



The Language of Tradition: Oral Literature and Cultural Identity among Sasambo Communities

Dira Novi Santari¹, Nuriadi¹

¹English Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram, Indonesia;

Article Info

Article History

Received: February 5, 2026

Revised: February 12, 2025

Accepted: February 26, 2026

Published: February 28, 2026

*Corresponding Author

Dira Novi Santari,

University of Mataram, Indonesia;

e-mail: diranovisantari@gmail.com

Abstract

Traditional oral traditions play an important role in preserving local wisdom, cultural identity, and social values within indigenous communities. This study aims to examine the forms, functions, meanings, similarities, and differences of oral traditions among the Sasambo communities, consisting of the Sasak, Samawa (Sumbawa), and Mbojo (Bima–Dompupu) ethnic groups in West Nusa Tenggara Province. This study employed a qualitative, descriptive approach using library research. The data were collected from the scientific literature on oral traditions such as *sesenggak*, *lawas*, *kapatu*, and other forms of local oral expressions. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that oral traditions in Sasambo communities function as media for transmitting moral values, character education, cultural identity, and social control. The Sasak community emphasizes symbolic language and wisdom in speech, the Samawa community highlights vocal arts and expressive social interaction, while the Mbojo community focuses on philosophical values and structured social norms. In conclusion, oral traditions remain an essential cultural instrument in preserving local wisdom amid globalization. This study contributes to the development of cultural and ethnolinguistic studies related to oral traditions in eastern Indonesian societies.

Keywords: oral tradition, Sasambo community, local wisdom, cultural identity, character education.



© 2025 The Authors. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 5.0 International License

INTRODUCTION

Oral traditions are a form of intangible cultural heritage that play a vital role in preserving a community's identity, social values, norms, and collective memory (Karsiwan & Azzahra, 2022). Before societies developed a written culture, oral traditions served as the primary medium for conveying knowledge, advice, history, and social norms, which were passed down through generations via storytelling, songs, folk poetry, and symbolic expressions (Hasanah & Andari, 2021). In the context of the Sasambo community, which includes the Sasak people of Lombok, the Samawa of Sumbawa, and the Mbojo of Bima and Dompupu, oral traditions serve not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium for cultural education and the reinforcement of local ethnic identity (Marhandra, 2020). The existence of oral traditions in Sasambo society reflects the richness of local culture, which has been shaped through historical processes, social interactions, and the community's adaptation to the environment and the changing times.

Oral traditions also play a significant role in preserving the local wisdom of the Sasambo community. Values such as cooperation, religiosity, respect for customs, social ethics, and character education are often conveyed

through various forms of oral traditions that are still upheld today. The Sasak people have traditions such as *sesenggak*, *sesimbing*, *senepe*, and *pepaosan*, which are rich in moral messages and religious values (Sulistiana & Ifan, 2024). Meanwhile, the Samawa community practices traditions such as *sakeco*, *bakelong*, *lawas*, and *ngumang*, which emphasize vocal art, social communication, and the delivery of life advice (Marhandra, 2021). On the other hand, the Mbojo community has traditions such as *kapatu*, *nggusu waru*, *belaleha*, and *biola katipu*, which contain philosophical values, character education, and the strengthening of social solidarity within the community (Irawan, 2025). Through these oral traditions, the community not only preserves the culture of their ancestors but also passes on local knowledge to the younger generation as a form of regional cultural preservation.

Several previous studies have shown that oral traditions play a strategic role in preserving the sustainability of local wisdom within communities. The study by Hasanah and Andari (2021) explains that oral traditions serve as a medium for transmitting cultural values and social education in traditional societies. Research by Sulistiana and Ifan (2024) indicates that the oral traditions of the Sasak people contain religious, moral, and social values relevant to the character development of the younger

Citation:

Santari, D. N., & Nuriadi, N. (2026). The Language of Tradition: Oral Literature and Cultural Identity among Sasambo Communities. *Jurnal Literasi Pendidikan Indonesia*, 2(1), 25–29.

generation. Additionally, Marhandra's (2021) study found that the oral traditions of the Samawa people contribute to strengthening social solidarity and preserving local cultural identity amidst the progression of modernization. Another study by Kiswanto and Huda (2023) also confirms that the diversity of oral traditions across the Indonesian archipelago is influenced by social and geographical conditions, as well as the dynamics of cultural interactions within local communities. These research findings demonstrate that oral traditions are not merely expressions of culture but also serve as vital instruments in the preservation of local wisdom and community identity.

