

# Resital



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## The Musical Identity, Women's Struggles, and Ecological Knowledge in the Samanim's Oral Opera

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**Abstract:** : *Samanim's oral opera* is a programmatic musical composition designed to embody the cultural identity of Malind, highlighting the challenges faced by women and the rich local ecological knowledge, all conveyed through the medium of performing arts. This research seeks to uncover, express, and revitalize Malind local wisdom, often marginalized in dominant narratives of development and modernity. In this context, Samanim's oral opera serves as a form of artistic expression and a vital tool for challenging established knowledge systems, all while elevating Indigenous perspectives in the broader discussion. Rooted in the principles of decoloniality, local feminism, and Indigenous ecology, this work emphasizes the vital role of women as key participants and guardians of values, knowledge, and the continuity of traditions across generations. This study utilizes practice-led research, a method selected for its ability to foster knowledge creation through creative practice, which in turn provides valuable insights via aesthetic experiences and thoughtful artistic processes. This analysis delves into three important areas: the musical and cultural identity of the Malind people, the vital roles women play in preserving and sharing knowledge, and the ecological values represented by Samanim as a central figure. The findings show that the Samanim's oral opera plays a vital role in shaping the collective memory of the Malind community by how it engages with musical elements, cultural narratives, and representations of women. This work highlights the vital contributions of women in both cultural and ecological stewardship, while addressing pressing contemporary challenges like environmental degradation, social marginalization, and the impact of capitalism on Indigenous ways of life. In the end, Samanim's oral opera operates as a medium through which cultural values and political reflection, showcasing how art can inspire resistance, enhance critical awareness, and contribute to sustainable thinking.

**Keywords:** *Programmatic Music Composition; Women's Struggles; Indigenous Ecology; Oral Opera; Malind*



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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, Papua has faced increasing challenges that jeopardize the preservation of its rich cultural heritage, the stability of its ecosystems, and the vital social roles played by indigenous women. Journalistic and environmental reporting emphasize the ways in which rapid modernization, extractive industries, and development programs that overlook local contexts have diminished oral traditions, musical practices, and community lifeways (Kompas, 2023; Mongabay Indonesia, 2023; Tabloid Jubi, 2021). Ethnographic and anthropological research highlights the experiences of marginalization while revealing persistent sources of resilience. Scholars studying Papuan communities observe that women, particularly in the Malind population, play a vital role as keepers of knowledge regarding land, the body, and language (Rumabar, 2020; Setyawan, 2022). In this context, Samanim's oral opera stands out as a vibrant space where shared memories and local beliefs come to life, centered around the esteemed figure of the female ancestor, Samanim. The production brings to life local stories, symbols, and values that are frequently ignored by mainstream discussions, presenting women not just as subjects to be examined but as vital protectors and carriers of cultural traditions.

Samanim, as a staged oral opera, illustrates how social practices come to life. The interplay of musical structure, narrative strategy, movement, and vocal practice work in harmony to convey ecological awareness and societal values, transforming the performance into a living archive of experience. The opera highlights the interconnectedness of individuals and their surroundings, expressing everyday ecological insights while critiquing environmental harm, social marginalization, and the invasion of capitalist ideologies (Peretas 2021). The Samanim's oral opera serves as both a form of artistic expression and a means of resistance, providing a creative space for a marginalized community to express its identity, challenge authority, and reclaim its history.

Even with this wealth of information, the scholarly work surrounding Papuan performing arts and the connections between music, gender, and ecology remains constrained in various interconnected aspects. The ethnographic studies conducted by Kamma (1972), Kirsch (2006), and Rutherford (2012) offer valuable insights into cultural and social contexts. However, they often approach performance as a fixed entity to be documented, rather than recognizing it as a vibrant process that fosters the creation, contestation, and renewal of knowledge. This tendency creates a gap in our understanding of how staged forms, especially oral opera, serve as spaces for innovation, teaching, and expressing political viewpoints. Research on indigenous women often highlights issues related to rights, political marginalization, and gender-

based violence (Lewis, 2008; Rumabar, 2020; Setyawan, 2022). However, it tends to overlook the significant contributions of women as ritual leaders, creative producers, and innovators within traditional knowledge systems. In a similar vein, critical ecological studies like those by Carruthers (2001) offer important critiques of the relationships between humans and the environment. However, they often overlook the ways in which environmental knowledge is shared through performative mediums and how artistic practices can play a role in shaping ecological awareness and conservation.

