

Intermedial Adaptation of Dayak Ngaju Karungut into Modern Poetry: Revitalizing Oral Tradition through Aesthetic Dialogue and Literary Re-creation

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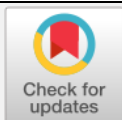
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ABSTRACT

Dayak Ngaju Karungut is an oral tradition from Central Kalimantan that integrates aesthetic expression, social values, spirituality, and cultural identity. This study examines its aesthetic structure and cultural values and analyzes its intermedial adaptation into modern poetry as a revitalization strategy. Using a qualitative descriptive design with participatory involvement of Dayak Ngaju communities in Kapuas Regency, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, audio-visual documentation, and transcriptions of two Karungut texts, then analyzed thematically and hermeneutically. The findings reveal distinct thematic orientations: “Palampang Budaya Itah” mobilizes collective action for cultural preservation, whereas “Budaya Ayun Itah” emphasizes identity reflection and cultural spirituality. The adaptation retains core themes, cultural symbols, and collective values while transforming oral repetition and musicality into textual rhythm and poetic musicality. These findings demonstrate how intermedial adaptation can connect cultural continuity with contemporary aesthetic innovation.

Keywords: Dayak Ngaju Karungut; Intermedial Adaptation; Modern Poetry; Oral Tradition; Cultural Revitalization

1. Introduction

Dayak Ngaju Karungut is an oral tradition of Central Kalimantan that plays an important role in transmitting knowledge, values, and collective identity. Oral traditions do not function merely as entertainment; they also serve as vehicles for transmitting cultural experience across generations (Finnegan, 1992; Vansina, 1985). In Karungut, rhythmically delivered utterances contain moral teachings, reflections on lived experience, and the worldview of the Dayak Ngaju people. Recent scholarship on Karungut has also identified values such as *handep* and *hapakat* and has positioned the tradition as a medium for expressing cultural identity (Asi & Poerwadi, 2024). Karungut can therefore be understood not simply as a performing art, but as part of an intangible cultural heritage closely connected to the continuity of Dayak Ngaju cultural identity.

Like many oral traditions in Indonesia, Karungut faces pressure from modernization, cultural globalization, and changing media ecosystems. Studies report declining oral-tradition practice as younger generations shift cultural consumption and appreciation from communal settings to digital platforms (Achmad et al., 2025; Suarta, 2017). Among Dayak communities, research on Kanayatn literature describes “symbolic extinction” and weakened social identity (Syam et al., 2024), while Talimaa literature among the Dayak Kayaan faces difficulties sustaining inherited ideas, values, and norms amid cultural change (Fitri et al., 2023). Safeguarding oral tradition therefore requires not only documentation but also forms and media that remain relevant in contemporary life.

At the global level, this concern is consistent with the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which emphasizes intergenerational transmission and the active involvement of tradition-bearing communities (UNESCO, 2003). Studies also connect the continuity of intangible cultural heritage with local identity, social cohesion, and sustainable development (Meissner, 2021; Petti et al., 2020). In Indonesia, this framework intersects with Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 5 of 2017 on the Advancement of Culture, which places cultural protection, development, utilization, and fostering within the national cultural-advancement agenda (Republic of Indonesia, 2017).

In practice, oral-tradition revitalization has been pursued through education, the strengthening of social functions, and the recontextualization of media. A number of studies employ oral traditions for character education and cultural literacy (Achmad et al., 2025; Purba et al., 2024), while Suarta (2017) demonstrates the use of Balinese oral-tradition values in character formation. In the case of Nandong Smong in Simeulue, the revitalization of local wisdom through musical forms has been developed to strengthen educational materials for Generation Z (Hakim et al., 2025). These studies show that revitalization does not simply preserve inherited forms; it also creates space for traditions to acquire functions and media that remain relevant in contemporary contexts.

Among Dayak communities, efforts to revitalize oral traditions have also attracted growing attention. Istianingrum et al. (2022) examine the revitalization of the Dayak Kenyah Ngendau oral tradition through creative industries, showing that the transformation of oral traditions into creative products can open economic opportunities while sustaining cultural practice. Studies of other Dayak oral literatures likewise demonstrate the richness and complexity of the ideas, values, and norms they contain, making them important resources for literary anthropology and contemporary literary creativity (Fitri et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the development of Dayak literary literacy through information systems and digital media suggests that technology can bridge younger generations and local traditions, provided that its design remains sensitive to cultural context (Widiyanto et al., 2023).

These studies reveal two important tendencies. First, oral traditions are increasingly understood as dynamic cultural resources that can be actualized through education, technology, and the creative industries. Second, sustainable revitalization requires the involvement of tradition-bearing communities in designing, interpreting, and implementing cultural initiatives. This principle is consistent with participatory approaches to heritage management that emphasize the recognition of cultural value together with support from relevant stakeholders (Cruz, 2024; Meissner, 2021; UNESCO, 2003).

Most Indonesian studies of oral-tradition revitalization have focused on documenting sociocultural functions, using tradition as an educational medium, or repackaging it through festivals, creative products, and digital platforms. Fewer studies position oral tradition as a source for modern poetry through a systematically articulated intermedial process. Damono (2018) defines *alih wahana* as more than transfer between media because it entails interpretation and literary re-creation; adaptation theory likewise treats cross-media movement as productive reinterpretation (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). Modern poetry's formal flexibility and semantic density make it suitable for such creative reworking (Teeuw, 1984).

The research gap lies in this process of transformation. Studies of Karungut have mapped its structure, rhyme, and represented cultural values (Asi & Poerwadi, 2024), yet the development of Karungut as a source for modern poetic creation through intermedial adaptation has rarely been explained as both an aesthetic and cultural process. This study therefore focuses on what is retained, transformed, and reinterpreted when Karungut moves from oral performance into the textual medium of modern poetry.

