'). The four lyrics from the song *Tahuli'u* (Data 117–120) form a highly cohesive mythic narrative: good behavior → peaceful death → many mourners → sincere tears. This myth makes community recognition the 'final social audit' of the quality of a person's life. Yusup et al. (2021: 184) affirm that a death surrounded by tears and prayers is one of the signs of *husnul khatimah* (a good end of life), reflecting the quality of the deeds and character left behind.

The fifth myth: the prohibition of arrogance and greed ('*Elehiya elehiya utama'o*', '*Elehiya U'sombongi*'). These two spiritual enemies are positioned as the root of moral corruption. The repeated call to 'avoid' functions as a collective alarm. This myth aligns with Islamic teachings that arrogance is the sin of Iblis and greed is the source of social injustice.

The five myths do not stand alone, but mutually reinforce one another. The myth of the hereafter reinforces the urgency of repentance (fifth myth), the myth of faith and deeds forms the foundation for a dignified death (fourth myth), and so on. From Barthes' perspective, these myths function as instruments for the reproduction of religious ideology, operating subtly through the repetition of songs within the community. The Gorontalo people do not merely listen to the songs, but also sing them together, so that religious values are internalized as truths that no longer need to be questioned.

Comparatively, this mythologizing function is not unique to Gorontalo; Boase-Beier (2006) demonstrates that oral religious poetry in minority languages across cultures similarly encodes ideological frameworks through repeated performance.

Likewise, studies of Sundanese *tembang* and Javanese *macapat* confirm that regional-language songs serve as principal vehicles of religious socialization in Indonesian communities (Suratno, 2011). What distinguishes Gorontalo *qasida*, however, is the explicit grounding in the *Adat-Syara'-Kitabullah* triad, which produces myths that are simultaneously theological and juridical in character—an aspect absent from the comparative cases above and that warrants further cross-cultural research.

Regarding critical reflection, it must be acknowledged that mythological readings are inherently interpretive: the same lyric may yield alternative myths depending on the analytical standpoint. For instance, the myth of “death as homecoming” could alternatively be read as a consolatory ideology that naturalizes social passivity, a reading aligned with Marxist critiques of religious escapism (Eagleton, 1991). The present study does not claim that these five myths are the only possible readings, but that they represent the most salient ideological patterns emergent from the corpus as a whole.

Concerning educational implications, these findings have concrete relevance for curriculum development in Indonesian schools, particularly in *Muatan Lokal* (local content) and Indonesian Language and Literature courses at the secondary level. The structured three-tier analysis modeled here offers teachers a replicable scaffold for guiding students to read regional cultural texts critically, moving from literal comprehension to ideological reflection. Future work should develop and test prototype teaching materials based on this framework within Gorontalo schools to assess their effectiveness in building both local cultural literacy and critical reading competencies.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion of Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics using Roland Barthes' three-tiered semiotics, three conclusions can be drawn.

First, at the denotative level, Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics explicitly convey Islamic teachings that are normative and easily understood. The literal meanings found include: (a) a collective invitation to carry out God's commands; (b) affirmation of the authority of God, the Qur'an, and the Prophet; (c) detailed obligations of worship (five daily prayers, fasting, charitable deeds); and (d) factual descriptions of aging, death, and critiques of worldly orientation. At this level, the song lyrics function as a direct medium for religious outreach, conveying religious messages in a straightforward manner.

Second, at the connotative level, the song lyrics activate cultural values, emotions, and ideologies that transcend their literal meanings. The findings reveal three main connotative mechanisms: (a) critiques of materialism through the metaphors of 'chasing the world', 'wealth and rank', and the reversal of the value hierarchy that worldly riches 'cannot be acknowledged' before God; (b) the construction of

spiritual urgency through the repetition of the word 'selagi' (while) (tame'a), which creates an awareness of the limitations of time and opportunity; (c) the actualization of Gorontalo cultural values such as respect for parents (hulawa), unity of heart, and mutual cooperation (huyula) as part of worship. Connotation also operates through the symbols of tears and self-reflection as signs of authentic repentance.

Third, at the mythological level, the song lyrics construct five belief systems that have been naturalized and are accepted as natural truths within Gorontalo society. The five central myths are: (1) true salvation exists only in the hereafter; (2) faith and deeds are the only measure of human worth before God, replacing the wealth-and-power-based social hierarchy; (3) death is not a frightening end, but a homecoming to one's origin; (4) a dignified death (marked by many mourners and sincere tears) is the pinnacle of a good life, reflecting husnul khatimah; and (5) arrogance and greed are the two primary spiritual enemies that must be avoided. These five myths mutually reinforce one another and function as instruments for the reproduction of religious ideology, operating through the collective repetition of songs within the community.

Overall, Gorontalo-language religious song lyrics are not merely artistic works or entertainment, but ideological texts functioning as a medium for religious outreach, social control, and a shaper of the community's worldview. This study broadens the application of Barthes' semiotics to oral texts in regional languages and contributes to the development of regional literary studies and literature appreciation teaching materials based on local wisdom in schools.

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