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The Role of Folklore in Shaping the Leukonese Characters: An Anthropolinguistic Study

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the relationship between folklore and the character of the Leukonese community on Simeulue Island, Aceh Province. Employing an ethnographic and anthropolinguistic approach, the study utilized audio-video recordings of oral Leukonese folklore, including 'nandong', 'nanga-nanga', and 'buai'. The performances of 'nandong' (songs), 'nanga-nanga' (sad stories), and 'buai' (poetry) were analyzed using the anthropolinguistic approach to delineate their components (text, co-text, and context) as an integrated whole. The meaning of the folklore was dissected through domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, and semantic componential analysis. Domain analysis explored the semantic relationship between folklore and the Leukonese character, identifying attributes. Taxonomy analysis categorized these attributes, influencing the Leukonese character in performance. Semantic componential analysis served to confirm and annotate these attributes in the Leukonese people's character. The study's findings demonstrate that the presence and perpetuation of Leukonese folklore significantly impact the character of its people. 'Nandong' teaches (1) the transmission of values and norms, (2) cultural identity and continuity, and (3) social cohesion. Meanwhile, 'buai' fosters (1) cultural preservation and celebration, (2) community cohesion and participation, and (3) integration of Malay tradition. Finally, 'nanga-nanga' instills (1) emotional expression and coping, (2) the reflection of social realities,

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and (3) empowerment and voice. Consequently, language serves as a means to express ideas, thoughts, and experiences, manifested in various oral traditions passed down through generations. These traditions often mirror the characteristic patterns of a community.

Keywords: Anthropolinguistic approach, character, folklore, Leukonese community.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leukonese is a community that lives on Simeulue Island, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The Leukonese language is endangered in Simeulue Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. This language is spoken only in two villages on the island and is increasingly threatened due to rapid development and increased reliance on the Indonesian language and the local lingua franca, the Jamee language (Lubis & Williams, 2019). Formerly, the Leukonese only worked as fishermen or farmers. However, recently, they have preferred being civil servants in the local government. Even though some Leukonese work as civil employees, teachers, and temporary workers, many of them still fish or farm.

Simeuleu is a small island with potential disasters and limited infrastructure, and this has encouraged elder Leukonese to advise the youth regarding safety and survival. Local knowledge about the appropriate seasons for fishing and farming, making a *bokge* ‘canoe’ and *robin* ‘boat’, staple food, and many other essential things should be passed down to the young generation to increase their awareness of the natural conditions in their area (Gani et al., 2023). Prior to the tsunami disaster in 2004, the Leukonese people used waterways to reach other districts, including the capital of Simeulue Island (Sinabang), for school, work, or health services. However, after the 2004 tsunami, there was massive development in every aspect of life, such as house buildings, school buildings, health services, roads, and transportation. Even though the development is still in process, it is a great help for the Simeulue community. This has also encouraged many Leukonese parents to send their children to school or continue their studies outside the island for better education.

Nowadays, many young Leukonese does not know much about *nandong* ‘songs’ or other oral traditions from their own hometown. The ways young Leukonese solve problems have changed due to education outside the island and the influence of technology. In the past, during sad times, Leukonese people would sing *nanga-nanga* ‘sad songs’ to relieve their misery. However, most young Leukonese now use their gadgets to express their sadness by sharing relevant quotes or memes from the internet.

“Our folklore, our character” is a message taken from some interviews with elders of Leukonese. This message is important because the ancestors have created and applied the traditions useful and accepted by the Leukonese community. These traditions are performed by Leukonese people with fulfilled meanings. For example, *nandong* is a local tradition that can be performed in several forms, such as poetry, stories, and songs. Each performance has its own purpose, but overall, it is local wisdom aiming to deliver advice. *Nandong* is sung by a man or a group of men in a high pitch (Lubis, 2019c). One of the lyrics of *Nandong* can be seen as follows:

<i>Tabik-tabik nampunyo rumah</i>	‘Excuses for the host’
<i>Kami bagandang di surambi</i>	‘We play drum at the porch’
<i>Mintak tabik nampunyo rumah</i>	‘Excuse for the host’
<i>Kami membaco surek nyanyi</i>	‘We read text of songs’

The lyrics above highlight the importance of asking permission from the host before performing any activity. They teach the Leukonese to seek permission before engaging in any activity at someone else’s house. Teaching this value has become a challenge for the elder Leukonese because they realize that the young Leukonese are influenced by other cultures that shape their characters. Leukonese parents desire better education and jobs for their children; however, the children’s local knowledge and survival ability in their own homeland decrease because they spend more time outside the island. Leukonese elders are aware of this situation, yet they still expect their children to develop good characters based on local wisdom (Revita et al., 2022). Local knowledge is generally gained from ancestors and experiences, which are often shared through oral traditions. These oral traditions are not merely for entertainment in formal or informal situations but also index the meaning of the traditions. Learning a traditional language can provide both information about the learner’s character and the value of local wisdom. According to Lubis (2019a), *nandong* is one of the local heritages from Simeulue, Aceh, Indonesia that serves this purpose.

