



Environmental Wisdom Reflected in Uluan Pantun from a Symbolic Interactionism Perspective

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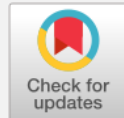
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ABSTRACT

Traditional oral literature has long served to preserve and pass down cultural values and wisdom. In the Uluan society of South Sumatra, pantun, a traditional Malay poetic form, plays a central role in communicating messages related to societal norms and environmental stewardship. This study explores the environmental wisdom embedded in Uluan pantun, using a symbolic interactionism perspective to examine how these oral traditions convey ecological messages. The research employs a qualitative methodology with an ethnographic communication approach. Data were collected through documentation of ancient pantun texts, in-depth interviews with cultural practitioners and local community members, participatory observation in key Uluan regions, and focus group discussions (FGD) to provide a comprehensive view of how pantun is actualized in contemporary environmental conservation efforts. The results show that pantun is an important medium for conveying explicit and implicit messages about the natural environment, reflecting the community's deep connection with nature. However, modern challenges such as deforestation and land degradation have threatened the sustainability of these traditions. The novelty of this research lies in its examination of pantun as an instrument for ecological communication, an area that has received little attention in previous studies. The findings imply that revitalizing the ecological messages within pantun could significantly promote environmental awareness and community-driven conservation in Uluan society today.

Keywords: *Environmental Messages; Ethnographic Communication; Local Wisdom; Oral Tradition; Pantun; Symbolic Interactionism; Uluan Society*

1. Bringing Pantun and Proverbs into the Environmental Sphere

Pantun, as part of the rich Malay cultural heritage (Thomas, 1985), has long served as a communication tool that reflects the identity and values of the community. The recognition of pantun as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2020 emphasizes its role as a form of oral literature and a means to convey moral, spiritual, and environmental messages. Pantun passed down across generations, has become an inseparable part of Malay society, including educating the younger generation about harmony with nature and maintaining morality (Andriani, 2012).

Research explains that although technology continues to develop, pantun still has a significant role in the lives of Malay people (Hidayatunnur et al., 2022). Pantun serves as a means of entertainment or daily communication and as a tool to promote the values of harmony and relationships between humans and the environment. Pantun contains messages about social and ecological balance, which remain relevant today. Pantun is also considered an important educational medium, especially in preserving culture and the environment.

In modern society, culture is often viewed as a tradable commodity, particularly in the tourism and festival sectors. This commodification reduces traditions to entertainment, overlooking their deeper cultural and spiritual meanings. Such shifts are evident in many communities where traditional practices, such as religious rituals or oral traditions, are staged to attract tourists. This often erodes the cultural and ecological values they once embodied (Cole, 2008; Johnston, 2013). For instance, in the Cham community of Vietnam, the Rija Nâgar ritual – once a purely spiritual practice – has been commercialized for tourism, creating tensions between the local community and external stakeholders. Performing these rituals for economic gain disrupts their authentic cultural significance and weakens the community's connection to their heritage (Cole, 2008). Similar challenges are seen in regions like Bali and Vanuatu, where cultural performances are commodified, stripping them of their original meaning (Ning, 2017). This is particularly relevant to pantun, as it demonstrates verbal creativity and reflects the balance between humans and nature, a cultural essence at risk of being overlooked in the push for commercialization.

The commodification of culture through tourism often results in the reduction of original meaning, where cultural practices that were originally rich in social and spiritual meaning turn into market-oriented performances (Talamayan, 2022). Correspondingly, Cudny highlights that cultural festivals often experience similar commodification, erasing intrinsic cultural values (Cudny, 2014). Festivals that previously promoted moral and ecological messages in people's lives are now more often focused on entertainment for tourists, eliminating the depth and relevance of these cultural messages.

While cultural commodification can bring economic benefits through the tourism sector, its impact on the original values of the culture is often overlooked. The intrinsic values of pantun are also at risk of degradation when only treated as a commodity. Pantun is not only an entertainment or a cultural product that can be showcased but also an expression of local wisdom closely related to environmental sustainability (Effendy, 2014; Hidayatunnur et al., 2022).

