



## THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF TRADITIONAL POETRY OF BINI PULAU ROTE IN THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

### FUNGSI SOSIAL PUISI TRADISIONAL BINI DARI PULAU ROTE DALAM MEMPERTAHANKAN IDENTITAS SOSIO-BUDAYA MASYARAKAT LOKAL

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#### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the social function of bini traditional poetry in the maintenance of the socio-cultural identity of local communities in Londalusi, East Rote District, Rote-Ndao Regency. The focus of the research is directed at the identification of the educational, normative, symbolic, integrative, and communicative functions of oral traditions related to the life cycle of society, including birth, marriage, and death. This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic-descriptive design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and documentation of traditional narratives submitted by two key informants, namely traditional speakers (manehelo) and local traditional leaders. Data analysis was carried out thematically to map the social function of traditional narratives in the context of people's social lives. The results of the study show that traditional narratives and traditional bini poetry play an important role as a medium for inheriting traditional values, collective memory, local cosmology, and inter-generational social ethics. This oral tradition functions as a means of informal education, a regulator of social norms, a symbol of representation of the Rote people's worldview, a strengthening of social cohesion, and a cultural communication medium that maintains the continuity of the socio-cultural identity of the local community. This research confirms that the oral tradition of bini is not just an aesthetic expression, but a living and adaptive socio-cultural system. These findings contribute to strengthening the study of oral literature and cultural anthropology, especially in the context of Indonesian archipelago communities.

**Keywords :** traditional bini-verse poetry; oral traditions; social function; socio-cultural identity; Rote society.

#### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fungsi sosial puisi tradisional bini dalam pemeliharaan identitas sosial budaya masyarakat lokal di Londalusi, Kecamatan Rote Timur, Kabupaten Rote Ndao. Fokus penelitian ini diarahkan pada identifikasi fungsi pendidikan, normatif, simbolik, integratif, dan komunikatif tradisi lisan yang berkaitan dengan siklus hidup masyarakat, termasuk kelahiran,



pernikahan, dan kematian. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain etnografi-deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dokumentasi narasi tradisional yang disampaikan oleh dua informan kunci, yaitu pembicara tradisional (manehelo) dan tokoh adat setempat. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik untuk memetakan fungsi sosial narasi tradisional dalam konteks kehidupan sosial masyarakat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa narasi tradisional dan puisi bini tradisional memainkan peran penting sebagai media untuk mewariskan nilai-nilai tradisional, memori kolektif, kosmologi lokal, dan etika sosial antar generasi. Tradisi lisan ini berfungsi sebagai sarana pendidikan informal, pengatur norma sosial, simbol representasi pandangan dunia masyarakat Rote, penguat kohesi sosial, dan media komunikasi budaya yang menjaga keberlanjutan identitas sosial budaya masyarakat setempat. Penelitian ini mengkonfirmasi bahwa tradisi lisan bini bukan hanya ekspresi estetika, tetapi sistem sosial budaya yang hidup dan adaptif. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada penguatan studi sastra lisan dan antropologi budaya, khususnya dalam konteks masyarakat kepulauan Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci :** puisi bini-verse tradisional; tradisi lisan; fungsi sosial; identitas sosio-kultural; masyarakat Rote.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Oral literature is a form of cultural expression that has a central position in the lives of traditional people, especially in the context of island communities and indigenous communities in Indonesia. In a society that has not yet fully relied on written traditions, oral literature serves as the main medium for storing, transmitting, and reproducing social knowledge, customary values, and collective memory across generations. Poems, mantras, ritual chants, and traditional speech not only serve as a form of verbal aesthetics, but also as social devices that regulate relationships between individuals and groups in a community. In this context, oral literature is a strategic instrument in maintaining the socio-cultural identity of local communities, especially when dealing with modernization and globalization currents that have the potential to erode traditional values (Fatmahwati et al., 2024; Asamoah-Poku, 2024).

The theory of the social function of oral literature places oral traditions as an integral part of the social and cultural systems of traditional societies. Oral literature is not understood simply as a text or linguistic performance, but as a living social practice that operates within customary structures, rites, and collective value systems. Through oral literature, people transmit the norms, ethics, and worldview that shape their collective consciousness. Previous research has shown that oral traditions play an important role in strengthening social cohesion, building a sense of togetherness, and strengthening group identity through narratives that are inherited from generation to generation (Anh, 2024; Fatmahwati et al., 2024).

