

## Functions of Oral Literature *Malèlang Madiôn* for Its Supporting Community in Aceh Barat Daya

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### Abstract

No study on functions of oral literature *Malèlang Madiôn* in Aceh Barat Daya has been conducted. Therefore, this study aims to seek novelty as a form of literature revitalization to avoid extinction. It proposes to describe the functions of oral literature *Malèlang Madiôn* for its supportive community in Aceh Barat Daya. The selected approach was folklore by using Bascom-Dundes' theories. Data were acquired from informants from Aceh Barat Daya through interviews and transcription, supported by a literature study. They were in the form of oral text *Malèlang Madiôn*. Analyses were carried out using the semiotic reading method through the following steps: (1) interviewing informants, (2) transcribing oral utterances into oral text, (3) reading oral text *Malèlang Madiôn* heuristically and hermeneutically, (4) revealing the functions of oral literature *Malèlang Madiôn* based on the function theory by Bascom-Dundes, (5) categorizing the functions of *Malèlang Madiôn*, and (6) describing the results and drawing a conclusion. The results point out several functions of oral literature *Malèlang Madiôn* for its supportive community, namely (1) as a projection system; (2) as a means of cultural institutions validation; (3) as an educational tool; (4) as a means of control and supervision for community norms; (5) as a means of social sanctions or punishment, and (6) as a means of social criticism.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every region in Indonesia has a distinctive culture with unique characteristics than others. Some are categorized as folklore. Folklore is entitled as a part of developing collective culture—passed down over generations (Gadri, 2016). Jauhari (2018) argues that folklore is a cultural product from a particular community in the form of oral examples accompanied by gestures passed down from one generation to the next. Folklore is an identity of a collective community, distinguishing it from others.

Oral literature is a form of folklore. It rose from an oral tradition that significantly shaped the literature in a particular social group (Baihaqi, 2017). According to Yanika et al. (2021), oral literature is delivered through messages, stories, or witnesses. Lamusu (2020) explains that oral literature results from social interaction, which was formulated to deliver messages to the next generation.

One of the regions with rich oral literature is Aceh Barat Daya Regency. The Aceh community back then was acknowledged as people with living and viscous oral traditions (Erfinawati & Ismawirna, 2019). In this case, Malèlang Madiôn is one of them, passed down orally in the surrounding area.

Malèlang Madiôn tells of two votive children who were falsely accused of adultery. The children were named Malèlang and Madiôn. The Chief Commander reported the slander to the King of the Kuala Batèe Kingdom. As a result, Malèlang and Madiôn, still kids, were sentenced to be beheaded. However, before the execution, the two children were married off first—which was the wish of their parents. Poems of sorrow continue to be sung during the wedding and bathing process. This process has become a tradition in Aceh Barat Daya today. After the process was completed, Malèlang and Madiôn were returned to the royal court for punishment. This event was witnessed by the royal community at that time and later became the oral literature there.

The existence of oral literature in Aceh Barat Daya has been currently starting to fade, one of which is due to the literature holders' dependence on memorization. In addition, the number of artists or poets decrease consistently. Most of the oral literature in Aceh Barat Daya, including Malèlang Madiôn, is not documented in the form of manuscripts. The literature seems abandoned and faded since people do not know its functions. This is quite ironic because Malèlang Madiôn has essential and valuable meanings for local people. Every oral literature has noble values that must be maintained and preserved; by this, Malèlang Madiôn needs to be revitalized. According to Safriandi et al. (2022), an inventory needs to be performed on oral literature because it contains noble values and local wisdom. One form of revitalization is to conduct research on the functions of Malèlang Madiôn as a form of documentation for preserving local culture.

Based on the field data, research on functions of oral literature Malèlang Madiôn is incredibly interesting to conduct. This recent study would combine function theories by William R. Bascom and Alan Dundes. Both are folklore function theories that are intertwined with oral literature. This combination is expected to reveal the intended functions. Hence, this study proposes demonstrating the roles of oral literature Malèlang Madiôn in supporting the Aceh Barat Daya community.