The pantun developed in the Uluan community of South Sumatra contains strong natural symbols, reflecting the area's ecological conditions. These pantun often include elements such as forests, rivers, mountains, and wildlife, which indirectly serve as a reminder of the importance of maintaining ecological balance. The Uluan people, who live in the upper reaches of the Musi River, create pantun that is closely related to their physical and spiritual natural surroundings. Each stanza of the pantun not only reflects their daily lives in direct contact with nature but also represents an expression of the social identity of its users. This representation shows how social groups interpret nature and their lives through pantun (Wijaya, 2021). According to Wulansari, pantun is part of how a social group integrates its knowledge and experience in interpreting the relationship between humans and nature (Wulansari, 2016). Meanwhile, oral traditions such as pantun reflect ecological wisdom, balancing exploiting natural resources with environmental conservation. Thus, pantun is a means of cultural communication and a value system that encourages harmonious relationships between humans and nature (Butar et al., 2019; Yusari, 2021).

These pantun serve not only as entertainment or moral teaching. In many ways, pantun also serves as an expression of orally transmitted local knowledge, which contains an understanding of the environment and how best to protect it. For example, references to clear water, green forests, or the presence of wildlife such as birds or deer in pantun not only describe the condition of nature in the past but also serve as a reminder of human responsibility in preserving nature. This follows the view that pantun is a social product born from the interaction between humans and nature, a dialog between humans and their environment.

Today, however, the values embodied in pantun are threatened by drastic environmental changes. Phenomena such as deforestation, land conversion to oil palm plantations, and coal mining exploitation have changed the face of the Uluan region. Massive deforestation eliminates wildlife habitat and reduces local communities' environmental quality of life, such as water pollution and increased risk of natural disasters. The Uluan area is one of the areas most affected by floods and landslides due to significant environmental degradation over the past few decades.

This raises a big question: Are pantun and proverbs that have been part of the local wisdom of the community still relevant in addressing current environmental problems? Can the messages contained in pantun still be maintained as a guide for modern society facing increasingly complex environmental challenges? This environmental degradation shows not only the physical destruction of nature but also the erosion of cultural and spiritual values that have long protected the environment through local wisdom.

In the past, pantun served as a medium of communication between individuals and a means of conveying powerful environmental messages. The Uluan community utilized pantun to teach the importance of protecting natural resources, understanding natural cycles, and maintaining harmony between humans and nature. In this context, pantun is not only a verbal aesthetic reflection but also part of a survival strategy based on ecological awareness, acting as a guide for sustainable living by conveying knowledge about environmental conservation.

Research on Carita Pantun in West Java reinforces this view, showing that oral traditions such as pantun function as entertainment and contain social and environmental values. These traditions emphasize the close relationship between humans and nature and strengthen awareness of responsibility for environmental sustainability (Firmansyah et al., 2022). This connection indicates that the pantun tradition has great potential for teaching environmental values.

However, modernization and industrialization have shifted the relevance of pantun as an environmental communication tool. Many younger generations no longer use pantun daily, and its values are beginning to be forgotten. This shift shows the urgent need to re-actualize environmental messages in pantun to keep them relevant to today's environmental challenges.

In the context of this research, bringing pantun and proverb back into the environmental realm is a matter of preserving culture and revitalizing values that can help address modern environmental issues. Utilizing natural symbols in pantun can bridge local wisdom and sustainable environmental conservation efforts. In this case, pantun not only preserves cultural heritage but also provides practical guidance for the community in maintaining ecological balance.