Socio-cultural identity in local societies is not formed static, but is produced and reproduced through repeated cultural practices, one of which is through oral literature. Oral traditions serve as a collective archive that stores community history, ancestral origins, kinship structures, and human relationships with nature and the cosmos. Through poetry and traditional speech, the community reflects on the ideal values that become the guidelines for social behavior. Thus, the mechanism for maintaining socio-cultural identity takes place through the internalization of these values in people's daily lives, both in the context of rituals, informal



education, and intergenerational social interaction (Fatmahwati et al., 2024; Asamoah-Poku, 2024).

In the traditional system of Indonesian society, oral literature is closely related to kinship structures, cosmology, and local value systems. Oral narratives often contain ecological knowledge, social ethics, and sustainability principles that are inherited through cultural symbols and metaphors. Research by Yuki et al. (2023) and Fowler et al. (2025) shows that oral literature serves as a medium of transmission of local knowledge that integrates social, ecological, and spiritual dimensions. In the context of archipelagic societies such as East Nusa Tenggara, oral literature is an important means to maintain a balance between humans, the environment, and the cosmos.

Rote Island as part of the East Nusa Tenggara region has a wealth of very complex and distinctive oral traditions, one of which is the traditional poem *bini*. In the Rote society, *bini* is not just understood as poetry or oral poetry, but as part of a traditional communication system that is full of symbolic and normative meanings. James J. Fox (2006) shows that the ritual speech of the Rote people is closely related to genealogical and topogenic concepts, where place names, ancestral origins, and kinship relationships are arranged poetically to affirm the social identity of the community. Thus, traditional *bini* poetry serves as a medium that connects individuals to their collective history and socio-cultural space.

Furthermore, Fox (2016) asserts that the Rote people have a highly structured tradition of ritual poetry, in which traditional poets and master ritualists play a central role in maintaining cultural continuity. Traditional poems are composed through semantic parallelism techniques and distinctive oral formulas, which allow indigenous values and local cosmology to be accurately transmitted across generations. In this context, *bini* functions not only as a means of aesthetic expression, but also as an educational, normative, and integrative mechanism in the social life of the Rote community.

Fox's (2024) research on the narrative of the origins of the Rote people further confirms that traditional ritual sounds and poems play a role as a vehicle for the inheritance of collective memory and social legitimacy. These narratives not only record cosmological and genealogical history, but also regulate social relations and customary hierarchies in society. However, although many studies on the oral tradition of Rote have been conducted, research that specifically maps the social function of traditional *bini* poetry in the context of maintaining the socio-cultural identity of local communities is still relatively limited. Some studies emphasize linguistic, ritual, or structural aspects, while the social functional dimensions have not been studied in depth and systematically (Elvina & Yasnel, 2025; Zainuddin, 2023).

Based on this description, this research has a strategic position to fill the research gap by comprehensively analyzing the social function of traditional poetry of the Rote Island *bini* in the maintenance of the socio-cultural identity of the local community. The novelty of this research lies in mapping the educational, normative, symbolic, integrative, and communicative functions of *bini* as a medium for the inheritance of traditional values, kinship relations, local cosmology, and intergenerational social ethics. Thus, the formulation of the problem in this



study is: how does the social function of the traditional poetry of the Pulau Rote play a role in maintaining the socio-cultural identity of the local community? This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the study of oral literature and cultural anthropology, as well as a practical contribution to efforts to preserve the intangible cultural heritage of the Rote people.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic-descriptive research design, which to deeply understand the social function of traditional bini poetry in the context of the socio-cultural life of the Rote Island community. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on the meanings, cultural practices, and social constructions that live in indigenous communities, which cannot be quantitatively measured. This method allows researchers to explore the emotional perspectives of the community, especially cultural actors and indigenous leaders, in interpreting traditional poetry as part of the social system and collective identity (Sugiyono, 2019; Creswell, 2014).

The location of the research was determined purposively in Londalusi, East Rote District, Rote-Ndao Regency, with the consideration that this village still maintains the practice of bini oral literature in the context of customary and social life of the community. This location is also known as one of the areas that has active traditional poetry speakers as well as customary structures that still function in regulating the social and cultural relations of the local community. The selection of the location was carried out based on the principle of suitability of the cultural context with the focus of the research, as recommended in qualitative research based on culture and ethnography (Creswell, 2014).