Although various studies have demonstrated the importance of oral traditions in the preservation of local culture, research specifically comparing the forms, meanings, functions, as well as the similarities and differences of oral traditions among the Sasambo people remains limited. Most previous studies have focused on a single ethnic group or a specific form of oral tradition, thus failing to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections of oral culture among the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo communities. Yet, a deep understanding of Sasambo oral traditions is essential for cultural documentation, the strengthening of local identity, and the development of cultural studies grounded in local wisdom in West Nusa Tenggara. Therefore, this study aims to examine the forms, meanings, functions, as well as the similarities and differences of oral traditions among the Sasambo people. This study is expected to provide a scientific contribution to the development of local cultural studies and serve as a reference in efforts to preserve oral traditions amidst the currents of globalization and modernization of society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Time and Place

This research was conducted from January to February 2026. The research sites were located within the cultural regions of the Sasambo people in West Nusa Tenggara Province, namely Lombok Island (the Sasak people), western Sumbawa Island (the Samawa people), and the Bima and Dompu regions (the Mbojo people). The research was conducted through a literature review, so data collection focused on tracing written sources relevant to the oral traditions of sesenggak, lawas, and nggahi in each of these regions.

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings, cultural values, and social contexts embedded in the oral traditions of the Sasambo community. The descriptive method is used to systematically describe the forms of oral traditions and the values they embody. The research data consists of secondary data obtained through a literature review, including books, scientific journals, articles, and written documents related to the oral traditions of the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo communities. Data collection was conducted through documentation and a review of literature relevant to the research topic. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis, which involves identifying, classifying, and interpreting the meanings of oral tradition

expressions based on the cultural context of each community. The analysis process was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and concluding to obtain a clear picture of the value of local wisdom in the Sasambo oral tradition.

Population and Sample

The population in this study consists of all forms of oral traditions among the Sasambo people, including the oral traditions of the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo communities in West Nusa Tenggara Province. The research sample consists of expressions of oral traditions, including sesenggak (Sasak), lawas (Samawa), and nggahi (Mbojo), obtained from various literary sources such as books, scientific journals, and relevant written documents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involves the deliberate selection of data based on its relevance to the research objectives, particularly those containing local wisdom.

Research Procedure

This research procedure was carried out in several stages, including preparation, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. During the preparation stage, the researcher determined the research focus, identified the research questions, and gathered various references related to the oral traditions of the Sasambo community. The data collection stage was carried out by compiling data in the form of oral traditions sourced from various literature such as books, scientific journals, and written documents relevant to sesenggak (Sasak), lawas (Samawa), and nggahi (Mbojo). Subsequently, the data analysis stage was carried out by identifying, classifying, and interpreting the meanings of oral traditions based on the local wisdom contained within them using content analysis techniques.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used in this study is content analysis. The analysis was conducted by identifying, classifying, and interpreting data in the form of oral traditions of the Sasambo community, including sesenggak, lawas, and nggahi, based on the local wisdom embedded within them. The data analysis process was carried out through the stages of data reduction, namely selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives; data presentation, namely organizing the data in the form of descriptive narratives to make it easy to understand; and drawing conclusions to obtain an overview of the cultural meanings and values found in these oral traditions. This analysis technique was used to produce a systematic and in-depth interpretation of the research data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Oral Traditions Among the Sasak People

Research findings indicate that the Sasak people of Lombok Island possess various forms of oral traditions that serve as a medium for transmitting moral values, social education, and the preservation of the community's cultural identity. The oral traditions identified include sesenggak, sesimbing, senepe, and pepaosan. Sesenggak consists of traditional expressions in the form of proverbs or advice conveyed through figurative language. The community uses this tradition as a guide to social ethics in daily life, particularly in fostering polite and harmonious

interpersonal relationships (Shubhi, 2019). The use of symbolic language in *sesenggak* indicates that the Sasak people regard the wisdom of speech as a vital component in maintaining social harmony.