There has been little research about the Leukonese community. Some studies focused on language vitality (Yusri & Amri, 2018), the Leukonese dictionary (Candrasari & Khalsiah, 2018), preliminary documentation of the Leukonese language (Lubis & Williams, 2019), *nanga-nanga* in Simeulue Island (Lubis, 2019b), and describing the balancing nature and landscape conservation practices of the Leukonese community on Simeulue Island (Lubis, Abus, et al., 2022). The objective of this study was to explore the role of Leukonese folklore and Leukonese people’s character through the anthropolinguistic approach. Thus, the research question is: What is the role of folklore in shaping the Leukonese character?

This research brings novelty by exploring the under-researched Leukonese community on Simeulue Island, Aceh Province, Indonesia. While previous studies have focused on language vitality, dictionaries, preliminary documentation, and cultural practices, this study investigates the role of Leukonese folklore in shaping the character of the community. It employs an anthropolinguistic approach to examine how oral traditions, such as *nandong*, impart local wisdom and influence behaviors. As modernization and external influences threaten the transmission of these traditions, this research offers the importance of preserving folklore to maintain cultural identity and values among the younger generation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are various definitions of folklore, based on its forms, transmission, and types. Some folklorists argue that folklore is confined to literary forms, such as folktales, myths, legends, and fables. Meanwhile, others include everyday practical knowledge, such as stories about brushing teeth, local cuisine, and operating a tractor, within the scope of folklore. The key themes of folklore encompass literature

(both oral and written), oral transmission, community, and survival. One of its functions is to impart survival skills within a community and foster the development of good character.

2.1 Folklore

Folklore is a compound word, derived from two basic words: ‘folk’ and ‘lore’. A folk refers to a group of people with identifiable physical, social, and cultural characteristics that distinguish them from other groups. These characteristics may include similar skin colors, shapes, sizes, hairstyles, livelihoods, languages, levels of education, and religions. However, more importantly, a folk has a tradition passed down through at least two generations, which can be recognized as common property. Lore, on the other hand, is a folk habit that is part of its culture, transmitted orally to the next generations or through examples accompanied by gestures or mnemonic devices (Endraswara, 2003). The concept of *peunajoh* not only addresses food needs but also covers the maintenance of values inherent in *peunajoh*. Additionally, the food ingredients in *peunajoh* serve as motivation for the community to preserve the diversity of flora and fauna as cultural elements. The presence of *peunajoh* in Acehese culture, with its firmly held meanings and values, is a significant factor in maintaining ecosystem diversity in Aceh (Lubis, Ramlan, et al., 2022).

Folklore serves as a vital tool for building character and skills as it conveys messages that inspire positive actions. It is a key aspect of folklore, linking people into small groups and relying on a dialogical relationship (Valk, 2003). The most common criterion for defining folklore is its mode of transmission, often referred to as the ‘oral tradition’ (Dundes, 1965). Folklore, in its oral and traditional form, is typically transmitted orally and serves as shared tradition-based creations of a cultural community (Harvilahti, 2003). Further exploration of oral literature is necessary due to its appearance in local languages and its non-literal meanings, requiring in-depth interviews with locals to ascertain its exact meanings. At times, oral literature in one area may be borrowed from other traditions due to immigration.

Folklore serves multiple functions, including as a projection system, ratifying cultural institutions, an educational tool, and a coercive and supervisory tool (Revika & Hayati, 2020). Bascom (1954) initially proposed four functions: (1) as a projection system, reflecting the collective imagination, (2) as a means of ratifying cultural institutions, (3) as an educational tool, and (4) as a coercive and supervisory tool to ensure community members adhere to norms. The theory of the ‘four functions of folklore’ has been widely discussed and studied, with its origins in the early 20th century and its inclusion in educational programs (Nuriman, 2021). Furthermore, folklore can be used to understand comparative development and culture and to predict contemporary attitudes and beliefs (Michalopoulos & Xue, 2021).