The research subjects or informants were determined using the purposive sampling technique, which is the deliberate selection of informants based on their knowledge capacity and role in the oral tradition of bini. The main informants in this study are two people, namely: (1) Anderia Ruy, a speaker of traditional poetry (manehelo) who is active in chanting bini in the traditional and social context of the community; and (2) Bai Sion, a traditional figure who has traditional knowledge and a deep understanding of the social, symbolic, and normative functions of the bini poetry. These two informants are seen as representative to describe the practices, meanings, and social functions of bini in the people of Londalusi Village (Band. Fox, 2016; Fox, 2024).

The research instrument in this study is the researcher himself as the main instrument, as is common in qualitative research, which is supported by in-depth interview guidelines, participatory observation sheets, and documentation tools in the form of voice recording devices and field notes. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow informants to narrate their experiences, knowledge, and views related to the social function of bin. Observations were made on the social context and situations in which the bini poem is chanted or discussed, in order to capture the contextual meaning and accompanying cultural practices (Sugiyono, 2019).



The data collection procedure includes three main stages, namely: (1) the pre-field stage, by conducting a literature study and mapping the socio-cultural context of Londalusi; (2) the fieldwork stage, which includes in-depth interviews with informants, participatory observation, and documentation of bini poetry; and (3) post-field stage, in the form of transcription of oral data, verification of data to informants (member check), and organization of research data. The validity of the data is maintained through source and technique triangulation techniques, as well as re-checking the results of interviews with the main informants (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2019).

Data analysis was carried out using qualitative thematic analysis, with the following steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The speech data of the bini poems and the results of the interviews were analyzed to identify the themes of social functions, namely educational, normative, symbolic, integrative, and communicative functions. This analysis was carried out inducively by linking the field findings to the theoretical framework of the social function of oral literature and the study of the oral traditions of the Rote community (Fox, 2006; Fox, 2016). With this approach, the results of the research are expected to be able to authentically represent the role of bini in the maintenance of the socio-cultural identity of the local community.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was carried out in Londalusi's Village, East Rote District, Rote-Ndao Regency, an area that still maintains traditional practices and oral traditions in the social life of its people. This village has an active indigenous social structure, especially in the human life cycle which includes birth, marriage, and death. The interview was conducted in September 2025, with two key informants. Interviews with BS (traditional leaders) are conducted during the day at the informant's residence, while interviews with AR (traditional speakers/manehelo) are conducted at night, adjusting local customs in the delivery of traditional narratives. The interview situation took place in an informal setting, using Indonesian mixed with Rote language, and the entire narrative was translated into Indonesian.

The informants in this study are two people, namely AR is a traditional speaker (manehelo) who has in-depth knowledge of the Rote traditional narrative and is in charge of conveying this knowledge orally. BS is a traditional figure who plays a role in the implementation and supervision of customs, and has symbolic authority in the community. The two informants provided a narrative that was a traditional explanation, not the chanting of the bini verse, but the structure of the speech showed a systematic and sequential pattern of traditional narrative.

#### a. Birth Customary Narrative Data

The research data we found consisted of 3 life cycles, including birth, marriage and death. We can describe these three things as a result

First; In the custom of the Rote people, the birth of a child is understood as an important event that has begun since pregnancy. According to the traditional narrative inherited by the





ancestors, when a newly married woman is found to be pregnant, the extended family begins to pay close attention to the development of the gestational age. One of the important stages is when the fetus reaches the age of seven months. At this time, the Rote people believed that the fetus had been perfectly humanized. Therefore, the family is obliged to carry out a traditional ritual called tefamulik, which is a thanksgiving ceremony that must coincide with the crescent moon or new moon phase, as a symbol of the beginning of a perfect life according to the cosmological view of the Rote people.

Tefamulik rituals have special ordinances that are full of symbolic meaning. In this ceremony, the family prepares a boiled egg and a male lamb about one year old. The eggs are consumed by pregnant women, while lamb meat is given in limited quantities. The meat taken also comes from certain parts, especially the stomach, with small portions that must be eaten by pregnant women. This practice is interpreted as a customary effort to strengthen the womb, maintain the safety of the mother and fetus, and prevent miscarriage. After the ritual is performed, the family recounts the gestational age until it reaches nine months and ten days, which is believed to be the perfect time of birth (bulak sio).

