



Cultural Symbolism in Regional Song Lyrics: Enhancing the Resilience of the Dayak Kanayatn Language

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Abstract

The indigenous communities, including the Dayak Kanayatn, face significant challenges in preserving their language and culture amidst rapid modernization. The traditional Dayak Kanayatn songs are crucial in preserving their culture, as the lyrics contain valuable vocabulary, history, myths, and moral lessons. This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing Charles Sanders Peirce's cultural semiotics theory to analyze the signs, referents, and interpretants within the lyrics of nine Dayak Kanayatn songs to uncover their cultural values. The analytical methods employed include transcription of the lyrics, structural and semantic analysis of sentences, identification of cultural symbols, and evaluation of the objects referenced in the lyrics. The meanings derived from the analysis are examined to understand cultural and environmental resilience, and conclusions are drawn based on these findings. The traditional Dayak Kanayatn songs reflect cultural symbols that depict agrarian life, harmony with nature, skills, hard work, well-being, and gratitude. Additionally, these songs also reflect social solidarity, community identity, as well as the life cycle and belief in the universe.

Keywords: Cultural Semiotics; Dayak Kanayatn; Language and Cultural Resilience; Song Lyrics.

Introduction

Indigenous communities face significant challenges in preserving their language and culture amidst the rapidly accelerating pace of modernization (Buragohain et al., 2024; Detkhrut, 2024; Lugo-Espinosa et al., 2024). This is also true for the Dayak Kanayatn indigenous community in West Kalimantan. Social, economic, and technological changes are gradually transforming nearly every aspect of daily life, including the traditions and cultures that form the core of ethnic

and customary identity (Wen et al., 2023). In the face of this, one crucial element that remains a stronghold in the preservation of culture is the lyrics of regional songs, which help reconstruct meaning through myths, metaphors, and codes (Değirmenci & Sağır, 2022; Yende, 2023). Regional songs are not merely a form of entertainment but also encapsulate various values, local knowledge, and traditions passed down through generations (Ambarwati et al., 2019; Lismawati, 2022).

The lyrics of Dayak Kanayatn regional songs are closely tied to the cultural imagery of their community. Each word and note carries meaning that is deeply connected to the people's worldview, spiritual beliefs, and relationship with nature (D, 2024; Nasr., 2021). These lyrics function as a "living archive," preserving historical stories, myths, and moral lessons of great significance (Madiba, 2021; Yücel, 2023). There is much to be learned, including how the Dayak community values the cycles of nature, nurtures knowledge about their culture, and conducts traditional rituals (Beno et al., 2022; Fransesco & Kurniawan, 2023; Mathilda et al., 2021).

In this globalization era, communities have strongly desired to preserve cultural symbols and languages (Sari, 2023). Regional song lyrics have become increasingly important as they bridge the older and younger generations (Rahman, Yudista, et al., 2024; Wisnawa, 2020). These lyrics reflect the language and are presented in an engaging form that can appeal to all age groups, making them more exciting and relevant. In this way, the songs preserve cultural identity and strengthen the community's pride in their own language (Balodis, 2024). These lyrics help reinforce the community's identity amidst the ongoing flow of change (Alpandi & Mistortoify, 2024).

Several studies have discussed semiotics and symbolic messages in song lyrics. However, none have specifically examined this form in the context of resilience, particularly about the Dayak Kanayatn language through traditional song lyrics using a cultural semiotics approach. A study by Anggraeni (2022), which applied Peirce's semiotics, explored the symbolism of loneliness within the context of pop culture. This research uncovered symbols of alienation and resilience, but its focus was limited to the modern context and did not address deeper traditional cultural aspects.

Another study by Arifin (2018) analyzed symbols in the Babalai ritual related to cultural and environmental preservation. The focus of that research highlighted ritual traditions, while this study aims to explore language resilience through traditional songs. The difference lies in the medium and object of study. Furthermore, research by Rosyadi & Rohmah (2023) focused on resilience messages in modern music, using a semiotic approach centered on individual experience. In contrast, this study places greater emphasis on cultural and collective aspects in the context of the Dayak Kanayatn community.