Against this background, the study aims to: (1) examine the structure, aesthetics, and cultural values of Dayak Ngaju Karungut; (2) implement the intermedial adaptation of Karungut into modern poetry with the participation of the tradition-bearing community; (3) identify the elements that are retained, adapted, or reinterpreted; and (4) analyze the aesthetic dialogue between oral tradition and contemporary literature. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with participatory community involvement, consistent with principles of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding that position communities as central actors in the continuity of living traditions (UNESCO, 2003; Meissner, 2021).

The significance of this study lies in its cultural, educational, and aesthetic dimensions. Culturally, it offers an adaptive model for revitalizing oral tradition without severing the continuity of inherited values. Educationally, the adaptation of Karungut into modern poetry has potential as enrichment material for locally grounded learning that strengthens cultural literacy and student identity. Aesthetically and literarily, the study contributes to Indonesian literature by developing modern poetic re-creation rooted in oral tradition as a primary source of inspiration. The study is therefore oriented not only toward preserving Karungut as a cultural artifact, but also toward strengthening local identity, expanding cultural literacy, and developing creative cultural models relevant to contemporary literary and cultural dynamics.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Oral Tradition and Intangible Cultural Heritage

Oral tradition transmits knowledge, values, and cultural identity through speech, song, and performance. Finnegan (1992) emphasizes its role as a socially embedded verbal art, while Vansina (1985) shows how orally transmitted forms carry collective memory and historical knowledge. The UNESCO (2003) safeguarding framework similarly recognizes oral traditions and expressions as living heritage whose continuity depends on community participation. Recent studies further show that oral traditions can reinforce identity and social cohesion while facing

pressures from modernization and changing cultural media (Meissner, 2021; Syam et al., 2024; Fitri et al., 2023). Preservation therefore requires creative and community-sensitive strategies rather than documentation alone.

2.2. Revitalizing Oral Tradition: Concepts and Approaches

The revitalization of oral tradition can be understood as an effort to restore the functions, roles, and relevance of tradition within contemporary sociocultural contexts. Revitalization is not static preservation; rather, it is a process of bringing traditions back into active life through creative adjustment while respecting the cultural values of their communities. It is a form of cultural adaptation intended to sustain cultural memory and collective identity amid rapid social change (Kurin, 2004; Smith, 2006). Consistent with this framework, a range of studies suggests that oral-tradition revitalization is a dynamic process through which traditions can regain social, educational, and cultural functions in contemporary community life (Assmann, 2011; Petti et al., 2020).

Within the global policy framework, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage emphasizes that intangible heritage comprises living practices and expressions within communities and must be safeguarded with the participation of the communities that sustain them (UNESCO, 2003). This perspective is consistent with critical heritage approaches that treat heritage as a social practice rather than merely a static object or relic (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006). Heritage-management studies further indicate that community participation must be accompanied by support and recognition from other stakeholders if management is to be sustainable (Cruz, 2024; Meissner, 2021).

Empirical studies demonstrate a range of revitalization approaches in different contexts. In Bali, oral traditions have been revitalized by integrating local-wisdom values into character education and the strengthening of cultural identity (Suarta, 2017). In Nandong Smong in Simeulue, local-wisdom values have been revitalized through musical forms to strengthen educational materials for Generation Z (Hakim et al., 2025). Among Dayak communities, the Ngendau tradition of the Dayak Kenyah has been revitalized through cultural creativity and the creative industries (Istianingrum et al., 2022). The use of information systems also demonstrates the potential of digital technology to connect the learning of Dayak literature with younger generations (Widiyanto et al., 2023).

These studies underscore two important principles. First, oral traditions are dynamic cultural entities, so revitalization should be understood as a creative process that opens dialogue between inherited values and contemporary social needs. Second, successful revitalization depends heavily on community-based approaches that position tradition-bearing communities as primary actors rather than passive beneficiaries. This principle is consistent with UNESCO's framework, which stresses that intangible cultural heritage should be safeguarded and developed together with communities so that revitalized traditions are not merely "remembered," but actively "brought back to life" in social consciousness and practice (Meissner, 2021; UNESCO, 2003).

2.3. Intermedial Adaptation in Literary Studies

Intermedial adaptation provides the main conceptual approach for this study. Damono (2018) explains *alih wahana* as a shift from one type of art or medium to another, meaning that the process extends beyond formal copying. Here, the concept is used to examine how elements of Karungut are retained, selected, and reconstructed as the tradition moves from oral performance into modern poetry.

Adaptation theory reinforces this understanding. Hutcheon and O'Flynn (2013) conceptualize adaptation as both a process and a product of creative reinterpretation that is always shaped by the affordances of a new medium. The transformation of Karungut into modern poetry is therefore not treated as mechanical reproduction, but as a form of re-creation that negotiates continuity with the themes, values, and symbols of the source while exploiting the aesthetic possibilities of modern poetry.

2.4. Modern Poetry and Contemporary Literary Aesthetics

Modern poetry provides space for formal freedom, semantic intensity, linguistic density, and interpretive openness (Teeuw, 1984). In intermedial adaptation, this flexibility allows cultural and spiritual experience to be reorganized through diction, imagery, rhythm, lineation, and relationships among stanzas. Modern poetry can thus function as a new medium that carries traces of tradition while establishing a contemporary mode of reading (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013).