In Simeulue Island, several traditions have been adopted from other areas, such as Minangkabau and Aceh Singkil. *Nandong* originates from Minangkabau and utilizes the Aneuk Jamee language, while *Tari Andalas* is from Aceh Singkil. Within the Leukonese community, two oral literature pieces use the Aneuk Jamee language, namely *nandong* ‘songs’ and *buai* ‘poetry’, while *nanga-nanga* ‘sad stories’ and *inafi-nafi* ‘customary speech or story’ use the Leukonese language. This study has

recorded only three oral traditions, as *inafi-nafi* is rare to find and is still in the process of documentation.

2.2 Folklore and Society

The society comprises an independent group of individuals that live in a shared region, have a common culture (a shared set of values, beliefs, practices, etc.), and are connected through regular social contacts and mutually dependent statuses and roles (Calhoun et al., 1997). Folklore exists within society and influences its way of life. The relationship between literature and culture in society is mutual: literature draws from cultural traditions, beliefs, and values, enriching culture, while cultures embrace and elevate literary works, with literature influencing and shaping societal culture (Akhter & Lamba, 2022). Folklore, a group of traditional ideas, practices, and narratives, has been traditionally transmitted orally through generations within a society (Michalopoulos & Xue, 2021), shaping and reflecting the society's norms and values.

In the current study, the Leukonese community also possesses folklore containing values that manifest through their behaviors. For instance, phrases like *O maiyo?* 'Where have you been?', *Umaeo* 'Where are you going?', and *Araya karajomo?* 'What are you doing?' are derived from folklore and is commonly used among the Leukonese. These interrogative sentences are not intended to interrogate the interlocutors but rather to inquire about each other's current updates and share information.

2.3 Performance

According to Bauman and Briggs (1990), performance is a mode of using language or a way of speaking. The theoretical concept concerning the art of speaking not only involves identifying the literary text's content and situational use but also tends to explain performance as the stipulations within speech communication. Performance encompasses the result of text, co-text, and context simultaneously. Performance, particularly in oral culture, is a distinctive mode of communication and human action that sets it apart from merely describing the normal way. Thus, certain acts of communication are characterized as performance by a quality that is frequent and within a 'frame' or theme.

In this phenomenon, language serves as one of the primary tools for cultural communication. Language can reveal a person's character through the expression of thoughts, opinions, or feelings. According to Oladunni and Tomi (2018), language can help us understand an individual's thought process and personality, thereby reflecting their identity. The comprehension of a language is then reflected in performance. Language in the form of oral tradition is closely related to the culture of a country's social group, through which events are informed and expressed (Finnegan, 2005). Oral expressions are transformed into performance, a cultural practice derived from folklore. This dimension emphasizes human life in music, theater, and abilities in other art forms displayed to the public, such as debate, storytelling, singing, dancing, and music, among other activities. It can be concluded that performance is the final result of an individual or group expressing their intention.

Studying performance is important because humans are creative in expressing their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in both literal and non-literal ways. Every sign produced by humans carries meaning and indexicality, which thrive in a community that accepts both verbal and nonverbal performance. An individual or group is also capable of delivering expressions with opposite meanings simultaneously (Lubis et al., 2018).

2.4 Character

Character is an attribute that is always admired as a sign of goodness, virtue, and moral maturity in a person (Pradhan, 2009). Character is formed by internal and external factors. The internal factors are derived from the acquisition and interpretation of an individual toward his/her surroundings. Meanwhile, the external factor is acquired from habits, school, and/or laws where the individual lives or stays. Character refers to the traits of each individual about his identity, which is the essence of inner/spiritual qualities, ways of thinking, and ways of behaving (outward attitudes and actions) in one's life and works the same in the family, community, nation, and state (Maksudin, 2013).

Character can also be shaped through storytelling. However, nowadays, the tradition of storytelling is rare to find. The activity has been replaced by various media that attract children's attention. Spending more time using gadgets has caused the children not to receive character education as expected. The tradition of storytelling can bring many positive impacts on children (Nnyagu & Umezinwa, 2018).

Oral literature includes human expressions and full intentions in it. The rapid development of technology and information currently has a highly influential impact on culture. One form of oral literature is *nandong* from Simeulue Island, Aceh Province. However, it is slowly being replaced by external cultures that contain values that do not follow local wisdom. For example, the value of advice in *nandong* oral literature can be shifted and substituted with an individualistic culture that no longer emphasizes the importance of mutual affection for each other (Lubis, 2019a).