William R. Bascom divides the function of folklore into four parts, namely (1) as a projection system or reflection of collective imagination, (2) as a means of cultural institutions validation, (3) as a tool for children's education (as well as for parents and society in general), and (4) as a means of control and supervision for community's norms (Azi, 2015). Meanwhile, Alan Dundes classifies folklore into six functions, namely (1) helping young people's education, (2) increasing the solidarity of a group, (3) giving social sanctions or punishment so that people behave well, (4) delivering social criticism, (5) providing a pleasant escape from reality, and (6) turning boring work into a game (Sudikan, 2017). Based on these two theories,

the functions of Malèlang Madiôn will be revealed.

No study on functions of oral literature Malèlang Madiôn in Aceh Barat Daya has been conducted. However, there are some relevant studies with parts of similarities. First, Fajri et al. (2022) conducted a study entitled “Nilai-Nilai dalam Cerita Rakyat di Kabupaten Aceh Barat Daya”. This study examines the values of folklore in Aceh Barat Daya, one of which is Malèlang Madiôn. The difference lies in the topic; this previous study focused on the values, while this recent study emphasizes the functions.

Second, Suantoko (2016) conducted a study entitled “Fungsi Sastra Lisan ‘Tanduk’ Masyarakat Genaharjo Kabupaten Tuban bagi Masyarakat Pendukungnya”. The applied theory was the function theory by William R. Bascom and Alan Dundes. The application of the theory demonstrates the relevance or similarity with this recent study. Meanwhile, the difference lies in the study object.

Third, Juniarto (2021) conducted a study entitled “Struktur dan Fungsi Pantun Tradisi ‘Palang Pintu’ Sanggar Bang Bens di Rawa Belong Jakarta Barat”. The similarity is in terms of analysis of oral literature functions and theories (Bascom-Dundes). Meanwhile, the difference is in the object of study.

Fourth, Uzliah & Susilo (2021) conducted a study entitled “Legenda Punden Ki Ageng Resi Saloko Gading Desa Seduri Kecamatan Mojokerto Kabupaten Mojokerto (Kajian Folklore)”. The results reveal eight functions of folklore, namely (1) as a projection system, (2) as a means of validating culture, (3) as a means of education, (4) as a means of social control, (5) as a means of religion, (6) as a means of sadaqah (alms), (7) as a means of bonding kinship, and (8) as a means of cultural promotion. The relevance is in terms of folklore functions—analyzed using Bascom-Dundes theories.

This study focuses on the function theory by Bascom and Dundes. Based on the theoretical perspective, Malèlang Madiôn possesses several functions, namely (1) as a projection system; (2) as a means of cultural institutions validation; (3) as an educational

tool; (4) as a means of control and supervision for community norms; (5) as a means of social sanctions or punishment, and (6) as a means of social criticism. The acknowledgement of these functions is expected to trigger the Aceh Barat Daya community to preserve Malèlang Madiôn as their local oral literature.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used a folklore approach combined with Bascom-Dundes' theories. Data were acquired from informants from Aceh Barat Daya through interviews and transcription, supported by a literature study. They were in the form of oral text Malèlang Madiôn. Analyses were carried out using the semiotic reading method. This method is based on the heuristic stage (linguistic rules) and the hermeneutic stage (literary, social and cultural rules and codes), which can be carried out simultaneously (Supriyanto, 2021). The steps were: (1) interviewing informants, (2) transcribing oral utterances into oral text, (3) reading oral text Malèlang Madiôn heuristically and hermeneutically, (4) revealing the functions of oral literature Malèlang Madiôn based on the function theories by Bascom-Dundes, (5) categorizing the functions of Malèlang Madiôn, and (6) describing the results and drawing a conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the theories by Bascom-Dundes, Malèlang Madiôn has six functions for the Aceh Barat Daya community, namely: (1) as a projection system; (2) as a means of cultural institutions validation; (3) as an educational tool; (4) as a means of control and supervision for community norms; (5) as a means of social sanctions or punishment, and (6) as a means of social criticism. The elaborations of the preceding points are presented below.