The intermedial adaptation of Karungut into modern poetry is therefore not merely an aesthetic exercise, but a cultural strategy for keeping oral tradition living, meaningful, and relevant to younger generations.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to understand the structure, cultural values, performativity, and creative process involved in the intermedial adaptation of Dayak Ngaju Karungut. A qualitative approach was selected because oral tradition and literary works require contextual and interpretive readings of meanings that are embedded in community life (Creswell, 2013; Moleong, 2017).

The research design is participatory and community-based. Members of the tradition-bearing community are positioned as partners in gathering cultural information, reflecting on the meanings of Karungut, and validating interpretations. This positioning is important because the adaptation process should not rely solely on the researchers' reading; it must remain connected to the cultural context in which Karungut is practiced.

3.2. Data Sources and Data Collection

The study was conducted among Dayak Ngaju communities in Kapuas Regency, Central Kalimantan. Data sources included Karungut performers, customary leaders, cultural practitioners, community members familiar with the tradition, and two Karungut texts that formed the principal corpus. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, audio-visual recording, textual transcription, and literature review. The corpus was selected according to continuity of use, the strength of its cultural values, and its aesthetic potential for adaptation.

3.3. Adaptation Process and Data Analysis

The adaptation process involved four stages: inventorying and transcribing the texts; reading their structure, themes, symbols, musicality, and cultural values; determining which elements should be retained or transformed; and recreating them in the form of modern poetry. Data were analyzed thematically and hermeneutically to interpret patterns of meaning and trace changes across media (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The analysis did not seek to measure effectiveness statistically, but to explain mechanisms of aesthetic and cultural transformation.

3.4. Trustworthiness and Research Ethics

Interpretive trustworthiness was strengthened through source and methodological triangulation, member checking, and dialogue with the tradition-bearing community. Participation was voluntary; individual identities were protected where necessary; and research findings were returned to the community as part of the researchers' academic and cultural responsibility. These principles were also used to ensure that literary re-creation did not sever the value contexts regarded as important by the community.

4. Results

4.1. Karungut Corpus Used for the Analysis

The research corpus was derived from Karungut practices that remain part of the cultural life of Dayak Ngaju communities in Kapuas Regency. Data were gathered through direct observation of Karungut performances, in-depth interviews with performers and cultural figures, and audio-visual recordings accompanied by textual transcriptions. Through this approach, the Karungut materials were not treated as texts detached from context, but as cultural practices embedded in the community's social experience, values, and cultural consciousness.

The corpus was selected according to three main criteria:

- continuity of use, meaning that the text remains known, performed, and recognized by the community;
- strength of cultural values, reflecting the worldview, ethics, and value system of the Dayak Ngaju community;
- aesthetic potential, meaning that the text contains linguistic structure, imagery, and symbolic richness that can be adapted into modern poetry without erasing its substance.

Based on these criteria, two Karungut texts were selected as the primary corpus because they were considered the most representative thematically, structurally, and culturally.

Table 1. Karungut Corpus Used for the Analysis

No.	Karungut Title	Creator*	Dominant Aesthetic Character	Substantive Function
1	Palampang Budaya Itah (Preserve Our Culture)	Atangsie D. Bungai	Persuasive, repetitive, strongly invitational	Mobilizes collective awareness for cultural preservation
2	Budaya Ayun Itah (Our Culture)	Riadi W.K.	Reflective-philosophical, contemplative, spiritually charged	Affirms culture as identity, dignity, and intergenerational heritage

*Creator as recorded in the research corpus documentation.

The two Karungut texts represent two major orientations in Dayak Ngaju cultural practice. "Palampang Budaya Itah" has a strongly persuasive character, marked by direct invitational diction and repetitive structure as a strategy for reinforcing its message. This is evident in the following lines:

"Ayu itah tundah pahari / Umba palampang budaya seni"

Let us, brothers and sisters / Join in preserving our cultural arts.

The text further affirms cultural identity by portraying cultural heritage as a shared and invaluable legacy:

“Jite panatau barega tutu / Ije iwaris akan anak esu”

It is a truly precious treasure / Passed down to our children and grandchildren.

This Karungut is oriented toward collective action, positioning younger generations as both the subjects of cultural hope and agents of cultural continuity.

By contrast, “Budaya Ayun Itah” displays a stronger contemplative dimension. Culture is positioned as a source of meaning, a moral foundation, and a spiritual force within the community. The text not only stresses the importance of culture as a social symbol, but also affirms it as the existential basis of Dayak Ngaju identity linking ancestors, the present generation, and generations to come.

Table 2. Thematic Differentiation of the Karungut Corpus

Dimension	Palampang Budaya Itah	Budaya Ayun Itah
Message Orientation	Collective action for cultural preservation	Reflection on identity and cultural dignity
Target Subject	Younger generations and active community members	Intergenerational community
Textual Tone	Persuasive-mobilizing	Reflective-philosophical
Cultural Function	Builds awareness and participation in preservation	Affirms identity consciousness and cultural continuity
Relation to Local Values	Strengthens handep (communal solidarity)	Strengthens spirituality and cultural ethics

Performatively, Karungut is not delivered merely as text, but as a melodic performance that creates emotional interaction between performer and audience. Musicality, lyrical repetition, and vocal rhythm deepen the reception of the message and facilitate the internalization of values. This demonstrates that the corpus is not simply linguistic or literary material, but a living cultural phenomenon embedded in community consciousness.

The Karungut corpus used in the analysis illustrates two ways of articulating Dayak Ngaju cultural consciousness: an impulse to sustain tradition and a reflection on the cultural dignity inherited from ancestors. The corpus was subsequently used to trace structural features, cultural values, and their transformation in the process of adaptation into modern poetry.