In addition to *sesenggak*, the Sasak people also recognize *sesimbing* as an oral tradition used to convey social criticism indirectly through certain metaphors and symbols. This tradition allows people to issue reprimands without causing open conflict, thereby preserving social relationships within the community (Syamsurrijal et al., 2025). Furthermore, *senepe* is an oral tradition that contains descriptions or predictions about community life based on social experiences and environmental conditions. This tradition serves as a means of social reflection as well as a reminder to the community of various changes over time that can affect socio-cultural life (Austin, 2010).

Another oral tradition is *pepaosan*, which involves reading and chanting lontar manuscripts using specific intonations. *Pepaosan* embodies religious values, moral education, history, and the preservation of the Sasak community's written cultural heritage (Atisah, 2018; Ihsani, 2021). This tradition is typically performed during customary or religious ceremonies, thus serving both social and spiritual functions. These findings indicate that the oral traditions of the Sasak people function not only as a medium of cultural communication but also as a means of character education and the reinforcement of local cultural identity.

Oral Traditions in the Samawa Community

Among the Samawa people in the Sumbawa region, several forms of oral traditions have been identified, such as *sakeco*, *bakelong*, *lawas*, and *ngumang*, which serve social, entertainment, and cultural educational functions. *Sakeco* is an oral art tradition presented in the form of poetic verses or *pantuns* exchanged in a call-and-response style, accompanied by traditional music. This tradition is typically performed during customary ceremonies, community celebrations, and folk entertainment. In addition to serving as entertainment, *sakeco* is also used to convey moral messages, life advice, and social criticism in a communicative and expressive manner (Marhandra, 2021).

The *bakelong* tradition is a form of traditional song passed down through generations within the Samawa community. *Bakelong* is frequently used in traditional and social events as a medium for cultural expression. Through this tradition, the community can strengthen social bonds while preserving the local cultural values inherited from their ancestors. Furthermore, *lawas* is a traditional poem of the Samawa people containing advice, expressions of emotion, religious values, and the community's worldview. *Lawas* holds significant importance as a medium of cultural communication that conveys moral messages and character education.

In addition, the tradition of *ngumang* was also identified, which the community uses as a form of traditional communication in certain social activities. This tradition demonstrates the strength of the Samawa people's oral communication culture in maintaining social solidarity and local cultural identity. The research findings indicate that the oral traditions of the Samawa people tend to emphasize vocal art, expressive social interaction, and the

use of oral literature as a medium of cultural communication within the community.

Oral Traditions in the Mbojo Community

Among the Mbojo people in the Bima and Dompu regions, traditions such as *kapatu*, *nggusu waru*, *belaleha*, and *biola katipu* have been identified, reflecting the strong philosophical, religious, and character-building values in the community's way of life. *Kapatu* is an oral poem used in various traditional and social activities as a medium for conveying advice, social criticism, and moral education to the community (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Haris & Hairun, 2025). *Kapatu* is usually delivered in the local language using specific speech patterns, giving it both aesthetic and educational value.

Another tradition is *nggusu waru*, which is the Mbojo people's philosophy of life comprising eight core values serving as moral, social, and leadership guidelines for the community (Badrun, 2019). These values form the foundation for shaping community character and regulating social relationships in daily life. Additionally, there is the *belaleha* tradition, which consists of traditional songs with spiritual and symbolic undertones, typically used in specific traditional ceremonies. This tradition serves as a means of strengthening the community's religiosity and social solidarity (Alwi, 2022).

The Mbojo people also have a tradition known as *biola katipu*, which combines traditional music, vocals, and call-and-response *pantun*. This tradition serves not only as a form of entertainment for the community but also as a medium for social education and the preservation of local culture. Research findings indicate that the oral traditions of the Mbojo people are closely linked to their value system, social norms, and the formation of their cultural identity.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that oral traditions among the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo communities share commonalities as a medium for transmitting cultural values, character education, and the preservation of local identity. All three communities utilize oral traditions as a means of conveying advice, exercising social control, and strengthening social bonds among community members. This finding aligns with the views of Hasanah and Andari (2021), who state that oral traditions function as a medium for the transmission of cultural values and social education in traditional societies. Additionally, the research by Kiswanto and Huda (2023) also explains that oral traditions in various regions of Indonesia serve primarily as guardians of collective memory and the cultural identity of local communities.