The gap this research aims to fill is the exploration of cultural symbols and unique language resilience strategies within the lyrics of Dayak Kanayatn songs, using Charles Sanders Peirce's cultural semiotics theory (Puspitasari, 2021). By

analyzing signs, objects, and meanings within the cultural context of the Dayak Kanayatn, this study seeks to deepen the understanding of how cultural values and the resilience of Dayak culture are reflected in regional musical expressions. Furthermore, this research provides insights into the mechanisms by which the Dayak community preserves its language and culture and offers practical recommendations for more effective preservation strategies for other indigenous groups in the future. The approach of this study differs from previous research that has primarily focused on textual forms such as poetry, films, or rituals.

This study examines how the lyrics of Dayak Kanayatn songs are not merely a sequence of words but a living expression of a culture that continues to endure amidst modernization (Hidayat, 2024). Utilizing cultural semiotics theory—comprising signs, referents, and interpretants (Mulyaningsih et al., 2021)—this research aims to answer the question of how the signs within Dayak Kanayatn song lyrics represent symbols that play a role in the preservation of language.

Through this inquiry, the study aims to understand how the Dayak Kanayatn community maintains its language and traditions. It also aims to offer practical suggestions for protecting local languages and cultures while highlighting the crucial role of song lyrics in cultural preservation efforts. Hopefully, this study will serve as a small step toward reinforcing their valuable cultural heritage.

Method

This qualitative and descriptive study emphasizes an in-depth interpretation of sociocultural phenomena (Nartin et al., 2024; I. M. Putra et al., 2023). The approach is contextual and flexible, aiming to provide a systematic and objective overview (Niam et al., 2024). This method gathers data that describes facts, behaviors, and cultural characteristics without making excessive generalizations and focuses on targeted and detailed descriptions to understand the cultural symbols in the lyrics (Pahleviannur et al., 2022; Safarudin et al., 2023). Using a cultural semiotics approach based on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, which examines signs, referents, and interpretants within song lyrics (Rahayu, 2021). This analysis aims to uncover how symbols within the lyrics represent cultural values and contribute to the preservation of the Dayak Kanayatn language and identity.

Data sources were collected through document analysis, recording, and note-taking. Lyrics were taken from nine official music videos available on YouTube from cultural practitioners or music studios and were transcribed in detail for semiotic analysis. The songs included in the analysis were "Amboyo," "Binua Garantukng," "Dayakng Rambune," "Kayu Ara," "Naik Dango," "Pacinta Adat Budaya," "Pantun Binua Landak," "Pantun Pituah," and "Tingkakok Nimang Padi." Several techniques were employed to ensure data validity. Observational persistence was carried out thoroughly and repeatedly to ensure the accuracy of the data. Triangulation was applied by using various data sources and methods and consulting cultural experts.

Member checking was conducted by discussing with peers to verify interpretations and prevent bias.

The analysis method in this study followed several stages. First, the song lyrics were transcribed from audio recordings into text to facilitate further analysis. Each sentence in the lyrics was then examined for its structure and analyzed for its meaning to understand the message. Next, the signs within the lyrics were identified and evaluated, including symbols and metaphors, to assess their function within the cultural context. Subsequently, the objects (referents) referred to by the signs were analyzed to evaluate the cultural and ecological elements represented and their relationship to the cultural context. The meanings (interpretants) derived from the signs and objects were interpreted to form an understanding of the cultural and environmental resilience depicted in the lyrics. Finally, all findings were integrated to form a comprehensive conclusion regarding the objects under study.

Results

Cultural Symbols in the Regional Songs of the Dayak Kanayatn Community

The research presents an in-depth analysis of nine regional songs of the Dayak Kanayatn: "Amboyo," "Binua Garantukng," "Dayakng Rambune," "Kayu Ara," "Naik Dango," "Pacinta Adat Budaya," "Pantun Binua Landak," "Pantun Pituah," and "Tingkakok Nimang Padi." These nine songs were composed by Dayak Kanayatn musicians and served as a medium for expression rich in cultural symbolism and ethnic locality. Through their lyrics, these works not only preserve the language and cultural identity of the Dayak Kanayatn but also become a crucial instrument in maintaining the traditions and values embedded within them. The results presented here aim to explore each song's cultural symbolism (sign, referent, and interpretant) in the context of language preservation and the ethnic identity of the Dayak Kanayatn.