After the delivery process, the Rote community customary strictly regulates the recovery period for mothers giving birth. Mothers are required to undergo a three-day warm-up period by sleeping on the attic of a traditional house or a special place equipped with coals. During this time, the mother is not allowed to take a bath with cold water and can only use hot water. This rule is believed to function to restore the condition of the body after childbirth. After three days have passed, the mother is allowed to take a bath with cold water. If this provision is violated, the family continues to count the days until the baby is forty days old as part of the fulfillment of the birth custom.

When the baby reaches the age of forty days, the Rote people carry out a traditional ceremony called kelaka, which is a thanksgiving feast marked by shaving the baby's hair. This hair shaving process must be done by a traditional figure called To'o. At the same time, the family also combines religious elements by bringing in a pastor or church elder to lead a prayer of thanksgiving. In this custom, the family is required to slaughter a pig as a form of thanksgiving, with certain provisions related to the distribution of meat parts. Furthermore, children are cared for until the age of three years before being weaned, in accordance with customary provisions. Therefore, in the traditional understanding of the Rote people, the birth process does not only stop at the time the baby is born, but takes place from pregnancy until the child reaches the age of three years as a whole life cycle.

Second; In the custom of the Rote people, marriage is understood as a social event that not only unites two individuals, but also connects two large families in one customary bond. According to traditional elders, the marriage process begins when a man takes an interest in a woman. The interest was not conveyed directly through a proposal, but was realized through a symbolic act in the form of a man's arrival at the woman's home for three consecutive days. This repeated presence is interpreted as a form of seriousness and seriousness of intention to build a household.



On the third day, the woman's family—including her parents and close relatives—waited for the man's arrival to inquire about the purpose and purpose of his arrival. If the man declares his intention to marry and the woman expresses his consent, then the woman's family will ask the man to return to his home to convey the intention to his family. This stage marks the beginning of official communication between families. Furthermore, the two families agreed to determine the meeting time to discuss marriage arrangements in accordance with the provisions of Rote custom.

During this process, men are still required to come and interact with the woman's family. The interaction is not just a social gathering, but a means of assessment for female parents on the abilities and responsibilities of their future son-in-law. Men are judged by their ability to work, especially in cultivating rice fields and meeting the needs of life. On the other hand, the groom's family also assesses the bride-to-be, especially related to the skill of weaving traditional fabrics, which in Rote culture is a symbol of maturity, perseverance, and readiness to marry. If both parties have accepted each other, then the parents begin to take care of the marriage process in a traditional manner.

The early stages of the traditional meeting are marked by symbolic rituals called "opening doors" and "opening mouths". In this stage, the two families enter the house, fill the betel nut place, and start a traditional conversation. This ritual marks that the meeting of the two parties has been customarily valid and recognized by the extended family. After that, the groom-to-be is dressed in traditional clothes as a symbol of acceptance. The customary conversation then continued by discussing various important elements, such as bai and to'o (customary belis), the role of the church, and the customary obligation called milk.

Ahead of the wedding day, the man and his family are required to bring traditional equipment in the form of a goat, one rice blush (about 20 kilograms), and two bottles of soup. The presence of this equipment serves as a marker that the marriage arrangement is ongoing and announced to the entire village, which in customary terms is called the village *trung*. After the customary arrangements were completed, the conversation continued with the church wedding plan. At this stage, the two brides-to-be appoint a spokesperson (spokesperson), while the family determines the marriage witness.

The next stage is engagement, which is marked by the discussion of the number of trays or deliveries that must be brought by the man. The number of trays is usually determined in odd numbers, such as five, seven, or nine trays, according to the woman's family agreement. After the number of trays is determined, the official bidding process is carried out. Next, the family discussed milk *belis* as a form of respect for the female parents. After the agreement was reached, a traditional meeting known as *picabok* was held at night, and the next day the wedding day was held.

In the Rote custom, the implementation of a feast or eating meat indicates that the *belis* has been brought by the man. At the same time, the women also prepared a reply as a form of customary reciprocity. This process of giving to each other affirms the principles of balance and reciprocity in Rote culture. After the delivery was brought, spokespersons from both sides



met at the man's house to wait for the arrival of the delivery from the woman's side. This stage is a marker that the marriage bond has been recognized customarily.