The lack of methodological and empirical approaches adds to these conceptual shortcomings. Current reporting highlights the effects of modernization and extractive practices on the lives of Papuans (Kompas, 2023; Mongabay Indonesia, 2023; Tabloid Jubi, 2021), yet there is a notable lack of academic research that connects these broad processes to changes in oral arts, community memory, and gender roles. There are limited studies that embrace practice-led or participatory arts-based methodologies, viewing creative making as a means of gaining knowledge (Quinn, 2020). This restriction hinders the potential to derive insights from artistic processes and collaborative efforts within communities. The efforts to document and preserve cultural expressions – like audiovisual archiving and maintaining languages – are critical yet inconsistent. In addition, research evaluating how performances led by community's foster resilience, continuity of identity, and impact on policy is still in its early stages (Peretas 2021). The identified gaps highlight an urgent call for interdisciplinary research that connects performance studies, feminist anthropology, and political ecology. By using a practice-led method, it is essential to understand fully how works such as Samanim's oral opera not only reflect but also transform the social and ecological contexts of Malind.

This study addresses those needs by utilizing a practice-led research approach in which creative practice encourages inquiry. The act of creating and reflecting on the opera serves as a valuable source of insight (Quinn, 2020). This research explores the Samanim's oral opera by looking at its musical structures, narrative strategies, and performance contexts. It reveals how this art form expresses Malind identity, highlights the important roles of women as guardians, and conveys valuable ecological knowledge specific to the community. By doing this, the opera is framed as a tangible archive and a dynamic space for discussing socioecological issues. It offers a multidisciplinary perspective that is rooted in real-world experiences and uses innovative methods, all while being attentive to the realities captured in both academic and journalistic perspectives.

## 2. Literature Review

### 1.1 Programmatic Music Composition

The idea of programmatic music composition refers to musical composition that is specifically linked to particular stories, occasions, characters, or visuals that come from sources other than the musical components itself. This idea pertains to extramusical or non-musical features, which are the elements of melody, rhythm, and harmony that are not part of the musical framework and are used to compose music. A musical work's structure and content can be shaped by extramusical elements, which transform non-musical data – such as linguistic structures, environmental information, and even visual patterns – into significant musical elements (Middleton & Dowd, 2008). In programmatic music, sound functions not just as a simple melodic expression but also as a means of narrative or the portrayal of certain meanings that listeners can identify and feel (Bonds 2013). Programmatic music composition establishes a connection between the composer's intended narrative or conceptual world and the musical world.

Batura (2020), Batura (2021), Pesce (1986), Chapin (2006), and Tsomis (2012), among others, have all done a great deal of research on the musical composition of programmatic music. According to Batubara (2020), "The Rhythm of Birds" is a programmatic musical composition that draws inspiration from Tanjung Malim, Malaysia's natural surroundings and sounds. This piece demonstrates how musical elements can be used to narratively reflect ordinary events and local culture (Batubara 2020). In the work *Destinasi* (Batubara, 2021), dance expressions, poetry readings, and digital music are all combined to create collaborative art practices that tell a single story about the human life cycle. The method captures the spirit of narrative music, which is to use a variety of artistic mediums to create a journey that is both symbolic and emotional.

Similar to this, MacDowell's symphonies employ programmatic esthetics to incorporate literary and narrative elements into his musical compositions, resulting in works that are musical due to their profound storytelling aspect (Pesce 1986). This interpretation is not entirely accurate, though, as programmatic music can be reflective, poetic, and symbolic in addition to being technical and narrative. It can also be used to illustrate external narratives or meanings through symbols and expressions, as well as to communicate an inner world and feelings that transcend words (Chapin 2006). Furthermore, the words serve as an inspiration and are reflected in the music, while programmatic elements serve as a symbol of character evolution through music (Tsomis 2012). The goal of programmatic music research is to demonstrate how a society's collective memory, space, and time, as well as the

composer's own empirical experiences, can serve as inspiration for musical compositions that fall under the category of extramusical concepts. These compositions are known as programmed or programmatic? music.