### 1. As a Projection System

Based on the Great Indonesian Dictionary, projection can be defined as an

estimation for the upcoming state using the recent existing data. Efrison (2017) explains that a projection system is a reflection tool of particular collective imagination, as stated by Bascom's function theory. Malèlang Madiôn functions as a projection system for the people of Aceh Barat Daya regarding heredity and vows (meuka-ôi). They are known as people familiar with binding vows to get offspring. When they are not soon blessed with children, they will make vows. This phenomenon (meuka-ôi) is identical to the story of Malèlang Madiôn.

*Si Malèlang ngon Madiôn  
Aneuk-aneuk pôn sigoe bandua  
Bukon sayang bungong situngkôi  
Aneuk ka-ôi boh haté ma*

The data explains that Malèlang and Madiôn are children born from a vow. Malèlang's and Madiôn's parents made a vow to Allah to be given a child because they had not been blessed with offspring for years. Children are the hope desired by every parent around the world. The function of the projection system, namely in the hope of getting offspring, can be seen in the story's characters. Efrison (2017) elaborates that Bascom's function theory provides understanding to married couples who are not yet blessed with children so they do not give up quickly and continue to perform efforts since all possibilities can happen by His will. Parents illustrate this situation in *Malèlang Madiôn*.

*Meuka-ôi* phenomena still exist in today's Aceh Barat Daya. Based on the tracing for *Malèlang Madiôn*, primarily in Kuala Batee Sub-district, "Malèlang" frequently refers to a vow to get offspring. That is what people respond to when the word is said, this function is still valid in society.

*Meu su meuriam beureutôh beudé  
Keuneuk poh matée aneuk bandua  
Aneuk dua droe lakè puwoe siat  
Jak peutrôh hajat ayah ngon poma  
Masa lam kandông poma meuka-ôi*

*Geubôh gaca pôn aneuk bandua  
Geulakè aneuk geupwoe siat  
Jak peuleuh hajat ayah ngon poma*

The preceding quotation portrays that vow will always be a responsibility of the speaker—which someday must be fulfilled. The Malèlang and Madiôn families asked for their two children to be returned first to carry out their parents' wishes while they were still in the womb. The intention that must be fulfilled is emphasized in the repetition of the lines, namely *Aneuk dua droe lakè puwoe siat/Jak peutrôh hajat ayah ngon poma* and *Geulakè aneuk geupwoe siat/Jak peuleuh hajat ayah ngon poma*. Promises or debts to have children must be fulfilled at a later date.

In addition to heredity and wish, *Malèlang Madiôn* describes a projection system about the relationship between boys and girls. This function is conveyed implicitly in the story. The literature tells of two children who were slandered for adultery. In ancient times, the relationship between men and women was very taboo. However, nowadays, the pattern has changed; girls hanging out with boys is just an everyday thing. The researcher concludes that there is a projection system elaborating the relationship between boys and girls in the present. Many young people are dating (in Islam, it is considered adultery). The oral literature indirectly also discusses the current association of youth.

## 2. As a Means of Cultural Institutions Validation

Efrison (2017) explains that every culture has social institutions such as mutual cooperation and feast. Farnadayanti & Mustofa (2021) describe that the function of cultural institution validation has yet to be executed by the local community. The Aceh community is acknowledged for their traditional *pajoh ranup*, also told in *Malèlang Madiôn*. *Ranup* becomes a symbol to open an event or activity in the Aceh tradition (Amin et al., 2022). One of the main elements in *pajoh ranup* is betel nut. In *Malèlang Madiôn*, it is told that Malèlang and Madiôn

went to pick betel nuts at the behest of their mother. This can be seen in the following quotation.

*Peu meukroh-kroh dalam lampôh soh  
Malèlang lôh boh pineueng muda  
Sidroe di ateuh sidroe di barôh  
Abéh di lurôh boh pineueng muda*

The data describes a cooperative interaction between figures picking betel nuts in the plantations. Malèlang climbed up the areca tree from above, and Madiôn was to receive and pick up the nuts dropped by Malèlang. The people of Aceh Barat Daya still carry out this activity by taking betel nuts. Tasks are divided; when someone chooses to climb up the tree, then others will collect the fallen nuts so that the job might be done quickly.