In Aceh, there is a proverb showing the relationship between custom (*adat*) and character. It is said that in custom, the information is delivered with a purpose to be obeyed. One of the representations of custom is folklore. The expression "*matee aneuk meupat jeurat, gadoh adat pat ta mita*" (a dead person can be known by the grave, a dead culture is hard to revive). Another expression about *adat* in Acehnese is "*adat ngon hukom/religion, lagei zat ngon sifeut*" (custom and religion are like material and its characteristics). It means custom and religion are closely bound. *Adat* penetrates every aspect of the Malay people's life, including their oral literature. Examples of oral literature are *pantun* (poetry), *petatah-petitih* (sayings), stories, and so on (Lubis, 2017b).

3. METHODS

This study used a qualitative paradigm with an anthropolinguistic approach to find the relationship between the role of folklore and the character of the Leukonese people on Simeulue Island. Anthropolinguistics is an interdisciplinary study of

human character through their language and culture (Miller & Heiland, 2021). It looks into the performance (text, co-text, and context) of oral literature and the meanings through the indexicality in the Leukonese people's minds and interpretations. Anthropolinguistics can help analyze the oral tradition as local wisdom in one area because it concerns human manner (performer) in their performance. Hence, the value of local wisdom can be revitalized and reorganized. According to Sibarani (2004), anthropolinguistics seeks to understand a language through cultural concepts, culture through linguistic concepts, and human life aspects through linguistic anthropology.

The ethnography method proposed by Spradley (1979) was also applied in this study. These twelve steps are powerful in understanding cultural practices and beliefs (Howard, 2021), they are:

1. Locating informants: identifying knowledgeable members of the community who can provide detailed cultural insights.
2. Interviewing informants: conducting interviews to gather information about the community's practices and beliefs.
3. Making an ethnography method: developing a structured approach to conduct the ethnographic study.
4. Asking descriptive questions: using open-ended questions to elicit detailed descriptions of cultural practices.
5. Analyzing ethnographic interviews: reviewing interview data to identify key themes and patterns.
6. Making a domain analysis: categorizing the data into meaningful domains or categories relevant to the culture.
7. Asking structural questions: exploring the relationships between different cultural domains.
8. Making a taxonomic analysis: creating a hierarchical structure of the cultural categories.
9. Asking contrast questions: identifying differences and variations within the cultural data.
10. Making a componential analysis: breaking down the data into components to understand the fundamental cultural rules.
11. Discovering cultural themes: identifying overarching themes that summarize the core values and beliefs of the culture.
12. Writing an ethnography: compiling the findings into a coherent narrative that accurately represents the culture studied.

Following the twelve steps of Spradley's (1979) ethnography method is crucial for ensuring a comprehensive and systematic study of the role of folklore in shaping the Leukonese character. Each step was built based on the previous one, allowing for a detailed understanding of the culture. This structured approach helped in capturing the complexities of cultural behaviors and beliefs, ensuring that the analysis was thorough and reliable.

3.1 Study Location

The location of the study was Simeulue Island (also known as Simeulue Regency), Alafan district. Because the Leukonese speakers reside only in two

villages, Langi and Lafakha, the study was conducted in both areas. The location of the study is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Simeuleu Island (in red circle) and Alafan district on Simeulue Island (in blue square).

3.2 Data Collection

The data were collected through recordings of the oral traditions of the Leukonese people and in-depth interviews with informants, including the local leader, the Leukonese elder, and the performers of *nandong* ‘songs’, *buai* ‘poetry’, and *nanga-nanga* ‘sad stories’. Additionally, annotations of oral literature were recorded in other contexts. The instrument used to document the audio-video recordings was a Panasonic handycam full HD HC-W585. ELAN (Eudico Linguistic Annotator) software was used to transcribe the utterances.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, and semantic componential analysis. In the domain analysis, the semantic relationship between the role of folklore and the character of the Leukonese people was investigated, aligning with the study’s objective. Since folklore serves as a communication medium in the Leukonese community, the semantic relationship ‘attribute’ was utilized in the study. The diagram of the domain analysis is shown in Figure 2.

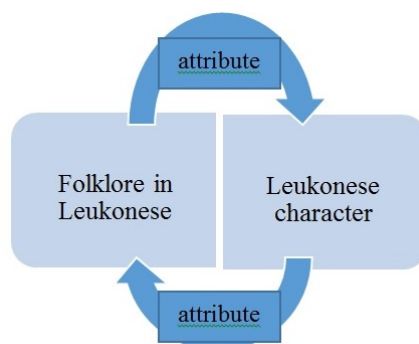


Figure 2. Domain analysis (source: the Authors, 2024).