2. Spoken Word Literature and Community Local Knowledge

2.1. The Development of Tutar Literature in Society

Oral tradition has long been an integral part of life in Indonesian society, especially among the Malay community in South Sumatra. This tradition develops along with the socio-cultural life of the community, which utilizes forms of oral expression such as pantun, *petitih*, proverb, and poem as a means of communication and moral education. This oral tradition conveys entertainment or personal messages and is a guardian of local values passed down from generation to generation (UNESCO, 2020). This aligns with local wisdom, where people collectively integrate their life experiences in interpreting the relationship between humans and the environment (Wulansari, 2016).

In the context of the Uluan community, oral tradition, especially pantun, is a very effective medium in conveying ecological messages that reflect harmony between humans and nature. As a community living in the upper reaches of the Musi River with a landscape rich in forests, rivers, and wildlife, pantun illustrates the balance of the ecosystem and the importance of maintaining the sustainability of nature. Pantun often contains powerful symbols of nature, such as water, land, and wildlife, which remind people of their responsibility towards nature (Akmal, 2018).

Oral tradition reflects how people interpret their world, including how they interact with the surrounding environment (Sung & Bin Hussein, 2020). In the Uluan community, pantun is a medium of communication between individuals and a tool for maintaining local knowledge about environmental conservation. In each stanza of the pantun, practical guidelines are passed down from generation to generation on how to utilize natural resources wisely.

Pantun, as a form of oral tradition, is inseparable from the social changes experienced by the Uluan community. In the past, the community relied on this tradition as an important instrument in daily life, both in social relations and in efforts to maintain ecological balance. However, along with the development of modernization and industrialization, the ecological values contained in pantun began to be threatened by various challenges such as deforestation, land conversion, and environmental degradation due to mining. Nevertheless, pantun still has the power to reflect these changes and convey messages relevant to modern environmental conditions (Setyadiharja, 2020).

An oral tradition such as pantun is an important medium capable of actualizing local values related to the environment. The symbolic interactionism perspective allows us to understand how the Uluan community builds social meaning through this oral tradition. Every symbol in the pantun, explicit and implicit, reflects the social and ecological interactions in the community. This confirms that pantun is a language art and part of how the community

maintains a harmonious relationship with nature and strengthens ecological awareness amid complex social changes.

2.2. Local Knowledge in Oral Tradition

Oral tradition in the Uluan community reflects the culture and social life and contains local knowledge born from the direct interaction between humans and their environment. As a verbal medium, this tradition encompasses practical values about sustainable living, focusing on environmental conservation and the wise use of natural resources. Pantun and *petitih*, as two prominent forms of oral tradition, represent how the community understands, preserves, and interacts with the surrounding nature.

In the context of Uluan, which consists of river, forest, and hill ecosystems, pantun often conveys natural symbols such as clear water, lush forests, or the presence of wildlife like birds and deer. These symbols not only depict the beauty of nature but also serve as a medium to convey implicit messages about the importance of maintaining ecological balance and environmental sustainability. Akmal (2015) emphasizes that pantun is not only a tool for entertainment but also an educational medium that carries messages of social and environmental responsibility (Akmal, 2018).

The local knowledge reflected in pantun and *petitih* guides the Uluan community in adapting to environmental changes. For instance, pantun, which addresses the theme of clean water, is not merely an aesthetic depiction but a reflection of the community's essential need to protect vital water resources. As a source of life, the river must be kept clean, and pantun often reminds people of the collective responsibility to safeguard these natural resources.

The local knowledge embedded in the oral tradition is born from the collective experience of a community that depends on the surrounding ecosystem (Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2015; Nelson & Shilling, 2018). This tradition, including pantun and *petitih*, transmits various strategies to maintain ecological balance. For example, references to forests and wildlife in Uluan's pantun often remind us of preserving biodiversity, a highly relevant issue facing modern threats like deforestation and land conversion.

In the context of this research, pantun functions as a means of transmitting ecological wisdom, which emerges from the community's deep understanding of natural cycles and resource management. Through the symbols found in pantun, the Uluan community gains practical knowledge on how to utilize and preserve their natural environment. This aligns with the approach of communication ethnography, where oral tradition is understood as a communication phenomenon that shapes the community's perspective on their environment.