The oral literature *Malèlang Madiôn* gave birth to a tradition called *manoe pucôk* in Aceh Barat Daya. *Manoe pucôk* is carried out on a wedding or circumcision day (Hidayati et al., 2022). The event still exists and is held before the D-day of the wedding. It is told that the culture derived from Malèlang and Madiôn, two teenagers led to marriage due to their parents' binding vow. *Manoe pucôk* is held a day before the wedding, assisted by the local community. The tradition is passed down over generations.

*Allah Allah hai ding  
Geureuding meulah si nyak manoe eu dah  
deungon batè meuh  
Allah jak seumanoe aneuk e  
Bak mon binèh blang lah luah tan padang neu  
jak adè ô neuk ija  
Allah jak seumanoe aneuk lôn bak mon binèh  
glé lalè pucôk awé  
Neuk keu talo ô neuk tima*

This quotation is a line hummed while bathing Malèlang and Madiôn. During the *manoe pucôk* process, there was an interaction between Malèlang's mother and the women in the *gampong*. The community worked together to assist the marriage process of Malèlang and Madiôn before their execution. Apart from

*manoe pucôk*, there are also henna and feast (cutting buffalo). The procession of both can be seen in the following excerpt.

*Jak cok gaca meutujôh ôn  
Geubôh gaca phôn Madiôn Ma  
Geucok gaca meutujôh bak  
Gaca tapak Malèlang Ma  
Jak cok gaca tujôh tangké  
Gaca uké boh haté ma*

The data explains the *bôh gaca* (henna) process before the wedding. This tradition is frequently held first before *manoe pucôk*. *Bôh gaca* is for both bride and groom. The henna leaves are mashed manually, normally assisted by mothers or elders in the Aceh Barat Daya community.

*Jak sie keubeue putéh talak  
Teu bôh gumbak Madiôn Ma  
Geusie keubeue di teungoh blang  
Geu kreh andam Madiôn Ma*

The primary data depicted the intention of Malèlang and Madiôn's parents when they were going to marry off their kids, namely to slaughter a white-forehead buffalo. This tradition is still relevant since people of Aceh Barat Daya nowadays slaughter buffalo for wedding food. This tradition can be adapted to the local people's financial ability. Buffalo meat can be replaced with mutton, duck, and chicken.

### 3. As an Educational Tool

The oral literature *Malèlang Madiôn* also serves as an educational tool. The delivered educational elements in the story are love, struggle, sincerity, patience, responsibility, and religious education. All aspects lead people to do good to elders and others. The parents are told to love their children very much. When their two children were sentenced to death, even though they were only ordinary people, they continued to struggle to liberate Malèlang and Madiôn from slander.

*'Oh ban trôh ayah tanyoeng meunoe ban*

*Pakon neuk badan dalam uroe kra  
Laju di seu-ôt aneuk meutuah  
Ka keundhak Allah katrôh bak masa*

The preceding data illustrates willingness and surrender to Allah. Malèlang and Madiôn accepted sincerely the King's decision, and so did their parents, eventually. Those characters could only be patient with His will—after giving maximum efforts and prayers.

*Geulakè aneuk geupuwoe siat  
Jak peuleuh hajaj ayah ngon poma*

Tremendous responsibility on vow is also represented in *Malèlang Madiôn*. The parents are told to ask for permission from the King to fulfil their binding vow. Malèlang's and Madiôn's parents had previously vowed to Allah to be blessed with offspring. They promised to marry off their children. This story teaches us about responsibility for fulfilling our promises—which is in line with Islamic values or teachings.

#### 4. As a Means of Control and Supervision for Community Norms

*Malèlang Madiôn* has another function, namely as a means of control and supervision for community norms in Aceh Barat Daya. This function is depicted in the King and Islamic law. Back then, people under the King's order must obey the royal laws and orders. In the story, Malèlang and Madiôn were beheaded by the order of the King. Nobody could intervene since the decision was based on Islamic religious law. Zuhaili (in Dalimunthe et al., 2021) explains that adultery is highly reprehensible in Islam, and the perpetrators must be punished by stoning (for married ones) and punished with 100 lashes (for unmarried ones).

*Munyoë masa nyan ronyan, munyoë ka lagènyan keujadian kon dipoh maté, padahai awaknyan hana pubut sapeu-sapeu.*

The data elaborates that Malèlang and Madiôn have slandered to outrage the Islamic sharia and had to be punished. Islamic law was

emphasized in the story because the punishment is a death sentence (for adultery).