4.2. Structural and Aesthetic Characteristics of Dayak Ngaju Karungut

Analysis of the corpus shows that Dayak Ngaju Karungut possesses an integrated aesthetic system built through the interaction of textual structure, language choice, cultural imagery, vocal musicality, and accompanying aesthetic functions. Karungut operates not merely as oral text, but as a literary-cultural practice that brings linguistic, musical, emotional, and spiritual elements together within a unified field of meaning. Its structural and aesthetic characteristics therefore cannot be understood only as formal features; they also function as cultural mechanisms that sustain Dayak Ngaju values and identity.

Structurally, Karungut displays a relatively stable pattern while still allowing performers a degree of flexibility. In general, it develops through an opening-body-closing sequence. The

opening establishes the atmosphere, creates emotional proximity with the audience, and introduces the thematic frame. The body becomes the principal space for articulating ideas, where moral, social, spiritual, and identity values are gradually developed in layered form. The closing functions as reinforcement, ensuring that the message is not only communicated but also embedded in the audience's collective consciousness.

This structural pattern is summarized in the following table.

Table 3. Artistic Structure of Karungut

Structural Dimension	Main Characteristic	Function in Meaning Construction
General Pattern	Opening – Body – Closing	Directs the flow of meaning and audience attention
Mode of Delivery	Melodic narration	Builds emotional depth and message reception
Rhetorical Strategy	Repetition of lines/phrases	Reinforces messages and internalizes values
Development of Meaning	Gradual and cumulative	Strengthens the impression of meaning
Flexibility	Allows performer variation	Maintains vitality within performance contexts

This structure shows that Karungut consciously functions as a medium of cultural communication. It does not merely convey information; it guides audiences through a gradual and reflective process of meaning-making that engages collective consciousness.

At the level of language, Karungut tends to employ symbolic diction saturated with cultural meaning. Local terms such as *handep*, *hapakat*, *penyang*, and *tatu hiang* function not merely as linguistic signs, but as markers of identity that condense historical experience, communal values, and Dayak Ngaju spiritual consciousness. Language is not used in a purely literal way; it is developed through symbols, metaphors, and figurative expression so that meaning emerges as layered and reflective.

These features are summarized in the following table.

Table 4. Language, Diction, and Symbolic Dimensions

Language Element	Empirical Characteristic	Indicative Example	Aesthetic Function
Diction	Connotative-symbolic	"barega tutu" (highly valued treasure)	Provides semantic depth
Local Vocabulary	Terms specific to Dayak Ngaju culture	<i>handep</i> , <i>hapakat</i> , <i>penyang</i> , <i>tatu hiang</i>	Marks cultural identity
Line Construction	Dense and suggestive	Short repetitive lines	Strengthens memorability
Figurative Language	Metaphor and symbolic expression	Culture as heritage and dignity	Builds layered reflection

Language in Karungut therefore extends beyond verbal aesthetics; it becomes a medium of cultural reflection that links individuals to community and human experience to shared values.

Karungut also displays a strong system of imagery. Nature is not simply a setting, but a cosmological space that binds human life together. Rivers, forests, land, and other landscapes

appear not as poetic decoration, but as symbols of sacred and ethical relationships between people and their environment. Images of ancestors and cultural inheritance mark historical continuity, while communal imagery emphasizes solidarity and togetherness.

Table 5. Imagery and Cultural Representation

Type of Imagery	Main Representation	Cultural Implication
Nature	Rivers, forests, land	Harmonious human-nature relations
Ancestors	Inheritance, dignity	Continuity of identity across generations
Communal	Togetherness, solidarity	Strengthening social cohesion
Spiritual	Ancestral values and cultural legitimacy	Affirms cultural-spiritual continuity

Karungut cannot be separated from musicality. Stable rhythm, repetition, measured intonation, and performer-controlled tempo create a powerful space for receiving the message. This musicality generates both aesthetic and emotional experience, so the message is not merely heard but also felt.

Table 6. Musicality and Rhythm

Rhythmic Aspect	Characteristic	Role in Communicating the Message
Rhythm	Stable and recurring	Builds emotional atmosphere
Intonation	Measured fluctuation	Accentuates meaning
Repetition	Consistent	Reinforces the message
Tempo	Controlled	Regulates emotional dynamics

Together, these elements form the aesthetic functions through which cultural messages are conveyed.

Table 7. Aesthetic Functions of Karungut

Aesthetic Dimension	Meaning Produced	Effect on the Audience
Symbolic language	Layered and reflective meaning	Stimulates cultural awareness
Repetitive structure	Strong and memorable message	Facilitates value internalization
Musical integration	Emotional-spiritual experience	Strengthens affective engagement
Cultural imagery	Sense of place, ancestry, and belonging	Reinforces identity and cultural memory

These characteristics are clearly reflected in the following lines:

“Ayu itah tundah pahari / Umba palampang budaya seni”
Let us, brothers and sisters / Join in preserving our cultural arts.

“Jite panatau barega tutu / Ije iwaris akan anak esu”
It is a truly precious treasure / Passed down to our children and grandchildren.

These lines combine symbolic diction, rhythmic repetition, and persuasive appeals with the framing of culture as a highly valued intergenerational inheritance.

4.3. Thematic Differentiation between the Two Dayak Ngaju Karungut Texts

Although both Karungut texts in the corpus address the preservation of Dayak Ngaju culture, the analysis shows that they articulate distinct thematic orientations. The differences are evident not only in content, but also in message emphasis, targeted social subjects, tone, and cultural function. The two texts therefore do not constitute a homogeneous corpus; rather, they represent complementary cultural perspectives within the discourse of cultural preservation.