### 1.2 Oral Opera

Oral opera is a vibrant form of performing arts that weaves together traditional storytelling, music, singing, and expressive elements, all deeply embedded in the local cultural landscape. This form represents a progression of the storytelling tradition that communities have utilized to share values, history, and ancestral wisdom across generations. In an oral opera, the recitations, chants, and musical dialogues serve as vital elements that actively shape and enhance the meaning of the story.

There is currently a limited amount of research that focuses specifically on oral opera. Previous research has explored the topic of Opera, with notable contributions from Tsommis (2012) and Jurriëns (2022). Tsommis delves into the earliest opera, which intertwines aspects of ancient Greek tragedies, especially those by Euripides and Seneca, crafting a musical narrative that resonates deeply with the audience's feelings (Tsommis 2012). Oral opera, as a form of performing art, provides a thoughtful and reflective environment where society can explore and redefine concepts of identity, social relationships, and environmental circumstances through the harmonious blend of voice, language, and theatrical movement. Jurriëns (2022) illustrates that Garin Nugroho's performance *The Planet: A Lament* is an innovative blend of traditional vocal music, dance, cinematography, and poetic narrative, all set within a performance space that resonates with the current ecological crisis. This performance, while not fitting neatly into the traditional Western opera category, embraces a dramatic and expressive framework that resonates with the essence of oral opera. It draws on musical performances rooted in oral narratives, reflecting a shared cultural expression and an inevitable passing down of traditions.

### 1.3 Samanim

Samanim holds a significant place as the female ancestor within the oral tradition of the Malind people residing in Merauke, Papua. He is celebrated as a foundational figure who signified the dawn of the Malind people's civilization, particularly within the Esom group of Malind society. In the oral stories shared across generations, Grandmother Samanim stands out as a key figure who shares essential knowledge about various aspects of life. She teaches gardening traditions, stone baking methods, fishing skills, and the processing of natural products, all rooted in local cosmological values. The wisdom shared by the Samanim encompasses not just practical insights but also

spiritual and ecological aspects, embodying the essence of women's knowledge within the Malind cultural framework.

In the meantime, there has been no scientific literature that focuses on the Samanim figure as its primary subject of study. Nonetheless, it continues to thrive in the shared memories and storytelling traditions of the Malind people. The work on Malind in art research was authored by Hukubun (2018). His work is showcased through illustrations in Malind folklore books, with the intention of reintroducing local moral and cultural values to the younger generation. It highlights traditional narratives that focus on male figures, omitting the story of the character Samanim, and transforms these characters into the medium of Wayang Papua, serving as a visual interpretation and reinforcement of cultural expression (Hukubun 2018).

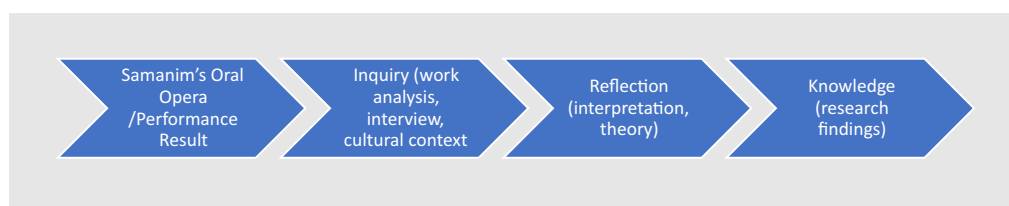
In the discipline of anthropological studies, the primary research literature offers an in-depth exploration of the Malind, as articulated by Van Baal in his seminal ethnographic work, *Dema: Description and Analysis of Marind-Anim Culture*, published in 1966 and focusing on South New Guinea. This study explores the belief systems and social structures of the Malind people, emphasizing the significance of dema, or the ancestors who shaped the world and established the cosmic order. This research emphasizes the relationship among mythology, rituals, and social structures like moieties and clans. Initiation and marriage rituals serve as clear expressions of the dema narrative, transforming myths into more than mere stories; they become the very basis of cultural practices that people engage in daily. This research explores the cultural shifts brought about by colonial influence and Catholic missions, serving as a significant reference for comprehending the historical and structural social changes within Malind society (Mead 1968). This article fails to recognize Samanim as one of the female ancestors, instead focusing predominantly on male figures who are thoroughly depicted as embodying moieties and clans.