In Figure 2, the semantic relationship ‘attribute’ serves as the core for analyzing the performance of Leukonese folklore/oral literature in terms of text, co-text, and context applied in daily communication among the Leukonese. The taxonomy analysis classified oral literature based on its meanings in Leukonese, while the semantic componential analysis categorized the uniqueness of Leukonese oral tradition based on its functions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nandong, *buai*, and *nanga-nanga* play vital roles in shaping the Leukonese character by transmitting values, preserving cultural identity, nurturing social cohesion, providing emotional outlets, reflecting social realities, and empowering individuals within the community. From the three oral traditions in the Leukonese community, two speech acts are used to deliver the messages, namely declarative and imperative speech acts. The declarative speech acts deliver information based on the indigenous knowledge and experiences of the Leukonese ancestors, while imperative speech acts ask the young Leukonese to behave according to the local values and culture on Simeulue Island. The way they speak represents their identity (Lubis, 2017a; Sibarani, 2015). These characteristics are expected to be developed among the young Leukonese as the next generation who preserves the island.

4.1 *Nandong*

Nandong, firstly, transmits values and norms; they often contain advice and stories, reinforcing societal expectations and ethical behavior (Ismail et al., 2020). The lyrics promote respect, learning, and gratitude, crucial for personal development and social harmony. Second, these oral traditions also serve as a medium for preserving and transmitting cultural identity and continuity (Arina, 2020; Ismail et al., 2020). By performing these oral traditions, the Leukonese people maintain a connection to their heritage and pass it down to future generations. Finally, these traditions are often performed in community settings, thus, fostering social cohesion. *Nandong*, with its variety of themes, particularly in welcoming ceremonies, helps unify the community through shared experiences and collective participation (Lubis, 2019a, 2019c).

Nandong is generally sung in a high pitch, by a man or a group of men, and in formal/informal/impromptu situations. This indicates that only a man/men can speak in a high tone as men are considered leaders in the Leukonese community. The text structure of *nandong* in a formal situation consists of an opening, content, and closing. *Nandong* is one of the Leukonese people’s ways to communicate and give advice (Lubis, 2019c). It can be done in a large group, small group, or solo. As a song, *nandong* has a fixed formula in a formal situation because it follows the main theme of the event (framing). The advice in *nandong* is in the form of narratives delivered persuasively (Zulkarnain et al., 2021). In informal and impromptu situations, *nandong* is sung based on what stanza is immediately created by the *nandong* singer (performer). The following is the illustration of *nandong* performed by a solo performer and a large group (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The solo *nandong* performer (left) and a large group of performers (right) (photo by the Authors, 2024).

The solo *nandong* performer in Figure 3 plays the *kedang* ‘drum’ and violin to accompany the *nandong*. The violin is preferred in a solo performance, while in a large group, the *kedang* is used by 3 or 4 players while the rest are singers. The singers take turns to sing, either voluntarily or after being pointed out by the previous singer. Unlike *nandong*, which can only be performed by men, *nanga-nanga* can be presented by both males and females using the Leukonese language. The lyrics are normally in the form of narratives.

Etymologically, *nandong* means ‘melody’ and this art form consists of the exchange of poems/pantuns by several performers, with a minimum of two performers, led by a performer called the *penghulu gandang* (Ismail et al., 2020). From the data collection, several types of *nandong* were identified, namely *nandong dendang* (*nandong* song), *nandong janji* (*nandong* about promise), *nandong jawab* (*nandong* about answering back/reply/response), *nandong kasih* (*nandong* about love), *nandong sambah* (*nandong* for opening), *nandong untung* (*nandong* about destiny), *nandong burung* (*nandong* about birds), *nandong carai-lenggang* (*nandong* about divorce), *nandong batunangan* (*nandong* about engagement), *nandong buang* (*nandong* about a person exiled by the community), and *nandong smong* (*nandong* about tsunami). The lyrics of *nandong dendang* (*nandong* song) can be seen as follows:

- (1) *Tabik-tabik nampunyo rumah* ‘Ask for the host’s permission’
Kami bagandang di surambi ‘We play drum at the porch’
Mintak tabik nampunyo rumah ‘Ask for the host’s permission’
Kami membaco surek nyanyi ‘We read the song’s lyrics’

Barang nan gala, runduk-rundukkan ‘If a thing is high, please lower it down’
Kanai pirak sitinggi bulan ‘Hit by silver as high as the moon’
Barang nan salah ditunjukkan ‘Show us the right from wrong’
Pandai ado biaso balun ‘We have the wits but just not used to’