“Palampang Budaya Itah” by Atangsie D. Bungai has a predominantly social-mobilizing orientation. The text frames cultural preservation as a collective responsibility requiring concrete action. Younger generations are positioned as principal agents of change and as inheritors who must actively sustain cultural continuity.

By contrast, “Budaya Ayun Itah” by Riadi W.K. has a more reflective-philosophical orientation. Culture is positioned not merely as an object to be protected, but as an existential identity, a source of life values, and a form of communal dignity connecting ancestors, the present generation, and generations to come. In other words, the text emphasizes the inward dimension of culture: not only what should be done to preserve culture, but what culture means for the existence of Dayak Ngaju people.

Table 8. Thematic Differentiation between the Two Karungut Texts

Thematic Aspect	Palampang Budaya Itah (Atangsie D. Bungai)	Budaya Ayun Itah (Riadi W.K.)
Message Orientation	Collective social action	Reflection on cultural identity
Principal Subject	Younger generation (anak tabela) and active community	Intergenerational community (ancestors–present–descendants)
Direction of Communication	Persuasive, direct invitation	Contemplative, reflective-philosophical
Cultural Emphasis	Participation in cultural preservation	Dignity, spirituality, and continuity
Dominant Consciousness	Consciousness to act	Consciousness to reflect on identity

The difference in orientation is clearly visible in the textual data. In “Palampang Budaya Itah,” younger generations are explicitly described as the hope for the future of culture:

“Anak tabela akan harapan / Manyambung palampang budaya huran” | Young people are our hope / The ones who continue the preservation of ancestral culture

The diction “harapan” (hope) and “manyambung” (to continue) establishes a progressive thematic logic: culture is not only to be protected, but must be continued and actively brought to life by succeeding generations.

Although “Budaya Ayun Itah” is not quoted in this section, textual analysis shows that its orientation lies more strongly in affirming cultural values as collective dignity. Its structure creates an awareness that culture is an inheritance that is not only worthy of preservation, but also meaningful as a foundation for life.

4.4. Social and Cultural Functions of Dayak Ngaju Karungut

Dayak Ngaju Karungut is more than a performing art; it performs strategic social and cultural functions in sustaining community life. Karungut serves as a space for value education, a medium of intergenerational communication, a reinforcement of collective identity, and a means of transmitting ancestral values. These functions are evident not only in textual meaning, but also in the way Karungut is sung, received, and experienced by the community.

In the context of value education, Karungut conveys moral teachings through lines that emphasize cultural responsibility, social solidarity, and personal integrity. These values are not communicated directly or dogmatically; instead, they are developed through symbolic language, repetition, and aesthetic emotion, enabling the message to be more readily received and embedded in the audience's consciousness. At the same time, Karungut functions as a medium of intergenerational communication. It bridges knowledge and values from the past with the realities of the present generation while directing cultural responsibility toward generations to come. In this way, Karungut supports the continuity of values that form the foundation of Dayak Ngaju identity.

Karungut also plays an important role in affirming cultural identity. Its texts position culture as a highly valued form of wealth and a source of communal dignity. Karungut does not merely remind listeners of the importance of preserving culture; it also cultivates pride, a sense of belonging, and the conviction that culture is a force that binds the community together. In addition, Karungut has a spiritual-cultural function as a medium for transmitting ancestral values (*tatu hiang*). It affirms that culture is not simply a worldly tradition, but part of a value system possessing historical, spiritual, and emotional legitimacy. Through Karungut, the community's relationship with its ancestors is not severed but continually renewed within cultural consciousness.

These four principal functions are summarized in the following table.

Table 9. Social and Cultural Functions of Dayak Ngaju Karungut

Functional Dimension	Main Characteristic	Empirical Indication
Character/value education	Instills moral values, responsibility, and ethical conduct	Emphasis on obligations to preserve culture and uphold ethical values
Intergenerational communication	Connects ancestral values with present and future generations	References to ancestors, descendants, and value continuity
Affirmation of cultural identity	Strengthens pride and sense of belonging	Culture is positioned as collective wealth and dignity
Spiritual-cultural continuity	Maintains relationships with ancestral values	References to <i>tatu hiang</i> and the spiritual legitimacy of heritage

These findings are reinforced by textual evidence. The line “*Seni budaya bara tatu hiang*” (Cultural arts come from the ancestors) affirms culture as an inheritance carrying spiritual and historical legitimacy. Likewise, “*Budaya itah sukup simpan ... Tagal jite keleh imparahan*” (Our culture should be safeguarded ... so that it becomes widely known) positions culture as a shared treasure that must be maintained and communicated so that it continues to live in community consciousness.

Karungut functions as a comprehensive system of cultural communication. It educates, affirms, links generations, and connects the past with the future. These social and cultural

functions demonstrate Karungut's strategic role in maintaining Dayak Ngaju cultural existence amid social change, while also providing a strong basis for revitalization and adaptation into modern literary media.

4.5. Rhythm, Musicality, and Performance in Dayak Ngaju Karungut

Karungut is a narrative art that cannot be separated from musicality. It is not conveyed through words alone, but sung according to specific rhythmic patterns, tempo, and melodic contours associated with Dayak Ngaju performance. Karungut performance is reinforced by traditional instruments such as the kacapi and gandang (Taruna, 2016), so the text does not stand alone as a sequence of words but emerges as an integrated aesthetic experience of sound, meaning, and emotion. This relationship is also reflected in an expression recorded in the corpus documentation:

"Karungut musik kacapi gandang," which indicates the close relationship among text, voice, and instruments as a single performative unity.