The local knowledge embedded in pantun also has a temporal dimension, where values passed down from generation to generation are continuously updated and actualized in line with changing social and environmental conditions. In the past, pantun was used to reinforce community awareness about the importance of protecting forests and rivers as vital resources. However, these messages must be revived in this modern era to address environmental challenges such as water pollution, erosion, and biodiversity loss due to unsustainable economic activities.

Using a symbolic interactionism approach, pantun and *petitih* can be seen as forms of social negotiation where the community constructs and maintains ecological meanings relevant to their lives. The natural symbols in pantun represent physical objects and carry a socially agreed-upon meaning. For instance, forests are not just seen as a collection of trees but as an entity that must be protected and preserved for the collective welfare.

The study of local knowledge in oral literature becomes increasingly important because oral traditions like pantun have great potential as tools for building ecological awareness in the face of modern environmental degradation. The actualization of environmental messages in Uluan's pantun can be an effective communication strategy to promote environmental conservation based on local wisdom.

2.3. Oral Tradition as a Medium for Communicating Ecological Messages

Oral tradition, particularly pantun and *petitih*, is a tool for cultural communication and an important medium for conveying ecological messages. This oral tradition contains narratives about the lives of communities dependent on natural resources and values that encourage environmental protection and preservation. In the Uluan community, natural symbols such as rivers, forests, and wildlife often appear in pantun. These symbols serve as aesthetic elements and carry deep meanings about the human responsibility to maintain the balance of nature. These pantun remind the community of the importance of caring for their surrounding environment.

For example, references to clear water or fertile forests in pantun are not merely reflections of past environmental conditions but also a call to maintain these resources so they can continue to provide benefits for future generations. Rivers, often used as symbols of life in pantun, teach the community that preserving water resources is not just an individual responsibility but a collective duty (Akmal, 2018). In this context, pantun acts as an ecological communication tool that spreads the values of sustainability.

Kimani (2018) emphasizes that oral traditions are crucial in transmitting environmental knowledge from generation to generation (Sone, 2018). The local knowledge embedded in pantun and *petitih* teaches the community ways to maintain ecological balance and ecosystem sustainability. Through verses referencing natural cycles, people are encouraged to understand the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment and their obligation to protect natural resources from degradation.

Oral tradition, particularly pantun, is seen as a tool to strengthen ecological awareness within the Uluan community. The symbolic interactionism approach shows that pantun is not just a means of entertainment but also serves as a medium that conveys social and ecological messages. Each pantun verse carries symbolic meanings understood collectively by the community, teaching the importance of preserving nature as part of everyday life. The symbols used in pantun, such as birds, forests, and rivers, serve as signs that remind people of the ecological consequences of human actions.

One concrete example is pantun, which depicts forest destruction due to human actions and serves as social criticism against activities that damage the environment, such as illegal logging or converting forests into plantations. Through pantun, the community is encouraged to think about the long-term impacts of these actions, which harm the environment and disrupt social and economic balance.

Furthermore, pantun teaches values related to ecological wisdom. For instance, in Uluan pantun, keeping water clean is often emphasized to maintain human and environmental health. These messages align with modern environmental conservation concepts, where clean water and forest preservation are key components in maintaining ecosystem balance. Thus, pantun serves as a relevant ecological and educational medium amidst modern challenges such as pollution, deforestation, and environmental degradation.

The communication ethnography approach in this study demonstrates that pantun is one of the environmental communication mediums capable of reaching all levels of society. This

tradition conveys conservation values in a form easily understood and accepted by various groups, including the younger generation. Using rich symbolic language, pantun becomes an effective way to enhance community awareness of the importance of protecting the environment from modern threats.

However, modernization and globalization have caused shifts in how this oral tradition is viewed and used. Pantun, once filled with environmental messages, is now more often used in the context of entertainment or formal events without emphasizing its deeper meanings. This presents a challenge in preserving the ecological values contained in pantun. Therefore, revitalization efforts are needed to ensure that the environmental messages contained in pantun remain relevant and can be applied to current environmental issues.