### **3. Methods**

This study uses a practice-led research approach. This method was selected because creative practice has been recognized as a way to generate knowledge that can lead to new perspectives. According to Smith and Dean (2009), engaging in art practice enhances one's understanding by fostering aesthetic experiences and encouraging creative reflection. Bolt and Barrett (2019) suggest that the researcher's role as a creator enables the work to serve as a platform for both critical reflection and the generation of knowledge. The following figure outlines the various stages involved in the research process.

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**Figure 1:**  
**A scheme of a practice-led research process**



This study began with an observation of documented performances that took place on August 17, 2024, in Bali, and on November 23, 2024, in Merauke. This involves examining all the components present in the work. This process aims to uncover the musical and cultural identities present in the Samanim's oral opera. Following the analysis phase, the research progressed to the reflection stage, emphasizing the ways in which women's struggles and ecological knowledge are woven into this work. Samanim, as a female character in the opera, navigates her struggles with a deep commitment to preserving cultural traditions while confronting the challenges posed by modernization as portrayed in this work. Examining the opera's narrative reveals how it allows Malind women to emerge as resilient figures, actively working to safeguard their knowledge and traditions.

In addition, the ecological knowledge shared by the characters in the opera, particularly concerning traditional practices for managing nature, like anchoring sago and fishing in the river, is a central theme in this reflection. In what ways does this oral opera illustrate the connection between people and the natural world, especially in light of the challenges posed to the preservation of ecological wisdom that is increasingly overlooked due to modernization and capitalism? This reflection process examines how the findings from this artwork relate to established theories, including ecofeminism and cultural identity, to gain a deeper understanding of how these themes are expressed through the art of performance.

This study is further enriched by interviews with four individuals involved in the Samanim oral opera: Vika Wairara, who portrays Samanim; Ani Bendokbiran, who takes on the role of a singer and community member; Erma Gebze, who also plays Samanim; and Rian Sirken, another performer of Samanim. In this study, the researcher takes on the role of a composer, crafting narrative melodies that draw from the rich narrative traditions surrounding the Samanim. The interviews with the players seek to gain deeper insights into their interpretations of the characters they embody, as well as how themes like cultural identity and the challenges faced by women are highlighted. The results of the interviews were subsequently transcribed and organized through coding.



In the context of practice-led research, as discussed by Smith dan Dean (2022), coding serves a purpose beyond just classifying data; it also helps to illuminate the dynamic interplay between artistic practice and theoretical reflection. In the context of the Opera Tutar Samanim, the coding process serves to encapsulate the artistic experiences of the Malind people, expressed through their voices, bodies, and cultural symbols that come to life in performance. The coding was conducted by focusing on categories related to musical and cultural identity, the challenges faced by women, and ecological knowledge, all of which reflect the life experiences of the Malind community. These experiences are conveyed through songs and oral narratives performed on stage. Coding in the practice-led research (PLR) connects the artistic experiences of the Malind community with a wider academic context, highlighting that artistic practice generates not just works of art, but also knowledge that emerges from shared and thoughtful experiences.