Karungut rhythm is generally stable, measured, and repetitive. Repetition occurs not only in language but also in rhythmic and tonal organization. Rhythmic recurrence strengthens the message because each verbal emphasis is accompanied by musical reinforcement that shapes a particular emotional atmosphere. Meaning is therefore received not only through rational comprehension, but also through the audience's affective experience. This rhythmic repetition also facilitates the internalization of values because consistent patterns help listeners remember, absorb, and feel the message being conveyed.

Karungut performance also creates a direct communicative relationship between performer and audience. The performer's voice does not merely recite a text; it brings the text to life through intonation, vocal emphasis, and tempo adjusted to the content of the message. In invitational or emphatic passages, vocal intensity tends to increase, whereas reflective passages employ slower tempo and softer intonation. Through these strategies, performance deepens emotional engagement, produces a sense of proximity, and creates a psychological relationship among performer, cultural message, and audience.

These findings can be summarized descriptively in the following table.

Table 10. Rhythm, Musicality, and Performance in Dayak Ngaju Karungut

Performance Aspect	Empirical Characteristic	Function in Communicating the Message
Rhythm	Stable, repetitive, measured	Shapes emotional atmosphere and semantic consistency
Musical instruments	Kacapi, gandang	Adds aesthetic force and sonic depth
Intonation	Varies according to message content	Accentuates meaning and attention
Tempo	Directed and controlled	Regulates audience emotion
Musical repetition	Consistent	Reinforces and embeds values

These findings demonstrate that rhythm, musicality, and performance are inseparable from Karungut's system of meaning. Musical elements do more than embellish delivery; they reinforce messages and build emotional depth. Karungut therefore operates through the integration of

words, voice, sound, and atmosphere, enabling cultural messages, social values, and spiritual consciousness to be received and experienced by listeners.

4.6. Transformation Patterns in the Adaptation to Modern Poetry

Comparison between Karungut as an oral medium and the strategy of literary re-creation shows that transformation occurs selectively. Elements directly associated with themes, collective values, and symbols of identity are retained, while features dependent on vocal performance are reorganized so that they can function in textual form. The transformation pattern is summarized in Table 11.

Table 11. Transformation Matrix from Karungut to Modern Poetry

Karungut Element	Retained Element	Form of Transformation	Representation in Modern Poetry
Themes and values	Cultural preservation, identity, collective responsibility, relation to ancestors	Reorganization of intensity and sequence	Thematic motifs and lyrical voice
Cultural symbols	Rivers, forests, land, community, ancestors	Recontextualization from performance to textual settings	Imagery and metaphor
Repetition	Function of emphasis and remembrance	Reduction of literal repetition and conversion into purposeful recurrence	Anaphora, lexical/phrase repetition, parallelism
Musicality	Rhythm, tonal emphasis, emotional movement	Transfer from vocal/instrumental sound to textual sound patterning	Internal rhyme, assonance, line breaks, enjambment
Performance relation	Audience engagement and collective atmosphere	Transformation into implied reader engagement	Address, lyrical positioning, and emotional progression

The matrix shows that intermedial adaptation operates through two simultaneous movements: continuity at the level of meaning and transformation at the level of presentation. Modern poetry is therefore positioned not as a substitute for Karungut, but as a new medium that reinterprets selected elements of the oral tradition.

5. Discussion

5.1. Karungut as an Integrated System of Cultural Meaning

Dayak Ngaju Karungut can be understood as a system of cultural meaning that integrates aesthetic, social, moral, spiritual, and identity dimensions. The data reveal themes of cultural preservation, respect for ancestors (*tatu hiang*), social togetherness, human-nature relationships, and intergenerational responsibility. At the same time, repetition, tempo, intonation, and performance intensify the affective experience of the message. These findings indicate that Karungut should be read through both its textual form and its performative event.

This finding positions Karungut within an oral-literary framework that not only records cultural experience but also constructs it performatively. Oral tradition is a living cultural practice that shapes community perspectives, behavior, and identity (Finnegan, 1992). In the Dayak context, this is consistent with Fitri et al. (2023), who show that Dayak oral literature contains

complex meanings associated with cultural values, social relations, and community cosmologies. Syam et al. (2024) similarly emphasize the strategic role of Dayak oral tradition in constructing social identity and sustaining cultural memory amid social change. Karungut can therefore be understood as cultural memory that maintains identity through text, symbol, and performance.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of rhythm, musicality, and performativity as mechanisms for internalizing values. Oral tradition operates not only through language, but through voice, rhythm, emotion, and the audience's social participation. This is consistent with theories of orality that identify sound, repetition, and performance as key carriers of cultural meaning (Ong, 1982). In the Indonesian context, Suarta (2017) shows that oral traditions can be effective media for value and character education precisely because aesthetic delivery engages the affective dimension of listeners. The Karungut data similarly indicate that musicality is not an aesthetic ornament but an integral part of the system through which cultural values are reinforced.

When related to earlier studies of oral-tradition revitalization, these findings underscore the importance of approaching Karungut as a living cultural practice rather than simply an object of documentation. Research on Dayak Kenyah Ngendau shows that revitalization can be combined with creativity and cultural industries (Istianingrum et al., 2022), while intangible-heritage frameworks position community participation and transmission as fundamental to the sustainability of tradition (Meissner, 2021; UNESCO, 2003). The contribution of this study lies in explaining how the aesthetic, social, and spiritual dimensions of Karungut are negotiated when the tradition enters a new literary medium.

Karungut can thus be positioned as a complex and dynamic cultural entity. Its disappearance would mean more than the loss of an art form; it could sever cultural memory, weaken social cohesion, and obscure Dayak Ngaju identity. Conversely, the continuity of Karungut is part of the continuity of cultural consciousness itself. This position provides an important basis for the relevance of the revitalization and adaptation into modern poetry developed in this study.