Table 1. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Amboyo by Tebo Rinyuakng

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|
| Talinsikng Papatn Inge | Rice binding string | Hard work, tradition, sustainability of agrarian life | This symbol directly connects to rice cultivation, which is a primary livelihood in many agrarian cultures. |
| Tangilikng serambi | ka' Armored pangolin in the living room | Proximity between wildlife and humans | A representation of natural elements or wildlife becoming part of the domestic space of the community. |
| Angkala' pamumpunan | Mali wood for burning | Empowerment | This symbol reflects the human relationship with nature, and the |

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| | | | | process of transforming simple materials into resources that sustain life. |
| Ne' uwit uwit nyaru' leko Ne' baruakng maba pangka' | Grandmother uwit uwit calls the wind/ Grandmother bear invites to play the spinning top | Spiritual transformation and harmony | | An act of opening oneself to greater natural forces, also tied to spiritual guidance, helping humans to understand the larger world through nature and the wisdom passed down from older generations. Playing <i>gasing</i> (spinning top) is seen as an invitation to enjoy life, maintain balance, and engage with culture. |
| Satangkakng tama' bubu | A piece enters the fish trap | Effort and perseverance | | Life does not always yield immediate results but requires patient and diligent effort. |
| Padi turutn ka' talino | Rice falls to humans | Prosperity | | After working hard and living harmoniously with nature, humans will be rewarded with prosperity. |
| Minta tele' ka ne' si Ja'ek Minta unsur ka' ne' Baruakng | Asking to see grandmother Ja'ek / Asking for a portion from grandmother Baruakng | Guidance, advice, and request | | Life should always seek guidance and advice, whether in spiritual or practical matters, to ensure it aligns with the correct values. This also represents a request to ancestors for wisdom. |

Table 2. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Binua Garantukng by Firmus

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| Binua Garantukng | Garantung Region | Dayak community village | Represents the region or village of the Dayak community as their place of residence. It carries the meaning of togetherness, cultural identity, and strong ancestral roots. |
| Rumah Radakng | Radakng House | Symbol of familial spirit, brotherhood, and unity | Symbolizes the cultural identity and ancestral heritage of the Dayak. The Radakng House serves as a symbol of togetherness and a gathering place for the community in the past. |
| Pantak padagi pasugu dango | Statue of the guardian of | Protective statue, manifestation of | Symbolizes the Dayak local belief in protectors of agricultural harvests. |

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| padi | the rice barn | ancestral spirits, tribal leaders, and elders who have passed away. | This statue guards the crops and reflects a close relationship with nature and spirituality. |
| Kalimantan tanah parene'an | Kalimantan, the land of ancestors | Kalimantan as the ancestral land | This phrase reflects Kalimantan as the land passed down from ancestors through generations. It describes the deep connection with the ancestral land, heritage, and cultural identity of the Dayak people. |

Table 3. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Rambune by M. Inpan

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Kana ahe padiku tumpah Tumpah pula ka atas pati | Rice spilled onto the chest | Loss of something precious | Rice is a sacred gift from nature, symbolizing prosperity and blessings. When rice is spilled, it indicates the loss of luck or harmony, reflecting the poet's sorrow over a loss or separation from a beloved figure. |
| Dayakng Rambune | The Girl of Rambune | The figure of a girl to be remembered | The repeated mention of this name acts almost like a mantra or prayer. In Dayak Kanayatn culture, repetition is a way to reinforce meaning and desire. Culturally, this could also reflect the way they honor someone who has passed away by not forgetting their name, and in the context of longing and loss, the person's name is kept in memory. |
| Ngayapm katupat | Weaving a ketupat | Skill, patience, and persistence. | Weaving a ketupat symbolizes the effort and perseverance required in dealing with difficult tasks. In the context of the lyrics, weaving a ketupat reflects the emotional challenges and struggles involved in maintaining love or a relationship over a long distance. |

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| Kasa kasa maniti kaso Kijakng dari' ngaranto raba' | The rangrang walks along the ridge, and the deer enters the thicket | A sign or deep information | Reflects the anxiety or difficulty being experienced. Nature and animals are often used as markers of situations in this culture, showing how they interpret natural signs as forms of communication and warnings. |
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Table 4. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Kayu Ara by N. N.