Although they share similar functions, each community exhibits distinct characteristics of oral traditions in accordance with their respective social and cultural conditions. The oral traditions of the Sasak people place greater emphasis on the use of linguistic symbolism, figurative expressions, and rhetorical wisdom in maintaining social harmony. This is evident in the *sesenggak* and *sesimbing* traditions, which employ symbolic language as a medium for conveying advice and social criticism. This finding supports the research by Sulistiana and Ifan (2024), which states that the oral traditions of the Sasak people contain moral and religious

values conveyed politely through cultural language. Oral traditions not only function as a medium of cultural communication but also shape how communities understand their social values and cultural identities. This aligns with the view of Septiani et al. (2025), who state that language shapes human thought patterns and enables people to think systematically and understand their social experiences.

Meanwhile, the Samawa people place greater emphasis on vocal art and expressive social interaction through the traditions of sakeco, lawas, and bakelong. These traditions demonstrate that the Samawa people utilize oral literature as a medium for both entertainment and social communication in their daily lives. The findings of this study align with Marhandra's (2021) research, which found that the Samawa people's oral traditions play a role in strengthening social solidarity and preserving local cultural identity amidst the progression of modernization.

On the other hand, the Mbojo community exhibits oral traditions that place greater emphasis on philosophical values, religiosity, and the community's normative system of life. Traditions such as nggusu waru and kapatu serve not only as works of oral literature but also as moral and social guidelines in community life. This finding supports Badrun's (2019) research, which explains that the values within nggusu waru form the foundation for character development and leadership within the Mbojo community.

The differences in the forms and characteristics of oral traditions among the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo communities are influenced by their respective historical backgrounds, geographical conditions, patterns of social interaction, and cultural developments. Nevertheless, all three share the same function as a medium for preserving local wisdom and regional cultural identity. Therefore, oral traditions must continue to be preserved through education, cultural documentation, and the empowerment of the younger generation so that local cultural values can endure amidst the currents of globalization and societal modernization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the oral traditions of the Sasambo communities, consisting of the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo ethnic groups, play an important role in transmitting moral values, character education, cultural identity, and social control within society. Although these communities share similar cultural functions of oral tradition, each group demonstrates distinctive characteristics shaped by its socio-cultural background. The Sasak community tends to emphasize linguistic symbolism and rhetorical wisdom through oral expressions, the Samawa community highlights vocal arts and expressive social interaction, while the Mbojo community focuses more on philosophical values and structured systems of social norms. These findings indicate that oral traditions are not merely cultural expressions, but also represent collective knowledge and local wisdom inherited across generations.

This study implies that the preservation of oral traditions is essential for strengthening cultural identity and sustaining local wisdom in the era of globalization. The findings also contribute to the development of cultural, anthropological, and ethnolinguistic studies related to oral

traditions in eastern Indonesian societies. However, this research is limited to a literature-based qualitative approach, so it does not directly explore the perspectives and practices of local communities in contemporary contexts. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ field studies, ethnographic approaches, or interdisciplinary methods to examine the transformation, preservation strategies, and educational integration of Sasambo oral traditions in modern society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author gives thanks to God Almighty for all His blessings and grace, which have enabled the completion of this research and the writing of this article. The author also extends gratitude to all parties who have provided support, assistance, and contributions to the research process, both directly and indirectly. Special thanks are extended to the academic advisors, academic institutions, and all parties who have provided the necessary references and information for this research.