5.2. Thematic Differentiation: Two Directions of Cultural Consciousness in Dayak Ngaju Karungut

The two corpus texts – “Palampang Budaya Itah” by Atangsie D. Bungai and “Budaya Ayun Itah” by Riadi W.K. – share a concern with cultural preservation but articulate it differently. “Palampang Budaya Itah” is socially mobilizing: it frames preservation as collective action and positions younger generations as agents of continuity. “Budaya Ayun Itah” is more reflective-philosophical, presenting culture as dignity, inherited value, and a link among ancestors, the present generation, and those to come. The first text therefore emphasizes action, whereas the second emphasizes identity and cultural reflection.

This thematic differentiation shows that Karungut is not homogeneous but accommodates multiple forms of cultural consciousness. Oral tradition can articulate both practical responsibility and reflective understandings of identity, rather than merely repeating inherited stories (Finnegan, 1992). In terms of cultural memory, the action-oriented text stresses continuity through practice, whereas the reflective text explains why cultural continuity matters by locating culture within collective dignity and historical connection (Assmann, 2011). Together, the texts reveal complementary dimensions of Dayak Ngaju cultural thought: acting to sustain culture and reflecting on the meanings that make it worth sustaining.

From the perspective of culture and collective memory, the distinction between social-action orientation and identity reflection reveals two complementary dimensions of cultural consciousness. Social-action orientation reflects awareness that cultural continuity requires

concrete practice, while reflective orientation expresses a deeper understanding of culture as the core of community existence and dignity. Together they form a cultural logic that addresses not only “the need to preserve culture,” but also “why culture must be preserved.” This is consistent with the concept of cultural memory as a social mechanism that does not merely preserve the past, but also constructs identity and cultural responsibility in the present and future (Assmann, 2011).

In relation to theories of orality, this thematic differentiation shows that oral traditions such as Karungut operate not only at an aesthetic level, but also at cognitive and ideological levels. Oral tradition shapes collective ways of thinking through thematic patterns, repeated messages, and narrative structures that become internalized in community consciousness (Ong, 1982). This supports the finding that Karungut does not communicate cultural messages monolithically, but opens space for rich, layered, and reflective forms of cultural consciousness.

The thematic differentiation within Karungut reflects the intellectual depth of Dayak Ngaju culture. Karungut is not merely artistic expression, but a conceptual medium articulating two directions of cultural consciousness: the consciousness to act and the consciousness to reflect on identity. Compared with oral-tradition studies that generally emphasize moral and identity functions, this study contributes a more specific account of how different thematic orientations in Karungut reveal complex, dynamic, and contextual structures of cultural thought within Dayak Ngaju society (Assmann, 2011; Finnegan, 1992; Ong, 1982; Fitri et al., 2023; Syam et al., 2024). Karungut not only voices culture; it also participates in shaping and interpreting cultural consciousness itself.

5.3. Social Function, Spirituality, and Identity: From Values to Collective Consciousness

The functions of Dayak Ngaju Karungut extend beyond the communication of values to the formation of collective consciousness. Cultural values such as togetherness, responsibility toward ancestral heritage, harmonious human-nature relationships, and pride in identity are not presented merely as normative discourse; they are enacted as living mechanisms in cultural practice. Karungut functions as cultural education that instills value discipline and social ethics through aesthetic, emotional, and spiritual experience. Its social and spiritual functions are inseparable from the construction of Dayak Ngaju collective identity because through Karungut, communities do not simply “hear” cultural values; they “experience” and “internalize” them within shared social space.

This function becomes clearer when Karungut’s musicality and performativity are considered. Repetitive rhythm, measured intonation, changing tempo, and instruments such as kacapi and gandang create an emotional experience through which cultural values are internalized. In oral-tradition theory, sound, rhythm, and repetition are foundational because meaning is carried through performance as well as language (Ong, 1982; Finnegan, 1992). Cultural performance therefore does more than communicate a message: through shared participation, it renews identity, solidarity, and relationships with ancestors (Bauman, 1984; Turner, 1987).

Within the framework of cultural performativity, Karungut performance demonstrates how cultural values become alive through events involving performers, audiences, social space, and collective emotional energy. Cultural performance does not simply communicate a message; it creates social reality because identity, solidarity, and relationships with ancestors are continually produced and renewed through performance (Bauman, 1984; Turner, 1987). This finding is consistent with studies of other Dayak oral literatures showing that Dayak oral traditions contain complex cultural meanings while shaping the social consciousness of their communities (Fitri et

al., 2023) and strengthening collective identity amid social change (Syam et al., 2024). Karungut is therefore not merely a cultural artifact but a cultural system that sustains identity.

From the perspective of intangible cultural heritage, the social, spiritual, and identity functions attached to Karungut affirm its importance as a component of cultural memory. Traditions such as Karungut allow communities to maintain connections with ancestors while continually reinterpreting identity in relation to present and future contexts. This view is consistent with cultural-memory theory, which understands tradition as a mechanism for constructing collective identity (Assmann, 2011), and with intangible-heritage frameworks that emphasize oral traditions as sources of social cohesion, spirituality, and cultural sustainability (Meissner, 2021; UNESCO, 2003).

Compared with previous research, these findings are consistent with the understanding of oral tradition as a medium of identity, value transmission, and social solidarity (Assmann, 2011; Finnegan, 1992; Ong, 1982). The contribution lies in showing that Karungut's musicality and performativity are not ornamental, but are directly connected to the emotional and spiritual experience of values. Cultural values in Karungut are therefore not simply normative propositions; they are actualized through aesthetic and performative mechanisms.