*Jadi, singoh uroe, di ba keuh aneuk bandua bunoe antara Malèlang ngon Madiôn, di ba u istana untok segera menghadap raja. ... Dan nyoe sungguh perbuatan nyang hana terpujo dan bandua geutanyoe harus disidangkan dan dihukum sesuai dengan syare'at Islam dan disaksikan oleh masyarakat ramee. ... Lehnyan bunoe, leuh geuteutapkan bahwa keudua nyoe akan di hukom pancong.*

All citizens under the King's order must deliver total obedience. The King decided that Malèlang and Madiôn must be executed by beheading them in the royal court. The general public witnessed the incident. This punishment shows control and supervision for the Aceh community norms. Breaking the law will lead to severe sanctions.

#### 5. As a Means of Social Sanction or Punishment

*Malèlang Madiôn* clearly describes the death sentence. The chosen case is adultery done by Malèlang and Madiôn. The intended message is that people in Aceh, primarily in the Aceh Barat Daya Regency—in which the majority are Muslims, must obey God's order and His sharia. Violating the rules will give birth to social sanctions and punishment.

*Allah  
Si Madiôn ô neuk e geubôh lam teupang  
Lah sayang Malèlang ô neuk e tumbak bak dada  
Allah ka geu adeup aneuk lôn di dalam kulét  
lah sidum nyan sakét  
sayang that hai boh haté ma  
Allah  
Jaroe ngon gaki ô neuk e ka geubôh labang  
Lah si dum nyan sayang  
Sayang that si Malèlang Ma*

Both data demonstrate the punishment that Malèlang and Madiôn must receive. Their hands and feet were tied in a *teupang* (a type of cross-shaped wood) and dried in the hot sun

until their skin felt pain. A spear was thrust into Malèlang's chest. After the sentence was carried out, the two children did not die. The last punishment carried out was decapitation. This story is relevant to today's condition; people committing adultery will still be punished similarly. The difference is that the sentence is now caning, not beheading. The public witnesses the punishment as a means of control and supervision of the community norms—which must be obeyed even by outsiders in the Aceh region.

#### 6. As a Means of Social Criticism

Another function was found in *Malèlang Madiôn* as a means of social criticism. This function is represented as a member of Kuala Batè Kingdom. The complaint was delivered to the Chief Commander in the following quotation.

*Bukon that paléh panglima meuntroe  
Adun ngon adoe tudôh meuzina  
Leupah that paléh panglima meuntroe  
Adun ngon adoe bak di peu suna  
//  
Leupah that paléh ô neuk e panglima  
meuntroe  
Lah aneuk dua droe sayang neuk ka di inaya*

The criticism was directed at the Chief Commander because, at that time, he was in one of the highest positions on board. The preceding data is a social criticism of one of the officials who committed a crime by slandering two children. This act is not commendable, let alone he was a great official of the Kuala Batè Kingdom. Furthermore, it implicitly elaborates on the condition of ordinary people who criticize leaders or officials, both in the past and present. This kind of criticism occurs almost all over the world. Therefore, the oral literature *Malèlang Madiôn* also functions as a social criticism to members of authority or people with positions, primarily those committing deviant acts.

#### CONCLUSION

Malèlang Madiôn is an oral literature from Soutwest Aceh Regency. It has the following six functions for its supportive community: (1) as a projection system, namely in the form of offspring, vow, and relevance of the relationship between men and women at present; (2) as a means of cultural institutions validation, namely in the form of pajôh ranup, manoe pucôk, feast, and bôh gaca ; (3) as an educational tool, namely in the form of compassion, struggle, sincerity, patience, responsibility, and religious education; (4) as a means of control and supervision for community norms, namely in the form of King's order based on Islamic teachings which people must obey; (5) as a means of social sanctions or punishment namely in the form of decapitation for adultery (now it is caning in Aceh); and (6) as a means of social criticism, namely criticism to the Chief Commander (as a symbol of leaders). This recent study on the functions of Malèlang Madiôn seeks a novelty to revitalize the local oral literature and avoid its extinction

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