Dimano dapek daun sambai? ‘Where could you get the *sambai* leaves?’
Ko tak di bukik rimbo tuo ‘It must be at *rimbo tuo* hill’
Dimano dapek kito pandai? ‘Where did you can get the wits?’
Ko tak diaja urang tuo ‘It must be taught by your parents’

The lyrics above are the opening of a *nandong* in Leukonese. They contain a message about the expected attitude and process of learning. The first bait tells us the

importance of asking for the host's permission before doing any activities at his or her house. The second bait asks the teacher to guide, remind, and forgive students if they make mistakes because the students are still young and need more practice. The third bait advises the students to remember their parents' or teacher's efforts to teach them to be a well-educated person. As a *pantun* or poetry, *nandong* contains the first two parable lines, while the other two lines contain the key advice in a literal form.

4.2 *Buai*

The other type of Leukonese oral literature is *buai*, namely poetry or *pantun* delivered in a formal situation (Ismail et al., 2020), such as in a welcoming ceremony for a newborn to express gratitude. The lullaby or poem is a performing art carried out by several singers using a swing, a tradition that has existed since ancient times and is still preserved today (Arina, 2020). The language used here is Aneuk Jamee. The role of *buai* in shaping the Leukonese characters is, firstly, cultural preservation and celebration. By incorporating traditional practices and attire, such as the *Tajak Palembang* headwear (see Excerpt (2) below), *buai* honors the cultural heritage of the Leukonese people and celebrates significant life events. Secondly, it also fosters community cohesion and participation. The communal nature of *buai* performances, involving multiple singers and audience engagement, creates opportunities for collective expression and bonding. By singing together, individuals strengthen social bonds and reinforce shared cultural identity. Finally, it helps integrate Malay traditions, such as language and customs, into Leukonese culture. This fusion enriches the culture of the Leukonese community, highlighting the interconnectedness of diverse cultural influences and fostering cultural diversity and inclusivity.

Some *buai* are similar to *nandong*; however, it is only sung by women. An example of *buai* can be seen as follows:

- (2) *Ayun tajak buaikan tajak* 'Tajak sling swing, swing the tajak sling'
Tajak Palembang dari jao 'Tajak Palembang sling from far away'
Ayun anak adek oi buaikan anak 'Rock the child oh sisters, rock the child'
Anak sakandung dengan nyao 'A beloved child who is cared for with all soul'

Insha Allah kawan oi takambang bungo 'If God wills, the flowers will bloom'
Takambang bungo durian 'The durian flowers bloom'
Insha Allah dek oi tido mangapo 'If God wills, everything will be okay'
Ohhh dimano tali buaian 'Oh where is the rope for rocking'

Tabik-tabik nanpunyo rumah 'Ask for the host's permission'
Kami babuai di surambi 'We sing *buai* at the porch'
Mintak tabik adek yo adek oi mamak 'Ask for the host's permission, oh sisters and uncles'
Kami babuai malam ini 'We sing *buai* tonight'

Makan sirih adek oi dalam sarano 'Having piper betel, oh child, in a food tray'
Sirih mudo pinangnyo masak 'Young piper betel has ripe fruit palm'
Babuai kito adek oi malam ini 'We sing *buai* oh sisters tonight'
Mancari lafal dan mak anonyo 'To find the correct pronunciation and its meaning'

From the first stanza, we know that the occasion's framework is *buai*. To perform *buai*, the performer must wear a *Tajak Palembang*, one of the traditional

headwear in Palembang. This initial stanza not only informs the purpose of the occasion but also aspects related to *buai*, such as the singer's clothing, the relationship between this tradition and the Malay tradition, and politeness. It shows that the people of Simeuleu, including the Leukonese, always ask for the host's permission before doing any activities, just like the common norm in the East. This is related to the third stanza, in which singing *buai* can only be done on the porch of the host's residence after permission is given. The next stanza is almost like the lyrics of *nandong*, delivering messages containing advice as well.