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Kayu Ara | Banyan Tree | Symbol of natural strength, emotional closeness, stability, wisdom, and collective protection. | Represents something eternal or a person who provides safety and comfort. The poet seems to express both respect and hope for the strength, peace, and stability that the tree offers. |
| Talo Biroco | Fruit of the Punai | Hope, peace, and the sustainability of life. | Symbolizes fragile longing or hope—a strong feeling but also vulnerable to change or separation. |
| Ta'ap Akar, Ta'ap Padi, tanam ka' Uma | Harvesting roots and rice, planting them in the garden | Traditional practice or belief related to luck or sustainability. | Planting or interacting with the banyan tree and rice is interpreted as a tribute to the natural cycles and ongoing life. In Dayak Kanayatn culture, this reflects their effort to maintain harmony with nature, both as a source of livelihood (rice) and as a spiritual guardian (the banyan tree, which holds the natural forces and spiritual energy). |

Table 5. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Naik Dango by Aan Baget

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| Gawe Dango | Naik Celebration of Ascending to the Granary | Gratitude and reverence for an abundant harvest. | This celebration is not just a festivity but also reflects the acknowledgment of the community's relationship with nature and God, who provides the bounty of the earth. |

Ikhza Mahendra Putra, Hotma Simanjuntak
Cultural Symbolism in Regional Song Lyrics: Enhancing the Resilience of the Dayak Kanayatn Language

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| Asa' dua talu empat anam jubata | One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, God | Balance or harmony in the universe. | The number seven is considered sacred, representing the Divine and the cosmos. It reflects the openness that can still be completed. This concept is also found in Dayak Kanayatn folklore, particularly in the story of "Ne' Baruakng Kulup." |
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Table 6. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Pacinta Adat Budaya by Tebo Rinyuakng

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Daun padakng, Daun Salasih | Wild Grass Leaves, Basil Leaves | The presence of simple life and growth together. | Wild grass symbolizes resilience and the ability to adapt to harsh environments, while basil represents purity or protection. |
| Pahat pangoker pantak padagi | Carving for Carving Padagi Statues | Traditional carving art or craftsmanship passed down from ancestors. | The carving chisel becomes a symbol of skill, hard work, and reverence for ancestors. It also serves as a means of conveying values and beliefs across generations. |
| Kade' mati dikandong tanah | When death is embraced by the earth | The life-death cycle governed by customs to return to the earth | There is a deep connection to nature, with the belief that death is not an end, but a transition back to the origin. "Embraced by the earth" symbolizes the eternal bond between humans and nature, highlighting that cultural values and traditions are preserved through the cyclical nature of generations, passed down through the earth as a medium of inheritance. |

Table 7. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Pantun Binua Landak by Tebo Rinyuakng

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Sompak, Jalimpo, Maranti, Banyuke, | Sompak, Jelimpo, Behe, Menyuke, Kampung Lintah, | Geographic markers and natural wealth of the Dayak | "Landak" symbolically represents the entire natural wealth, traditions, and culture that the community is proud of. |