Pantun has great potential to be used as an effective environmental communication tool. By re-actualizing the ecological values contained in pantun, the community can be encouraged to be more aware and take action on environmental issues. Pantun is not just a traditional teaching medium but can also serve as a bridge to integrating local wisdom with modern environmental preservation strategies based on collective awareness.

2.4. Dynamics of Oral Tradition in the Modern Era

As times progress rapidly, the relevance of oral tradition as a communication medium, especially in the context of environmental messages, has undergone significant shifts. Modernization, urbanization, and globalization have altered how society, particularly younger generations, perceive oral traditions such as pantun. Pantun, once rich with ecological values and as a tool for social education, is now more frequently used in entertainment, ceremonial events, or formal rituals, often without paying much attention to its deeper meaning. Sayekti emphasizes that pantun, which once served as a medium for communicating moral and environmental values, has often lost its essence, especially among generations more exposed to global popular culture (Setyadiharja, 2020).

This shift in the function of pantun presents a major challenge for efforts to preserve environmental messages within the context of local wisdom. This shift has influenced how the tradition is understood and practiced in the Uluan community, where pantun plays a central role in social and ecological life. Pantun, once rich with ecological references, such as forests, rivers, and wildlife, is now more often viewed as an aesthetic and symbolic cultural product without accompanying real actions to protect the environment. However, traces of ecological messages in pantun can still be found, and this forms the basis for efforts to revitalize the tradition in a modern context.

In the context of this research, the changes in pantun as a medium for communicating environmental messages align with broader social changes in the Uluan community. Modernization and land conversion, which lead to deforestation and the exploitation of natural resources, such as mining, have threatened environmental sustainability in the region. The shift in the function of pantun reflects the shifting values of society, which are increasingly distant from their ecological wisdom roots. The oral tradition, which once maintained harmony between humans and nature, is now threatened by social dynamics driven more by economic and technological interests.

Nevertheless, amidst these modernization challenges, efforts to revitalize oral tradition have emerged to restore the social and ecological functions of pantun. Incorporating pantun into the educational curriculum at the elementary and higher education levels is crucial to maintaining the relevance of local values, including ecological messages, amidst modern challenges (Noviana et al., 2023). This approach aligns with the need to integrate local wisdom

with formal education, promoting cultural preservation and raising environmental awareness among the younger generation.

Revitalizing pantun as a medium for ecological communication is important for preserving tradition and responding to the complexities of modern environmental challenges. Deforestation, water pollution, and land degradation demand new approaches combining modern knowledge with local wisdom. In this context, pantun can be revitalized as a relevant communication medium for addressing contemporary environmental issues. Pantun, which contains explicit or implicit messages about the importance of maintaining ecological balance, can be used as an effective educational tool in environmental campaigns or community-based conservation activities.

The symbolic interactionism approach in this research shows that while the meaning of pantun evolves with social dynamics, the symbols within pantun can still be actualized in a modern context. Natural symbols in Uluan's pantun, such as water, birds, and forests, still resonate strongly within the community. Through revitalization, these ecological messages can be reinterpreted to address more acute environmental challenges. For example, pantun depicting clear water can educate the community about the importance of keeping rivers clean as a source of life.

Moreover, pantun can play an important role in developing modern environmental communication strategies. In today's digital era, oral tradition can be combined with information technology to reach a wider audience. For instance, pantun can be disseminated through social media, videos, or other digital platforms as part of environmental awareness campaigns. The use of traditional symbols in modern formats allows the ecological messages embedded in pantun to become more relevant to broader society, particularly younger generations who are more familiar with digital technology.

Therefore, efforts to revive the relevance of pantun as an ecological communication medium represent a strategic step in preserving local wisdom while promoting environmental values. This revitalization also becomes part of a broader effort to combine local wisdom with community-based environmental approaches, where local values are integrated into community-based solutions for addressing modern ecological challenges. Through this approach, pantun serves as cultural heritage and an instrument that supports the sustainability of ecosystems and cultural continuity within the Uluan community and beyond.