Overall, the marriage custom of the Rote people—which in the old term is called *Eno sasao ana*—is a long series of processes that emphasize deliberation, family agreement, and adherence to customary norms. Marriage is not only understood as a personal relationship between a man and a woman, but as a social event that involves the community at large. Therefore, the marriage custom of the Rote people is considered complete and perfect after all stages of custom, especially *antaran*, are carried out in accordance with the applicable provisions

Third; In the custom of the Rote people, death is seen as a social and spiritual event that involves the entire kinship structure, regardless of the age or gender of the person who died. From ancient times to the present, death is not only interpreted as the end of biological life, but as a transitional process that must be undergone through regular and sacred customary stages. Therefore, each death is followed by a series of rituals that regulate the role of family, traditional leaders, and communities in ushering the spirits to the perfect customary settlement.

In the past, the coffins of the Rote people were made from *lontar* trees or *tuak* trees, which were specially cut down according to customary regulations. This felling process has a symbolic sequence, where the first party to hurt the tree is the grandmother or *ba'i* of the deceased. This act symbolizes the genealogical relationship between the ancestor and the person who died. The grandmother who carried out the early logging was obliged to bring a dog or goat as a traditional offering, which was then burned or cooked at the logging site so that the people who continued the work could eat together. This tradition emphasizes the importance of preparing pets as part of customary obligations in dealing with death.

After the palm trees are cut down and the coffin is prepared, the next customary responsibility lies with the *om* of the deceased, especially in digging grave burrows. The digging of the grave was carried out symbolically by the *to'o*, who were required to carry a crowbar as a symbol of work, as well as offerings in the form of animals—sheep, pigs, and dogs—and five bottles of soup. This responsibility shows that death is not only a matter for the nuclear family, but also involves a wider network of kinships, with a clear division of roles according to custom.

The funeral process is also strictly regulated. *To'o* traditional leaders became the first party to nail the coffin as a symbol of the last surrender according to custom, then continued by religious leaders, the government, and family members. After the burial is over, the mourning period does not end immediately, but continues with the calculation of customary days. The 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th days after the funeral are important stages marked by joint prayer and the dismantling of the mourning tent. This stage marks the process of releasing the symbols of death that were previously installed during the period of mourning.

In Rote customary terms, the ritual on certain days after death is called *nunula*, which means to remove or lower the marker of grief, such as a cloth or blanket that is hung when death occurs. After this stage, the family still continues the grieving period until the 40th day. On the





40th day, a traditional ritual and worship called lufakeo is performed, which marks a change in meaning from sorrow to joy. At this stage, grief is considered to begin to be released customarily and spiritually.

During the series of customs, there is also the practice of giving to each other between families. The om of the deceased comes to receive traditional offerings from the bereaved family, while the extended family of the om brings foodstuffs such as coconuts, bananas, chicken, and cakes as a form of traditional participation. On the contrary, the family of the deceased welcomed the group by providing wine and cattle meat, especially the head and hind legs which had to be handed over complete with the tail. This practice reflects the principles of reciprocity and balance in Rote customs.

The last stage in the death custom of the Rote people is the calculation until the 100th day. On the 100th day, the family held a last worship and thanksgiving feast led by the pastor as an expression of gratitude to God that the entire series of customs had been completed. Thus, death is declared to be completely customary and spiritual. For the Rote people, the completion of the death custom up to the 100th day is a sign that the family has fulfilled all social, cultural, and religious obligations towards the deceased, and can return to living a normal social life.

Based on the data from the research results, the social functions of poetry and traditional speech in Londalusi Village can be summarized as follows:

Social Context	Forms of Poetry/Speech	Main Social Functions
Birth	Tefamoris speech, a poem of gratitude with the main characters Manehelo and To'o in the implementation period at 7 months-40 days of birth	Social behavior regulation, maternal and infant protection
Weddings	Traditional dialogue, agreement poems with traditional leaders and spokespersons as the main characters in the pre-post-marriage time period	Legitimacy of relationships, binders of family cohesion
Death	Ritual speeches, support poems with the main character To'o and traditional leaders in the period of 3 days -100 days of death	Grief organizers, community solidarity

Overall, the results of this study show that the customary narratives conveyed by AR and BS contain a consistent sequence of social practices in the life cycle of birth, marriage, and death. The narrative is conveyed orally, systematically, and collectively, and becomes the main reference for the community in carrying out customs. All data from the results of this study are presented as empirical exposure without interpretation, in accordance with the purpose of the subchapter of the research results.