**Table 1. The coding of Interview Results from Sources**

Narrative / Quote	Subcode	Code	Sources
"Let me introduce myself... I take on the role of the female singer (alto) while serving as a representative for the community."	Vocal role (Alto)	Musical Identity	Ani Bendokbiran
"My name is Aransa Denta Vika Wairara... my role is as a soprano singer and also as the character Mama Samanim."	Vocal role (Soprano)		Vika Wairara
"At first, when I joined... my role in this group was as an alto singer."	Vocal role (Alto)		Erma Gebze
"As a tenor, I got particular solo parts that I was responsible for."	Solo part		Rian Sirken
"At first, when I joined... my role in this group was as an alto singer and also as a Samanim and member of the community."	Vocal role (Alto)		Erma Gebze
"Bringing together our thoughts, feelings, and even our egos proved to be a challenging endeavor. However, we managed to navigate through it all as a team, despite all the challenges we faced along the way."	Singing together / solidarity		Rian & Ani
"My challenge was that I performed in my native language, Marind. As a member of the Muyu tribe, I frequently encountered repeated corrections."	Dialect / learning Malind pronunciation	Cultural Identity	Ani
"It was the meaning that I fully sensed... when the figure of Samanim recited a prayer honoring our ancestors and the land."	Ancestral narrative		Erma dan Rian
"I played the role of Samanim and that of the community at the same time."	Ancestral Narrative		Erma
"The values of mutual cooperation and helping one another are starting to disappear."	Loss of mutual cooperation / Solidarity		Vika



"In the same way, the <i>pangkur sago</i> tradition holds a significant connection to women."	<i>Pangkur Sagu</i> is a traditional dance from Papua that beautifully illustrates the journey of harvesting sago, showcasing everything from the felling of the tree to the processing of the sago itself. This represents the collaborative spirit, unity, and appreciation that the Papuan people hold for the natural world.		Ani & Vika
"In the tradition of fish netting known as <i>imbalak</i> , women skillfully employ <i>kipah</i> to catch fish, ensuring that the ecosystem remains unharmed."	<i>Imbalak</i> refers to the tradition of fish netting		Ani & Vika
"What is depicted in this work is actually an activity we often do: gardening, processing sago, fishing, and even cooking."	Daily activities / Gardening	Ecological Knowledge	Ani & Vika
"The gradual disappearance of forests disrupts the vital link between women, culture, and nature."	Nature has been diminished, and culture has been eroded.		Vika Wairara
"The concept of 'born' as presented by the Samanim holds essential benefits for human existence."	Nature is a home for love.		Ani Bendokbiran
"It's closely connected... daily activities: gardening, tapping sago, fishing."	Traditional hunting		Vika Wairara

Once the analysis and reflection phase concluded, the research findings were gathered by integrating all insights related to musical identity, cultural identity, women's struggles, and ecological knowledge found in the Samanim's oral opera. This study aims to investigate the ways in which this work contributes to the understanding and examination of the cultural identity of the Papuan people. It will also delve into how artistic elements, including music and storytelling, shape a narrative around women's challenges and highlight the significance of safeguarding ecological knowledge.

## 4. Results



### 4.1 Musical and Cultural Identity

The concept of identity in the Samanim's oral opera can be explored through two primary dimensions: musical identity and cultural identity. The musical identity is

clearly reflected in the structure and tonal qualities found in the repertoire of this work. The vibrant musical culture of Malind is evident in its unique modes, which often diverge from the Western diatonic scale system. Instead, they are deeply rooted in the pentatonic scale and the melodic patterns found in Malind's vocal traditions. A notable feature is the presence of the note "si" in each melody, which adds a unique character and enhances the sense of local identity. The rhythm and melody employed are notably unique, frequently characterized by repetition and polyrhythmic elements, which illustrate the ways in which the Malind people convey their stories and emotions through chanting. Moreover, the blending of voices in the choir's repertoire showcases a vibrant local identity, often standing in contrast to traditional Western harmonic principles. Natural sound elements, like the gentle crashing of waves and the soft whisper of the wind, are woven into the soundscape, contributing to the overall atmosphere of the performance. The combination of these elements creates a musical expression that not only beautifully brings the Samanim narrative to life but also revitalizes the musical heritage of Malind, which has seldom been presented in contemporary art settings.