3. Environmental Messages in Pantun and Proverbs

3.1. Pantun with Environmental Themes

Pantun is one of Malay culture's most well-known forms of oral literature (Butar et al., 2019; Muslimin & Utami, 2021). In the Uluan community of South Sumatra, pantun is often used to convey messages about the environment. These pantun reflect the close relationship between the community and their surrounding nature, as shown through references to natural elements such as rivers, forests, and wildlife. The ecological messages contained in pantun serve as reminders of the importance of maintaining the environmental balance while also acting as a medium for conveying moral values related to human responsibility towards nature.

The Uluan community's pantun tradition often uses natural symbols that are familiar to them in their daily lives. For example, clean and clear water in the pantun above symbolizes vitality and life, while the singing birds represent ecological balance. The implicit message of this pantun is that when humans harm nature, the harmony of nature will also be disrupted, ultimately affecting human life.

According to Wulansari, the representation in this pantun reflects the beauty of nature and expresses how the community understands and cares for the environment around them (Wulansari, 2016). Pantun often combines aesthetic elements with moral and ecological messages, making it an effective communication tool for spreading environmental awareness.

In the Uluan community, pantun is not merely a form of entertainment but also a tool for imparting advice on the relationship between humans and nature. Environmental messages in pantun can be direct or implicit. For example, pantun containing references to clean water, dense forests, or wildlife are often used to teach the importance of maintaining ecological balance. These messages are passed down through generations and have become an integral part of the local wisdom of the Uluan community.

The Uluan community also utilizes pantun in various traditional ceremonies and social activities, which enables the dissemination of environmental messages to all levels of society. Pantun, when used in these contexts, often refers to local ecological conditions, demonstrating how the community understands and adapts to its surrounding environment.

The use of pantun as an ecological communication medium is also in line with symbolic interactionism, where the natural symbols contained in pantun carry social meanings collectively understood by the community. Symbols such as water, forests, and birds in pantun represent physical objects and contain moral and ecological meanings that guide human behavior in maintaining environmental balance.

3.2. Construction of Environmental Meaning in Proverbs

Proverbs in the Uluan community of South Sumatra play a significant role in conveying environmental messages (Aliana & Ratnawaty, 1996; Wijaya, 2021). Through metaphors closely related to natural elements, these proverbs transmit ecological values that guide human actions in preserving the environment. The natural symbols often used in these proverbs reflect the Uluan community's understanding of the importance of maintaining the sustainability of the ecosystems that support their lives.

This proverb teaches that if humans harm nature, the impact will be immediately felt by the living beings that depend on that ecosystem. Therefore, this proverb serves as a reminder that environmental destruction caused by human activities will negatively affect the ecological balance and the sustainability of both humans and wildlife.

Proverbs like this function as social advice and ecological guidelines that influence human behavior towards nature. For example, the proverb "The fruit is eaten, the tree is cared for" teaches the importance of using natural resources wisely while ensuring those resources are preserved for future generations. Through these proverbs, the Uluan community is taught to live harmoniously with nature, utilizing its wealth while maintaining balance.

From a symbolic interactionism perspective, proverbs reflect the social interaction between the community and their environment. Natural symbols such as forests, birds, and trees represent physical elements and carry social and moral meanings that underscore the importance of ecological balance. The Uluan community understands these symbols as guides for behavior towards nature, demonstrating that nature is not just a resource but an integral part of their survival.

This study finds that the proverbs passed down through generations in the Uluan community have played an important role in strengthening environmental awareness. Proverbs emphasizing the importance of preserving forests and water teach conservation values and illustrate the connection between ecosystem sustainability and human well-being. The moral messages in these proverbs are often conveyed during social events and traditional ceremonies,

making them a part of the collective culture that internalizes environmental preservation values.