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| Kampokng Lintah, Landak, Barimbo, Riampm Banangar, Mandor, Bukit Seha, Sengah Temila, Banyuke, Ngabang, Sebangki | Landak, Serimbo, Riam Banangar, Mandor, Bukit Seha, Sengah | Kanayatn community's homeland. | Names such as "Sompak" and "Jelimpo" suggest that these areas have distinct characteristics understood by the local inhabitants. |
| Daripada idopnyu nganggur Baik dehe' karaja karas | Rather than having an idle life, it is better to work hard | Work ethic and productivity | Symbolizes the value of hard work upheld in the Landak society. This expression reflects the importance of a strong work ethic as a part of social life and the desire to live a productive life. In Landak culture, hard work is viewed as a way to be a good and valuable member of society. |
| Daras-daras Ai' ka' Mandor; Bukit Seha' Bakelok-kelok ba arokng tinggi | Swift waters in Mandor; Bukit Seha winding with high ravines | Abundance and beauty of the Landak region's nature | Evokes a sense of gratitude and respect for the environment. Nature is not merely a geographic backdrop, but an integral part of the identity and wealth cherished by the community. |

Table 8. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Pantun Pituah by Purnawandi Wawan

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|--|---|--|---|
| Kade' batamu ka' maraga Ame lupa batanya' kabar | If you meet on the road, don't forget to ask about news | Values of hospitality and care in culture | Asking about someone's well-being is a form of kindness and solidarity within the community. This action serves as a reminder to care for and appreciate one another. |
| Lagu diri' Dayak kanayatn Ame sampe diri lupaatn | Our song, Dayak Kanayatn, let us not forget it | Cultural identity and the Dayak Kanayatn's sense of self | Represents the tradition passed down as a form of expression, pride, and connection to ancestors. |
| Kade' tidura' ngampar tikar | If you wish to sleep, spread | Preparation and order in life | The mat here symbolizes tradition and simplicity, reminding of a |

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| out a mat | lifestyle that is closer to nature and does not require luxury to find comfort. |
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Table 9. Cultural Symbols in the Lyrics of Tingkakok Nimang Padi by M. Inpan

| Sign (Original Text) | Sign | Referent | Interpretant |
|---|---|---|--|
| Lagu kami lagu katurunan | Our song, the song of our ancestors | Connection | The song serves not only as entertainment but also as a reminder of ancestral values that must be preserved. |
| Burung tingkakok nimang padi | The Matan bird cradles the rice | Guardian or Protector of the rice harvest | A symbol of gratitude and hope for a bountiful harvest, which also represents the close relationship between the community and nature, particularly the produce of the land. |
| Naik dango ujud Budaya Sambil diri nyambah Jubata | Ascending the dangau of culture; While we worship God | Gratitude, surrender, and submission | Respect for culture and tradition is seen as part of one's piety, creating a balance between tradition and spirituality in community life. |

Categorization of Cultural Symbol Dominance in the Lyrics of Dayak Kanayatn Regional Songs

The following presentation categorizes the dominant cultural symbols found in the lyrics of regional songs, highlighting the symbolic cultural meanings embedded in the traditions of the Dayak Kanayatn community.

Table 10. Categorization of Dominant Cultural Symbols

| No | Symbol Categorization |
|----|--|
| 1 | Interpretation of Cultural Symbols in Dayak Kanayatn Traditional Songs |
| 2 | Representation of Agrarian Life in the Lyrics of Dayak Kanayatn Songs |
| 3 | Harmony with Nature as the Spiritual Essence and Symbol of Identity |
| 4 | Symbols of Skill and the Value of Hard Work in Dayak Community Life |
| 5 | Symbols of Prosperity, Gratitude, and Harvest Rituals |
| 6 | Symbols of Social Relationships and Solidarity in Daily Life |
| 7 | Geographical Symbols and Markers of Community Identity |
| 8 | Symbols of the Life Cycle and Beliefs about the Universe |

Discussion

Interpretation of Cultural Symbols in Traditional Dayak Kanayatn Songs

Several categories were identified that reflect the essential values of the Dayak Kanayatn community, as seen in the Categorization of Cultural Symbol Dominance. These symbols, as represented in traditional songs such as "Amboyo" and "Naik Dango," represent not only daily life but also reflect the worldview, spirituality, and identity of the Dayak Kanayatn people. One prominent symbol that emerged is "Talinsikng Papatn Inge" (rice harvesting rope), which depicts an agricultural tool and symbolizes perseverance in their agrarian tradition. These symbols are similar to those found in other Dayak communities, illustrating a solid connection to ancestral heritage and a profound respect for hard work as a source of livelihood (Jakarias & Dedi, 2024).