Buai is performed by women only. It is performed in a formal situation, such as in the celebration of childbirth. The text organization of *buai* is similar to *nandong*, which consists of an opening, content, and closing part. It comprises declarative and imperative sentences. Examples of declarative sentences in *buai* can be seen as follows:

- (3) *Ayun tajak buaikan tajak* 'Tajak sling swing, swing the tajak sling'
Tajak Palembang dari jao 'Tajak Palembang sling, from far away'
Ayun anak adek oi buaikan anak 'Rock the child oh child, rock the child'
Anak sakandung dengan nyao 'A beloved child who is cared for with all soul'

The parable used in the first two lines and the target message in the last two lines are in the form of declarative sentences. They provide information that *tajak* 'a traditional headwear' is used during *buai* in the celebration of a newborn. The imperative sentences in *nandong* are shown in the subsequent stanza as follows:

- (4) *Makan sirih adek oi dalam sarano* 'Eating/having piper betel in *cerana*'
Sirih mudo pinangnyo masak 'The young leave of piper betel, the fruit palm is ripe'
Babuai kito adek oi malam ini 'We do *buai*, oh sisters, this night'
Mancari lafal dan mak anyo 'To find the correct pronunciation and its meaning'

The first two lines of the stanza are imperative sentences, marked by the words "have piper betel" addressed to the audience. Then, the last two lines invite the audience to join the celebration and listen to advice in *buai*. In formal circumstances, *nandong* and *buai* are generally performed after the evening prayer or by 9 p.m. On the other hand, *nandong* in an informal and impromptu situation can be sung anytime, such as when going fishing, picking up a glove, or sitting with family.

4.3 *Nanga-nanga*

From *nanga-nanga*, the first character is the emotional expression and coping. *Nanga-nanga* provides a platform for emotional expression and coping with personal and collective experiences. The lyrics often reflect deep personal sorrow or memories, allowing individuals to process and share their feelings, which promotes emotional resilience (Arina, 2020; Ismail et al., 2020; Nasution et al., 2024). The second character shaped by this oral tradition is the reflection of social realities. Through its narratives, *nanga-nanga* offers a reflection of social realities and personal histories (Lubis, 2019b). This oral art captures and communicates the lived experiences of the Leukonese people, addressing themes like family struggles and colonial impacts, thus fostering a sense of shared history and understanding. Lastly, is empowerment and voice. *Nanga-nanga* empowers individuals, especially women, by giving them a voice to articulate their stories and experiences (Lubis, 2019b;

Nasution et al., 2024). This inclusive tradition highlights the importance of diverse perspectives within the community, reinforcing values of empathy and support.

Nanga-nanga is a type of Leukonese oral literature that differs from *nandong*. It is not in the form of poetry but more of a story. *Nanga-nanga* is a vocal art passed down through generations in Simeulue. It features verses of advice, satire, and lamentations sung by both men (*Silae*) and women (*Silafai*), though more often by women (Nasution et al., 2024). The lyrics blend rhythm with profound meaning, carrying aesthetic and social significance by narrating personal stories or ancestral messages. *Nanga-nanga* is only available in the Leukonese language. An example of a *nanga-nanga* performance is illustrated in Figure 4.

From Figure 4, it can be seen that three Leukonese elders were sitting together. Two of them were a married couple, while the other one was a neighbor (sitting on the left). When the woman (wife) sang *nanga-nanga*, her husband could not hide his sadness due to not having any child and feeling lonely.



Figure 4. The performance of *nanga-nanga* by a Leukonese woman (photo by the Authors, 2024).

Below is the *nanga-nanga* sung by the Leukonese woman in Figure 4:

- (5) *Elala elala oe elala untungta ngaurendem untungta sia sia*
Ngaita mesiasia emakta, tenek uri emakta alenta baeng ale alenta
Ek ita daro daro darondol ita erea ngaurendem erea mesinasa
Ngang ao me mesinasa emak ia
Urendem emak ia alenggok lehe
Ibo ibo angao emak oe ibo ibo utarimo
Teneng uri urimo banomo ngang baleen emak oe tofanomo ek surugo
Bo embak emak oe ita surugo samo samo.

(Translation: *Elala elala oe elala*, if I remember our fate, our fruitless fate, our life, and our mother's life was fruitless, from the moment our mother was still alive to the time she passed away, so did our friends. Now it is only us who live making a mat; I have already made a mat as my mother did. I remember my mother and my friends were at home. I am so sad, so sad, but I have accepted this fate since a long time ago until today. You already have your place, mother. Your place is in heaven, and we will see each other again in heaven)

Enak ere ita emak oe samo samo muakbofo
Ngang ao mu muakbofo ek hon sukun tumundo e
Ek hon sukun humahokakhong kakhong mata ujung bak eng o bek emak,
Laonggo laonggo me adek oe mata ujung raing uhon meo marak
Meo meo marak adek oe rain oon belin bakhong baeng mon ba bakhopba belin bakhong deman balal

Umaeo umaeo adek oe deman balal manyinal mae ao mae mae ao abang oe manyinal mek kubang meroi

Meo meo manyinal nyinal kubang oya oya ngaiseo ngaiseoo oya oya ao pindah alamat

Alamat a alamat abang oe ao pindah.