## b. Discussion

This discussion comprehensively examines the research findings on the social function of traditional narratives (as a form of oral tradition related to traditional bini poetry) in the life cycle of the people of Londalusi, Rote Island, by relating them to the theoretical framework of the social function of oral literature and oral traditions in traditional society. The discussion focused on how the traditional narrative of birth, marriage, and death plays a role in maintaining



the socio-cultural identity of local communities through educational, normative, symbolic, integrative, and communicative functions.

**The Educational Function of Traditional Narratives in the Inheritance of Social Values**  
The findings of the study show that the traditional narratives conveyed by informants function as an effective and sustainable means of social education. Narratives about birth, marriage, and death not only explain customary procedures, but also transmit knowledge about the stages of human life, social responsibility, and the ethics of relationships between community members. This is in line with the view of Fatmahwati et al. (2024) who affirm that oral traditions function as a medium of informal education in local communities, where cultural values are taught through speech and practice, rather than through the formal education system.

In the context of the Rote community, indigenous education takes place through narratives that are repeated and inherited across generations. The explanation of tefamulik at seven months of gestation, for example, not only teaches ritual procedures, but also instills an understanding of the concept of human perfection according to local cosmology. This kind of education is contextual and based on collective experience, as affirmed by Anh (2024), that oral traditions shape the historical and moral consciousness of the community through the repetition of meaningful narratives.

#### **c. Normative Function: Customs as Regulators of Social Behavior**

The results of the study show that traditional narratives have a strong normative function in regulating individual and group behavior. Each stage of life is bound by clear customary rules, starting from pregnancy, the marriage process, to the stage of death. These norms are conveyed orally and adhered to as a form of social obligation. This corroborates the findings of Asamoah-Poku (2024) who stated that oral traditions play a role as a social regulatory system that maintains cultural stability and local identity in the midst of social change. In Rote marriage customs, for example, the evaluation of male work ability and female skills shows that customary norms regulate the social viability of prospective partners. This process is not just a ritual, but a social mechanism to ensure the economic and cultural sustainability of the new family. Thus, traditional narratives function as "unwritten laws" that are obeyed and reproduced through social practices, as also reflected in Nadra's (2023) study on the normative function of oral literature in the archipelago's culture.

#### **d. Symbolic and Cosmological Functions in Indigenous Narratives**

The discussion of the findings also shows that traditional narratives are loaded with symbolism and cosmological meaning. The use of the crescent moon in tefamulik rituals, the calculation of the 3rd, 7th, 40th, and 100th days in the custom of death, as well as the use of certain animals as customary offerings represent the Rote people's worldview of the order of the cosmos and the cycle of life. This is in line with Fox's (2006) view of the genealogical and topogenic importance in Rote ritual speech, where traditional symbols connect humans with ancestors, space, and time.

This symbolism shows that oral traditions are inseparable from local cosmology. Traditional narratives are a means to explain the relationship between humans, nature, and



transcendental forces. These findings are also in line with Fowler et al. (2025) and Yuki et al. (2023) who emphasize the role of oral traditions in transmitting ecological and cosmological knowledge that underpins cultural and environmental sustainability.

#### **e. Integrative Function: Strengthening Social Cohesion**

One of the important findings of this research is the integrative function of traditional narratives in strengthening the social cohesion of the community. Each traditional ritual involves the collective participation of the nuclear family, extended family, traditional leaders, and village communities. Traditional narratives are a unifying tool that unites various parties in a framework of common meaning. This confirms the view of Fatmahwati et al. (2024) that oral traditions function as social glues that build a sense of belonging and community solidarity. In the custom of death, for example, the involvement of the om, to'o, religious leaders, and extended family shows a clear and complementary division of social roles. This process not only strengthens kinship bonds, but also affirms the social structure and customary hierarchy within Rote society, as also explained by Fox (2016) about the role of master rituals and social structures in Rote oral traditions.