These songs also emphasize the representation of agrarian life, such as in the phrase "Padi turutn ka' talino" (rice descending to humans), which underscores the importance of agriculture as the foundation of the economy and the source of the community's well-being (Bahri & Lestari, 2020). This symbol affirms the harmonious relationship between humans and nature maintained through agricultural traditions (Rahman, Setiasih, et al., 2024). Furthermore, some symbols emphasize spirituality and harmony with nature, such as "Tangilikng ka' serambi" (pangolin to the living room) and "Kayu Ara" (banyan tree), which position nature as a critical component in both daily life and spirituality. This symbol is common in Dayak Kanayatn culture and shares similarities with other Dayak tribes, including the Dayak Mali (Hemafitria & Nurhadianto, 2024).

Additionally, the values of hard work and perseverance are strongly reflected in symbols such as "Satangkakng tama' bubu" (a piece that enters the trap), which portrays perseverance as a cornerstone of the social identity of the Dayak Kanayatn people. This symbol represents the appreciation for hard work and patience, passed down to younger generations through traditional songs. Symbols of prosperity, gratitude, and harvest rituals also stand out, such as the symbol "Naik Dango," which not only represents an abundant harvest but also signifies rituals of thanksgiving and reverence for nature that have provided sustenance (Dinase, 2024; Noviantari et al., 2023).

Solidarity and Brotherhood also emerge as central elements in these cultural symbols, such as in the "Rumah Radakng," which symbolizes the spirit of collectivism and unity within the Dayak community (Widiatmaka et al., 2022). Additionally, geographical symbols such as "Sompak," "Jelimpo," and "Bukit Seha" in the "Pantun Binua Landak" serve as markers of identity that connect the community to its geographical environment, as well as to a sense of pride in ancestral heritage. Finally, the concept of the life cycle is reflected in the phrase "Kade' mati dikandong tanah" (when death is embraced by the earth), which demonstrates reverence for the cycle of life and death, reinforcing the community's view that life is deeply interconnected with nature.

The findings are consistent with studies that identify a close relationship between agrarian symbolism and spirituality in other cultures that rely on agriculture. However, unlike previous research that may view agriculture solely as an economic aspect, this study shows that for the Dayak Kanayatn community, agrarian symbols also serve as a spiritual medium to connect with ancestors and nature, thus providing a new perspective on the multifaceted function of cultural symbols (Bahri & Lestari, 2020).

This research has implications both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the findings support the understanding that symbolism in the oral culture of the Dayak Kanayatn community functions as a tool for transmitting values, not merely an aesthetic element. Practically, these implications support the development of policies that preserve local cultures through formal and informal education and promote cross-cultural understanding through music and the arts.

It must be acknowledged that this study has limitations regarding the sample of songs analyzed. The selected songs may cover only some of the variations of symbols present in the traditional Dayak Kanayatn lyrics. Furthermore, the interpretation of cultural symbols tends to rely on an inductive approach and local perspectives, which may differ in a broader context.

Suggestions for Future Research include further exploration of cultural symbols in the lyrics of traditional songs from other Dayak sub-ethnic groups, which may reveal variations in the use of agrarian symbols or other symbols not identified in this study. Additionally, using quantitative methods or a multidisciplinary approach could enrich understanding how these symbols function in constructing cultural identity.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the songs of the Dayak Kanayatn are not only a form of entertainment but also a crucial tool for preserving cultural values, spirituality, and social identity. This research illustrates how cultural symbols in these songs reflect the essential values the Dayak Kanayatn community uphold and the importance of preserving this heritage to ensure its relevance in modernization.

Dayak Kanayatn Songs as a Medium for Language Preservation and Cultural Identity

The Dayak Kanayatn community in West Kalimantan has undergone various social, economic, and technological changes that have gradually transformed nearly all aspects of daily life, including the traditions and culture that are at the core of their identity (Putri et al., 2024). Amid this situation, one crucial element that remains a stronghold in preserving their culture is the lyrics of their regional songs. These songs are not merely for entertainment; they also encapsulate various values, local knowledge, and traditions passed down through generations (Lukyantus et al., 2024). Traditional Dayak Kanayatn songs reflect their cultural landscape, where every word and note carries a meaning closely tied to the community's worldview, spiritual beliefs, and relationship with nature.