Table 2. Musical Identity Elements in the Samanim's Oral Opera


No	Musical Element	Description	Concrete Example (Repertoire Section)
1	Typical Malind mode	This system diverges from the Western scale framework, drawing instead from the pentatonic traditions of the Malind community.	Opening melody: solo singing with a non-diatonic scale  <i>Waninggap Bekaiti</i> <i>Do= Eb</i> <i>Septina Layan</i> 1 . . . 3' 5 5 . . 7 7 5 5 3 5' 3 5 5 7 7 5 5 3 O----- <i>Ahiya</i> 1- <i>lahi</i> sang paya anan Mbua ghr' aedeh kapip makan nango 3 5 5 7 7 5 5 3' 3 5 5 7 7 5 5 3' <i>Mbia ghr' aedeh deg nango tamughr' ghr' ahwighr' Mbua ghr' aedeh Halai adaka, a..... ah'am kuhwadak</i> 3 5 5 7 7 5 5 3' 3 5 5 7 7 5 5 3' <i>Mbia ghr' aedeh</i> <i>Ipala, dea, Namakid yanai, Mbua ghr' aedeh anim mendodap alokti, yoh koghr'a katihab</i> 3 5 5 7 7 5 5 3' 3 5 5 7 7 5 5 3' <i>Mbia ghr' aedeh</i> <i>Kambo nango' Mbua ghr' aedeh waya nango' Mbua ghr' aedeh waninggap bekaiti</i> 5 5 . 3 5 7 5 5 3' 7 7 5 5 3' 5 5 5 3 5 7 1 1 7' <i>Kiwal</i> en mayan ahap gan. Adaka ep kalulakane ahap gan. Makan mabulunam kumaghr' tek 5 5 3 <i>Oleh Amal en bekalokka</i>
2	Characteristic sound (sound marker)	The presence of the note "si" serves as a defining feature of the local melody. The note "si" is an ongoing component in the repertoire of the Samanim's oral opera.	SATB   5 3 1 3   5 7 1 7   5 3 1 3   O----- O----- SA   5 3 1 3   5 5 5 5   5 3 1 3   O----- O----- TB   5 7 7 1 7 5 5 5   3 5 7 7 7 5   3 5 7 7 5 .   Es ghr'anid nango Kasis anam in O. nahe wanangga ka - me hwitukla S   5 7 1 7   1 1 1 1 7 7 5 3 5 5 . 5 .    O----- Kapip yaba waninggap makan A   1 1 1 1 7 7 5 3 5 5 .   3 3 5 5 7 7 5 . 3 3 5 5 3 3 3 1    Kapip yaba waninggap makan Awah Payah make nin Awah payah makenin... T   6 1 . 6 1 . 1 5 . .   6 1 . 6 1 . 1 5 . .    Ah ghr'aokem yas Ah ghr'aokem yas B   1 6 . 1 6 . 5 5 . 6   1 6 . 1 6 . 5 5 . 6    Awah Payah make nin Awah Payah make nin

3	Rhythm and tempo	Repetitive and polyrhythmic, reflecting the narrative structures typical of the Malind tradition. The "ancestral call" section of the responsorial vocal.	<div><div>S1 Adaka kape ihaghr' ok (diucapkan: mengajak mari turun dalam air/spoken - inviting - let's go down into the water)</div><div>S    5 5 1 6 6 6 5 5 ≠   5 5 1 6 6 6 5 5 3   </div><div>A    3 3 5 4 4 4 3 3 ≠   3 3 5 4 4 4 3 3 1   </div><div>A - da - ka kape ihaghr' ok A - da - ka kape ihaghr' ok -----</div></div> <div><div>S1 Awah tama ahinen (diucapkan: mengajak ayo buat lingkaran/spoken - inviting - let's make a circle)</div><div>Ahap ghr'ainiden (diucapkan: mengajak Maju lagi/spoken - inviting - Move forward again)</div><div>SA    5 5 7 7 1 1 7   5 5 3 5 5 . .   </div><div>Wai mbia waninggap Samb awekaet</div></div> <div><div>S1 Ahap ghr'ainiden mbia hyakod (diucapkan: mengajak siap maju sama-sama/spoken - inviting - ready to move forward together)</div><div>SA    3 3 5 . .   1 1 . xxxx xxxx x   ≠ (diulang-ulang/reapets)</div><div>Makinde kamak</div></div> <div><div>S1 Kipa ahap ihwetokem (diucapkan: mengajak siap angkat Kipa/spoken - invited - ready to lift Kipa)</div></div>
4	Choir harmonization	The relationship between local tones and the singers' free expression generates a soundscape that beautifully intertwines, standing in contrast to the structure of Western harmony.	The vocal harmonization that develops naturally within traditional musical practices does not adhere to the principles of Western harmony theory. The voices emerge from a shared understanding and the connection among the singers, weaving together a melody that enhances one another and fosters a harmonious sound. This harmony may not always maintain tonal stability, yet it conveys a sense of cohesion and unity, reflecting a shared musical experience.
5	The natural soundscape and body sounds (clapping, stomping, shouting)	The sounds of nature, along with human sounds like waves, wind, rustling leaves, clapping, foot stomping, and shouts, come together to create a soundscape that enriches the emotional and spiritual essence of the performance.	<div></div> <div>The artwork is accessible by scanning this QR code or through the following link: <a href="#">Soundscape Alam dan Sound dari Tubuh [Natural Soundscape and Body Sounds]</a></div>
6	The structure of musical idioms	The integration of local elements serves as the cornerstone of the musical framework in the Samanim's oral opera. The community's dialectal expressions are showcased in a genuine manner, enhancing both identity and the vibrant nature of	<div></div> <div>The artwork is accessible by scanning this QR code or by clicking the following link: <a href="#">Potongan Karya Opera Tutur Samanim [Excerpts from the Samanim's Oral Opera]</a></div>