Karungut can be understood as a cultural system that turns values into lived consciousness. It does more than communicate moral teachings or cultural knowledge; it creates cultural experience that cultivates belonging, emotional attachment, and pride in identity. This reveals the depth of Karungut's cultural dimension: it is not merely traditional art, but a space for the formation of spirituality, social solidarity, and collective Dayak Ngaju identity (Assmann, 2011; Bauman, 1984; Finnegan, 1992; Ong, 1982; Turner, 1987; Fitri et al., 2023; Syam et al., 2024; Suarta, 2017).

5.4. Intermedial Adaptation: From Medium Transfer to Re-creation of Meaning

The adaptation of Dayak Ngaju Karungut into modern poetry is not a simple transfer of form but a selective process of re-creating meaning. Core themes, collective values, and cultural symbols are retained, while medium-specific features are transformed. Repetition that regulates oral rhythm becomes poetic recurrence through diction, semantic patterning, and line composition; musicality produced by voice and traditional instruments becomes textual musicality through sound patterning, internal rhyme, enjambment, and emotional movement. This balance between continuity and transformation is consistent with adaptation as reinterpretation rather than mechanical reproduction (Damono, 2018; Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013).

This process demonstrates that intermedial adaptation is not a mechanical transfer from one medium to another, but a re-creation of meaning that balances connection to the cultural source with the creative possibilities of the new medium. From an adaptation perspective, a shift in medium can generate a new form without erasing its relationship to the source (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). In this study, themes, values, and symbols function as markers of continuity, while oral repetition and musicality are transformed through diction, purposeful recurrence, internal rhyme, enjambment, and line organization. Transformation therefore occurs primarily in modes of presentation rather than in the cultural values that ground the re-creation.

The adaptation process is conceptualized here as an aesthetic dialogue rather than as the appropriation of tradition for aesthetic purposes alone. Themes, values, and symbols regarded as culturally important are retained, while changes are made in elements shaped by the demands of poetic form. This approach is consistent with cultural-memory theory, which allows representations of the past to remain active in new forms (Assmann, 2011), and with principles

of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding that emphasize continuity and community involvement (UNESCO, 2003; Meissner, 2021).

Compared with earlier studies of oral-tradition revitalization, this study adds an account of intermedial selection: what is retained, what is transformed, and how those changes are negotiated. Previous research has shown that traditions can be actualized through new creative forms (Istianingrum et al., 2022; Suarta, 2017). Within an intermedial framework, the present findings show that themes, symbols, and values can be retained while performative repetition and musicality are reconstructed as textual rhythm and line organization (Damono, 2018; Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013).

The adaptation of Karungut into modern poetry can thus be understood as an aesthetic dialogue that retains cultural identity while opening space for innovation. In this study, adaptation is not merely the production of a new text, but a cultural act through which Karungut can remain relevant, readable, and meaningful within the contemporary cultural landscape. One of the study's principal contributions therefore lies in demonstrating that oral tradition need not survive only in its original form; it can be revitalized through a modern literary medium without losing the cultural spirit at the core of its existence (Assmann, 2011; Finnegan, 1992; Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013; Istianingrum et al., 2022; Suarta, 2017; Meissner, 2021).

6. Conclusion

This study shows that Dayak Ngaju Karungut functions as a system of meaning that connects aesthetic, social, moral, spiritual, and identity dimensions. Textual structure, symbolic language, cultural imagery, musicality, and performativity do not operate independently; they reinforce one another in communicating values and cultural memory. Karungut should therefore be understood simultaneously as text and cultural practice that links community experience with intergenerational transmission.

The findings also show that the two Karungut texts in the corpus exhibit important thematic differentiation. "Palampang Budaya Itah" is oriented toward mobilizing social action and involving younger generations as agents of cultural preservation, whereas "Budaya Ayun Itah" places greater emphasis on identity reflection, spiritual values, and cultural continuity across generations. This differentiation demonstrates that Karungut is not a homogeneous tradition, but a space in which multiple forms of cultural consciousness are articulated: a consciousness to act and a consciousness to reflect on identity. The findings reveal the depth of Dayak Ngaju cultural thought and enrich scholarly understanding of the dynamics of Dayak oral literature.

In the context of cultural revitalization, the study shows that adapting Karungut into modern poetry involves the re-creation of meaning rather than a simple transfer of form. Core themes, collective values, and cultural symbols are retained, while oral repetition and musicality are reorganized as rhythm, sound patterning, and poetic intensity. The process therefore demonstrates a form of revitalization that maintains connection with tradition while opening space for contemporary aesthetic innovation.

Academically, the study contributes to oral-tradition and adaptation studies by showing mechanisms through which oral performance is transformed into poetic text. In practical-cultural terms, it offers a community-based framework for literary re-creation that can inform programs for revitalizing intangible cultural heritage. Aesthetically, it expands the possibilities for producing modern poetry rooted in local cultural sources without treating tradition as a static form.

Future research can explore the adaptation of Karungut into other artistic media, including theater, contemporary music, and digital media, as well as investigate the reception of adapted

works among Dayak youth and general readers. Cultural revitalization can thereby develop not only as a conceptual strategy, but as a living, adaptive, and sustainable cultural practice.

7. Limitations

This study has three principal limitations. First, the analytical corpus consists of only two Karungut texts, so the findings are not intended to represent the full range of Dayak Ngaju Karungut. Second, the field context is limited to communities in Kapuas Regency; variations in practice elsewhere in the Dayak Ngaju region may produce different aesthetic patterns and interpretations. Third, the study focuses on transformation processes and cultural meaning rather than reader reception or the long-term use of the adapted poems. Future research should expand the corpus, compare practices across locations, and examine how younger generations and tradition-bearing communities respond to the adapted forms.

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