REFERENCES

- Atisah. (2018). Mengenal pepaosan tradisi lisan Lombok: Teks, konteks, dan fungsi. *Sawerigading*. <https://sawerigading.kemendikdasmen.go.id/index.php/sawerigading/article/view/465/315>.
- Austin, P. (2010). Reading the lontars: Endangered literature practices of Lombok, eastern Indonesia. *Language Documentation and Description*, 8, 27–48. <https://doi.org/10.25894/ldd214>.
- Badrun, A. (2019). Filsafat Nggusu Waru dalam tradisi lisan Bima dan relevansinya dengan ciri kepemimpinan modern. *Mabasan*, 2(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.62107/mab.v2i1.120>.
- Haris, A., & Hairun, H. (2025). Representasi karakter perempuan masyarakat Bima dalam budaya Kapatu: Kajian tradisi lisan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education*. <https://ejournal.mandalanursa.org/index.php/JIME/article/view/2482>.
- Hasanah, L. U., & Andari, N. (2021). Tradisi lisan sebagai media pembelajaran nilai sosial dan budaya masyarakat. *Jurnal Ilmiah Fonema*, 4(1), 48–66.
- Hermansyah, W., & Nurjadin, R. (2024). Estetika budaya sastra lisan Sakeco dan integrasinya dalam pembelajaran muatan lokal sekolah dasar di Kabupaten Sumbawa. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Indonesia (JPPI)*, 4(4). <https://bimaberilmu.com/jurnal/index.php/jppi/article/view/742>.
- Ihsani. (2021). Leksikon yang digunakan dalam ritual pepaosan takepan masyarakat suku Sasak: Sebuah kajian etnolinguistik. *Jurnal Ilmiah Telaah*. <https://journal.ummat.ac.id/index.php/telaah/article/download/6190/3432>.
- Irawan, R. (2025). analisis nilai-nilai sejarah daerah bima terhadap penguatan pendidikan karakter mahasiswapendidikan sejarah stkip taman siswa bima. *Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia*, 2(7), 13942–13948.
- Kiswanto, K., & Huda, N. (2023). Perbandingan Mitos Sejarah di Berbagai Komunitas Lokal: Studi

- Kasus tentang Perbedaan dan Persamaan dalam Tradisi Lisan. *PERSEPTIF: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 1(1), 34-42.
- Karsiwan, K., Sari, L. R., & Azzahra, A. (2022). Sagata sebagai identitas tradisi lisan masyarakat Lampung. *Pangadereng: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 8(2), 251-270.
- Marhandra, R. (2020). Tradisi Lisan Sumbawa: Kajian Etnografi Komunikasi. rehal. id.
- Marhandra, R. (2021). Lawas Pamuji: Mutiara dakwah dan komunikasi dalam tradisi lisan Sumbawa. Rehal. id.
- Rahmawati, S., Syamsinas, S., Asyhar, M., & Sudika, N. (2023). Kapatu Bima acceptance: Stylistic study. *Kopula: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pendidikan*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.29303/kopula.v3i2.2708>.
- Septiani, M., Hidayatullah, M. I., & Widhyastuti, K. L. (2025). The Role of Language, Logic, Mathematics, and Statistics in Scientific Reasoning. *Jurnal Literasi Pendidikan Indonesia*, 1(2), 7–13. Retrieved from <https://journals.widhatulfaeha.id/index.php/jper/article/view/138>
- Shubhi, M. (2019). Hakikat karya masyarakat Sasak yang tercermin dalam sesenggak. *Mabasan*, 5(2), 48–58. <https://doi.org/10.62107/mab.v5i2.210>.
- Sulistiana, E., & Ifan, M. (2024). Exploring Religious Wisdom in Sasak Lelakaq: Oral Tradition as a Medium of Spiritual Expression. *Novaturient: Journal of Qualitative Research*, 1(2), 74-81.
- Suyasa, M. (2019). Lawas Samawa dalam konfigurasi budaya Nusantara. *Mabasan*, 3(1), 86–106. <https://doi.org/10.62107/mab.v3i1.103> <https://mabasan.kemendikdasmen.go.id/index.php/MABASAN/article/view/103>.
- Syamsurrijal, Syamsurrijal, Z. A., & Abdul Muhid. (2025). Study of Sasaknese proverb and its significances in social life: Semiotics Roland Barth analysis. *Humanitatis: Journal of Language and Literature*. <https://doi.org/10.30812/humanitatis.v10i1.3498>.
- Usman, U., Mustari, M., Kurniawansyah, E., & Sumardi, L. (2023). Pelaksanaan tradisi Rateb Sakeco pada masyarakat Sumbawa di Desa Belo, Kecamatan Jereweh. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v8i2.9552> <https://journal.unpas.ac.id/index.php/pendas/article/view/9552>.