#### **f. Communicative Function and Collective Memory**

Traditional narratives in this study also function as a medium of cultural communication and a repository of collective memory. Through oral narration, the community's history, values, and collective experiences are conveyed and remembered together. Elvina and Yasnel (2025) emphasized that oral traditions not only convey messages, but also build identity through distinctive language and speech styles.

The findings of the study show that the traditional narrative of Rote is conveyed systematically and repeatedly, thus allowing for the deep internalization of values. This communicative function is becoming increasingly important in the context of modernity, where oral traditions play a role as a fortress of cultural identity, as revealed by Zainuddin (2023).

#### **g. Contribution to the Study of Oral Tradition and Cultural Identity**

Theoretically, this research makes an important contribution in expanding the understanding of the social function of oral traditions, especially in the context of traditional poetry bini Pulau Rote. This research emphasizes that traditional narratives are not just a form of folklore, but are a complex and multifunctional social system. By mapping the educational, normative, symbolic, integrative, and communicative functions, this study complements the study of Fox (2006; 2016; 2024) which emphasizes more genealogical, ritual, and oral composition aspects.

Empirically, this study enriches the documentation of the traditional practices of the people of East Rote, especially Londalusi, which have been relatively underexposed in academic studies. These findings also strengthen the argument that oral traditions are still actively functioning in the lives of contemporary societies, rather than simply remnants of past cultures.

The theoretical implication of this research is the strengthening of the paradigm that oral tradition must be understood as a dynamic and contextual social practice. The practical



implication is the importance of preserving traditional narratives as part of intangible cultural heritage. Documenting and strengthening the role of traditional speakers (manehelo) and traditional leaders is crucial to maintain the sustainability of oral traditions in the midst of social change.

In addition, this research can be a reference for the formulation of local cultural policies, especially in efforts to preserve and revitalize oral traditions in East Nusa Tenggara. Oral traditions can be integrated in local culture-based education as a strategy for maintaining socio-cultural identity.

Although it makes a significant contribution, this study has some limitations. First, the number of informants was limited to two key informants, so the findings did not fully represent the variation in perspectives within the broader community. Second, the data analyzed was in the form of a narrative of traditional explanation, not a direct chanting of the poem bini, so that the analysis emphasized more on the social function of the traditional narrative than on the aesthetic aspects and linguistic structure of the poem. Third, this study focuses on one village location, so generalization of findings to other Rote areas needs to be done carefully. However, these limitations do not diminish the value of research as an in-depth study that is contextual and rooted in the social realities of local communities.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that traditional narratives related to traditional bini poetry have a very significant role in maintaining the socio-cultural identity of the people of Londalusi, East Rote District, Rote-Ndao Regency. Through the study of traditional narratives in the human life cycle—birth, marriage, and death—this study shows that oral traditions do not only function as a means of inheriting traditional stories, but as a social system that lives and regulates the life order of local communities as a whole.

The findings of the study confirm that traditional narratives carry out educational functions by transmitting cultural knowledge, customary values, and social ethics informally and sustainably across generations. The normative function appears in the role of the customary as a regulator of social behavior, which establishes the obligations, roles, and boundaries of individuals within the community. Symbolic and cosmological functions are reflected through the use of time, numbers, animals, and rituals that represent the Rote people's worldview of life, death, and man's relationship to the cosmos. In addition, the integrative function of traditional narratives is evident in the collective involvement of families and communities in each ritual, which strengthens social cohesion and kinship solidarity. The communicative function of traditional narratives also acts as a medium for storing and transmitting collective memory, which maintains the continuity of the cultural identity of local communities.

Overall, this study confirms that traditional bini poetry and its accompanying traditional narratives are strategic socio-cultural instruments in maintaining the socio-cultural identity of the Rote people in the midst of the dynamics of social change. This research makes an important contribution to the study of oral literature and cultural anthropology by expanding



the understanding of the social function of oral traditions in the context of Indonesian archipelago society.

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that further research expand the number and variety of informants, including the younger generation, to look at the dynamics of inter-generational transmission of oral traditions. Further research also needs to examine specifically the direct chanting of bini verses to analyze the aesthetic aspects, linguistic structure, and performativity of oral literature. In addition, efforts are needed to document and preserve oral traditions systematically as part of the protection of intangible cultural heritage, both through academic approaches and community-based cultural policies.

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