Each element, including the traditional melodic modes of Malind, the repetitive rhythmic patterns, and the incorporation of natural sounds such as waves and wind, serves a purpose beyond mere decoration or enhancement. All these elements come together to form an integral aspect of the overall composition, contributing to its distinct musical identity. The music in this opera goes beyond merely representing local culture; it breathes life into it within a contemporary framework, crafting an artistic experience that resonates deeply with today's audience, who find themselves woven into the fabric of the performance. One of the singers confirmed this by stating, "When we sing, we're not merely performing a song; it's as if we're retelling the history of Malind in our own unique way. It's not merely music; it's our very existence that is showcased." (Erma, Ani, and Rian)

**Table 3. The Cultural Identity in the Work of Samanim's Oral Opera**

Cultural Aspects in Music	Description	Concrete Example (Performance Work Section)
Human vocals without musical accompaniment	The choice to prioritize vocals as the main form of expression highlights the roots of oral traditions that are integral to the community's culture.	The entire performance is carried out acappella, completely free from any musical accompaniment.  The artwork is accessible by scanning the QR code or by clicking the following link: <a href="#">Potongan Karya Opera Tutur Samanim [Excerpts from the Samanim's Oral Opera]</a>
Woodwind instruments as cultural markers (Figure 2)	The sound of woodwind instruments opens the entire range of performances, symbolizing the summoning of cultural spirits and marking the musical space.	The bamboo flute began the performance after the Samanim's actors recited prayers. (photo display).
The vocal structure of the leader and group response (Figure 3)	The call-and-response pattern reflects the social relationship between the community leader and other members.	In this work, different people take on the role of the leader in turn. This pattern reflects the inclusive and expansive character of the Malind people's leadership tradition, which extends beyond the singular role of the king. The leader will make a call that is then met with a rhythmic response from the support group, as indicated in the score text.
Malind language as the main language (Figure 4)	The use of mother tongue in this work serves as a powerful means of affirming identity and resisting external domination.	The complete story and songs are performed in the Malind language, showcasing the distinctive Malind articulation throughout a full musical score text ( <i>partitur</i> ).
The role of local artists to the pronunciation of phoneme sounds in the Malind language.	Isaiah Ndiken communicated not just the textual translation but also the feelings, spirit, and cultural resonance.	Performers practice the pronunciation and delivery of specific sounds on the basis of the guidance of native speaker Isaias Ndiken. The process can be viewed through the URL provided below or by scanning the QR code.  <a href="#">Proses Latihan Pelafalan Bahasa Malind</a> [The Pronunciation Training Process for the Malind Language]

Cultural revitalization through music	Music serves as a living space for the values, sounds, and cultural symbols of the Malind people.	Oral opera is a combination of traditional elements and modern opera forms.
		