Thus, proverbs in the Uluan community of South Sumatra are not merely wise sayings but essential guides for maintaining environmental balance. The construction of environmental meaning reflected in these proverbs offers relevant local solutions to address global environmental challenges such as deforestation, climate change, and ecosystem degradation. Through the shared understanding of natural symbols, proverbs create a deep comprehension of the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment.

3.3. Actualization of Environmental Messages in the Modern Context

Although pantun and proverbs are part of a rich cultural heritage, modernization, and globalization have diminished the relevance of these oral traditions in everyday life. Social and technological changes have influenced how society, particularly the younger generation, perceives pantun and proverbs, which were once filled with environmental messages. For example, the development of the internet and social media have made oral traditions like pantun less frequently used in daily conversations, and their environmental messages have slowly started to be forgotten.

Nevertheless, the values embedded in pantun and proverbs remain relevant, especially in addressing today's increasingly complex environmental crises. Pantun and proverbs often carry implicit messages about maintaining the balance of nature, which can now be re-actualized in various ways. Revitalizing these oral traditions is essential to ensure that the ecological values that have long been part of community life are not lost as times progress.

In the educational context, incorporating pantun and proverbs into the school curriculum can effectively preserve the sustainability of their ecological messages (Hasan & Suwarni, 2012; Noviana et al., 2023). These oral traditions can teach history and culture and serve as powerful tools for spreading environmental awareness. By making pantun and proverbs part of the educational program, the younger generation can better understand and appreciate local wisdom while recognizing the importance of environmental preservation as part of their cultural heritage.

In addition to education, pantun and proverbs can be revitalized through digital media. Social media, videos, and other platforms allow this pantun to be revived in a more modern format and made more accessible to the wider public. For instance, using YouTube or Instagram to share Pantun with environmental themes can help capture the attention of younger generations who are more familiar with digital technology. Integrating oral traditions into modern media helps preserve culture and strengthens the relevance of their ecological messages.

Pantun, as a medium for environmental communication, is important for cultural preservation and addressing global environmental challenges. As a form of communication widely recognized within society, pantun can serve as an effective tool in raising awareness about environmental issues such as deforestation, water pollution, and climate change. Thus, pantun can connect local wisdom with community-based environmental solutions supported by modern technology.

This study finds that pantun and proverbs have great potential to be used in local culture-based environmental campaigns. The messages embedded in these oral traditions are highly relevant to today's environmental challenges. With the right revitalization efforts, oral traditions like pantun can strengthen environmental awareness across the broader community,

particularly among younger generations increasingly exposed to popular culture and modern technology.

4. Conclusion

This study reveals that pantun and proverbs in the Uluan community of South Sumatra are important in conveying environmental messages relevant to preserving local ecosystems. Using the symbolic interactionism approach, pantun and proverbs reflect the community's understanding of ecological balance, where natural symbols such as forests, water, and wildlife become media for communicating human responsibility in protecting nature. These oral traditions serve as entertainment or social advice and educational tools that transmit ecological values from generation to generation. This study emphasizes the importance of revitalizing the traditions of pantun and proverbs, especially in the context of modernization, which increasingly challenges environmental sustainability. These efforts can be undertaken through education and digital media to strengthen the relevance of these environmental messages today.

However, this study has several limitations that should be noted. The scope of the research is limited to the Uluan community in South Sumatra, so the results may not be generalizable to other regions. Additionally, the limited number of informants and reliance on oral sources may affect the comprehensiveness of the data obtained. For future research, it is recommended that the scope of the study be expanded to other areas in Sumatra with similar traditions and that comparative studies be conducted to explore differences in how environmental messages are conveyed in other Malay communities. Further research can also explore how pantun and proverbs can be integrated into digital platforms for broader environmental awareness campaigns, especially for younger generations. Additionally, a quantitative approach can be used to measure the impact of environmental messages in oral traditions on community behavior in protecting the environment.

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6. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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