These songs play a vital role in preserving language, strengthening cultural identity, and conveying the cultural values of the Dayak Kanayatn community in West Kalimantan (Lukyantus et al., 2024). Amid the gradual changes reshaping nearly every aspect of daily life, including the traditions and cultures central to their ethnic identity, these regional songs continue to serve as a bastion of cultural preservation. Dayak Kanayatn traditional songs often contain cultural symbols that reflect the community's worldview and spirituality (Putra et al., 2023). Using their native language, these songs strengthen the meaning of the cultural symbols that hold profound significance for the community. By singing these songs, the Dayak Kanayatn people can preserve and enrich their mother tongue while younger generations understand the life philosophies and values upheld by their ancestors.

The agrarian way of life, represented by symbols such as "rice" and other farming tools, underscores the importance of agriculture in Dayak Kanayatn culture (Howson et al., 2023). These songs depict everyday activities and convey messages about perseverance, responsibility, and hard work—qualities essential to an agrarian society. Using agricultural terminology also keeps the Dayak Kanayatn language alive through unique local terms that do not exist in other languages.

Dayak Kanayatn's songs emphasize the spiritual relationship between humans and nature. Symbols such as the "banyan tree" or "pangolin" in the song lyrics do not just refer to the surrounding natural world but also symbolize the belief in the power and importance of nature for the community's existence (Pageh, 2023). This harmony with nature conveys that the natural world is integral to Dayak Kanayatn's identity and must be respected and preserved. By continuing to be sung, the spiritual and symbolic messages about the human-nature relationship are passed down to future generations.

Symbols in the lyrics, such as "tama' bubu" (fishing with a trap), represent traditional skills and the value of perseverance in the community's life. These songs serve as reminders of the importance of ancestral skills and the work ethic inherent in Dayak Kanayatn culture. Through lyrics that reflect the value of hard work, the community can maintain and introduce these traditional concepts, teaching cultural values that form part of their collective identity.

Songs like "Naik Dango," which celebrates the harvest, serve as a medium for expressing gratitude and highlighting the importance of spiritual well-being. The ritual expressed through this song connects the community with harvesting traditions and teaches that prosperity is not solely material but also spiritual (Bahri & Lestari, 2022). In this way, these songs remind the Dayak Kanayatn people of the importance of gratitude while preserving the ritual vocabulary and symbols important to their community.

Dayak Kanayatn songs often contain symbols representing social relations and solidarity, such as "Rumah Radakng," which symbolizes a sizeable communal house or gathering place. The Rumah Radakng is not just a physical structure but

also embodies values of collectivism and Brotherhood. These songs demonstrate that solidarity is a core value in the community's social life. Through these lyrics, the values of unity and the importance of togetherness continue to be taught and passed down.

References to places such as "Sompak" or "Bukit Seha" in Dayak Kanayatn songs indicate the presence of geographical symbols that serve as markers of community identity. By mentioning local place names, these songs reinforce the geographical and ethnic identity of the Dayak Kanayatn people, evoking pride in their homeland and honoring ancestral heritage. Through these songs, younger generations are introduced to their origins while maintaining the collective memory of places that hold cultural significance (Febriansyah & Zuan, 2024).

Songs that contain concepts related to the life cycle, such as "dikandung tanah" (embraced by the earth), remind listeners of the Dayak Kanayatn belief that life is part of a continuous natural cycle. This symbol highlights the relationship between humans and the universe and teaches that every human will return to nature. Dayak Kanayatn's songs preserve the understanding of life, cosmic cycles, and the local wisdom rooted in Dayak Kanayatn's spirituality through these symbols.