(Translation: A long time ago, we were raised by our mother. We were raised as long as breadfruit tree, oh my husband. There was no breadfruit again, oh my mother. I wanted to go to *Mata Ujung*. I wanted to go with my little brother to buy tobacco at tomorrow's noon. I would go anywhere with my little brother tomorrow at noon to dry tobacco. I would also go with my elder brother to dry tobacco at the pit. I went to the place, and my brother moved to another place).

Susah susah manambahma nambah susa ita sikolah ngaurendem

ngaurendem aleo tusikolah bak malua

naere naerefa akhio bak malua tuayanta

bakdo bakdo kharajoa tuayanta makhawali makhawali uang sikolanta mesia sia untung untungta mesia sia be Belanda

tenek tenek uri to Belanda kayo kayo ita

baru baru mang kayo kayo ita anakda da akhinta angma angmanjadi jadi sikolanda engang ngang afel afel to kepengda

(Translation: It was harder and harder when we went to school. I remember the days we went to school. Since a long time ago, my brother became a father to us. There was no job, he substituted for our father and went to earn money for our school fees. Our fate is bad because of the Dutch. We were supposed to be rich. We could be rich and your son might have been educated and had a lot of money).

In the first paragraph, the *nanga-nanga* sung by the woman indicates their deep sorrow because they do not have any children and feel like they have failed to be parents. Then, the story proceeded to talk about her memories as a child, particularly the memories with her family and the things they had ever done together, such as going to a place called *Mata Ujung* to buy tobacco and drying it until his brother moved to another place. The third paragraph contains her appreciation for her elder brother's sacrifice to take over their deceased father's role and responsibilities to take care of her and her little brother, but he faced difficulties because of Dutch colonialism.

The word *urendem* 'I remember' in the lyrics above aims to share the performer's memory or past moments, whereas the lyrics' *Ibo ibo angao emak oe ibo ibo utarimo, teneng uri urimo banomo ngang baleen emak oe tofanomo ek surugo. Bo embak emak oe ita surugo samo samo* 'I am so sad, so sad, but I have accepted this fate since a long time ago until now; you already have your place, mother. Your place is in heaven, and we will see each other again in heaven' describes the performer's feelings and what she desired for the future. The female performer sang in a neutral pitch, but sometimes, she lowered the pitch. This is by the statement of [Sibarani, et al. \(2022\)](#) that *nanga-nanga* can be sung in a high or low pitch. The woman performed solo because the *nanga-nanga* focused on her story. The *nanga-nanga* is similar to songs in general, but it uses the Leukonese language with a specific tempo and tone and without a chorus or refrain.

Nanga-nanga is sung in an informal situation when the performer needs to entertain himself/herself as a way to cope with sadness. By singing *nanga-nanga*, the performer may feel relieved, and if there are listeners, they will usually show sympathy, such as crying together and giving the performer emotional support.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that folklore plays a role in building the character of the Leukonese people. The folklore, delivered orally in the forms of *nandong*, *nanga-nanga*, and *buai*, describes the Leukonese ways of life and behaviors, emphasizing the importance of caring for each other. *Nandong* teaches (1) the transmission of values and norms, (2) cultural identity and continuity, and (3) social cohesion. Meanwhile, *buai* fosters (1) cultural preservation and celebration, (2) community cohesion and participation, and (3) integration of Malay tradition. Finally, *nanga-nanga* instills (1) emotional expression and coping, (2) the reflection of social realities, and (3) empowerment and voice. As a result, language functions as a vehicle for articulating concepts, perspectives, and life encounters, embodied in diverse oral customs transmitted across successive generations. These customs frequently reflect the traits and behaviors of a society.

While the study provides valuable insights into Leukonese folklore and its role in shaping cultural identity, several limitations and recommendations for future research should be noted. Firstly, its geographical and cultural focus limits generalizability, suggesting the need for comparative studies across diverse regions. Additionally, the reliance on ethnographic and linguistic methods overlooks other dimensions of folklore transmission, such as visual or performative aspects. Future research could incorporate interdisciplinary approaches and explore emerging forms of folklore in contemporary contexts. Furthermore, while the study touches on the relationship between folklore and character development, further investigation into the mechanisms underlying this influence is warranted. Addressing these gaps could enhance our understanding of folklore's significance in cultural identity formation.

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