In conclusion, Dayak Kanayatn songs preserve the language and strengthen cultural identity. As a medium for transmitting values, these songs help preserve vocabulary and cultural concepts unique to the community while instilling a sense of pride and solidarity within the group. Amid the tide of modernization, these songs connect the current generation to the traditions and values of their ancestors, ensuring the continued existence of the Dayak Kanayatn language and culture.

Implications and Future Research Directions

The findings of this study provide important insights into our understanding of the relationship between cultural symbols in Dayak Kanayatn songs and the preservation of language and cultural identity. The results support the theory that oral traditions, such as traditional songs, play a vital role in language preservation. On the other hand, the study also identifies that the cultural symbols embedded in these songs can serve as more effective tools for introducing cultural values to younger generations. Therefore, the theory linking oral traditions to language preservation can be expanded by incorporating the active role of traditional songs in shaping social and cultural identity.

This research has significant practical implications, particularly in the context of cultural preservation policies and education. The findings suggest that traditional songs can be an effective medium in education to introduce and preserve regional languages. Thus, integrating these traditional songs into the educational curriculum in regions with endangered languages is highly recommended. Furthermore, public policies that support the strengthening of culture through media, such as local music, can bolster communities' cultural identity and help counteract globalization's adverse effects on cultural diversity

(Kusuma et al., 2024).

The study employs a qualitative method with a symbolic analysis approach to the lyrics of traditional songs, which has proven effective in uncovering cultural values. However, this research also identifies limitations in the sample selection confined to a single community. Therefore, developing more comprehensive methods involving a broader range of communities or using quantitative approaches to measure the impact of these songs on cultural understanding could enrich future research outcomes.

This research focuses on the Dayak Kanayatn songs, which, while highly representative, only represent one ethnic group in West Kalimantan. Therefore, future research could expand the scope by including traditional songs from other ethnic groups in Kalimantan or other regions of Indonesia that also have rich oral traditions. This would provide a complete picture of how traditional songs preserve language and culture across different regions.

One limitation of this study is the lack of longitudinal data that could track changes or developments in traditional songs within the Dayak Kanayatn community over time. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to monitor how the role of traditional songs in preserving language and culture evolves over the coming decades, particularly in the context of modernization and globalization. For instance, studies on radio use to preserve the Javanese language and culture (Achmad et al., 2021) could provide relevant comparisons.

While this research identifies the importance of symbols in traditional songs, it has yet to explore other factors that may influence cultural understanding, such as the role of social media in disseminating traditional songs. Future studies could delve deeper into how technology and social media support the preservation of traditional songs and regional languages and how social factors like migration influence perceptions of these songs.

Given the importance of oral culture in shaping identity, longitudinal studies could be conducted to understand how the impact of traditional songs on younger generations changes over time. Research could also assess the extent to which understanding of these songs is maintained in succeeding generations and their role in preserving regional languages.

Future research could adopt a multidisciplinary approach, integrating linguistics, anthropology, musicology, and psychology to comprehensively understand traditional songs' role in preserving culture and language. This approach would reveal the symbolic value in these songs and identify the psychological impacts of listening to and interacting with oral culture in shaping individual cultural identities. While this study has significantly contributed to understanding language preservation through traditional songs, there remains room for further research to enrich knowledge about new ways of preserving culture through traditional media and modern technologies.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Dayak Kanayatn traditional songs play a crucial role in preserving the cultural symbols, values, and identity of the Dayak Kanayatn community. These lyrics depict an agrarian lifestyle, spirituality, the relationship between humans and nature, and values such as collectivism, hard work, and gratitude. The symbols present in these songs represent the values of perseverance in farming and community solidarity.

Practically, this research provides a foundation for developing cultural preservation policies, where these songs can be used as educational media to introduce local values to younger generations. The agrarian and spiritual symbols contained in the songs are not merely aesthetic elements but also tools for cultural transmission and the cultivation of community identity. This study affirms that, amid the currents of modernization, Dayak Kanayatn traditional songs connect the current generation with their ancestral traditions while preserving the continuity of their language and culture.

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Ikhza Mahendra Putra, Hotma Simanjuntak
Cultural Symbolism in Regional Song Lyrics: Enhancing the Resilience of the Dayak Kanayatn Language

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