**Figure 2:**  
The woodwind instrument played by one of the dancers opened the entire series of performances of the Samanim's oral opera, serving as a cultural marker.  
(Researcher Documentation)  
Anarta Indonesia Storytelling Stage, August 17, 2024

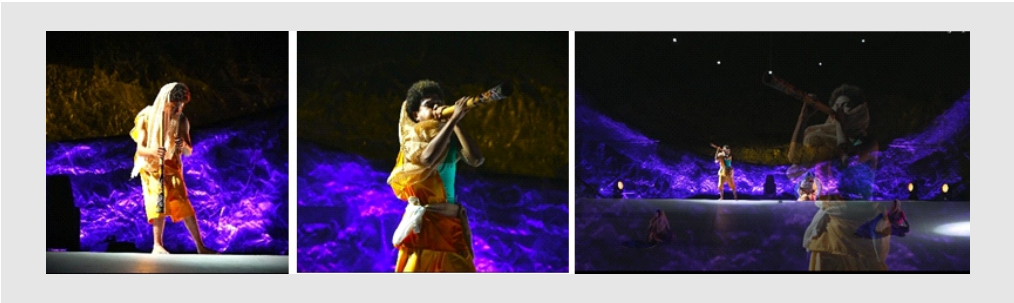


Figure 2 illustrates the second aspect of cultural identity in Samanim's oral opera. Following the heartfelt chanting of prayers by the Samanim's performers, a traditional Malind musical instrument, crafted from wood and resembling a trumpet, was played with vigor, its sound resonating throughout the open performance space of the oral opera. The wooden trumpet, known as the Pika in the North Kimaam region, produces a sound that serves as a cultural symbol, fostering a connection between the audience and the shared identity and imagination of the Malind people. In the sphere of performance, it serves as a significant indicator of musical space, representing the time and place where the narrative symbolically and spiritually commences. He observed that the event transcended a typical performance, serving as an artistic rite that welcomed the audience into the rich tapestry of the Malind cultural universe. Therefore, this musical instrument is essential in fostering a sacred atmosphere, bridging the gap between reality and memory, and emphasizing that Opera Tatur Samanim transcends mere performance; it is a heartfelt endeavor to cultivate connections with ancestors, affirm one's identity, and rejuvenate cultural spaces that have faded over time.

In the Samanim's oral opera, cultural identity is vividly expressed through the chosen narratives, the language employed, and the symbolic values that are deeply woven into the musical components. Vocal music performed without instrumental support, along with the introduction of bamboo wind instruments at the beginning of the piece, are significant cultural elements. These aspects not only provide a means for artistic expression but also offer insights into the social dynamics of the Malind community. The significance of the community leader's role is evident in musical

expressions, where the leader's vocal patterns (call) are met with responses from the supporting group, illustrating a social structure that is both hierarchical and collective. A source highlighted: "When there is a primary voice, it resembles the village chief addressing the community, and we all respond in unison." That has been a common occurrence in our village for a long time." (Interview, Source 2). Furthermore, incorporating the mother tongue, Malind language, in the songs and narratives enhances the cultural identity that is being preserved and championed. The significant contribution of Isaias Ndiken in translating spoken language in this work goes beyond mere textual interpretation; it also captures the essence of culture through genuine sound pronunciation. One of the speakers noted that: "The Malind language isn't just words; it possesses a spirit, so when it's sung, it resonates deeply" (Vika).

**Figure 3.**  
The excerpt from the score showing call-and-response reflects the social relationship between the community leader and other members.  
(Researcher Documentation)

S1	<i>Adaka kape ihaghr' ok</i> (diucapkan- mengajak- mari turun dalam air/spoken - inviting - let's go down into the water)
S	: 5 5 1̣ 6 6 6 5 5 ≠   5 5 1̣ 6 6 6 5 5 3 :
A	: 3 3 5 4 4 4 3 3 ≠   3 3 5 4 4 4 3 3 1 :
	A - da - ka kape ihaghr' ok A - da - ka kape ihaghr' ok -----
S1	<i>Awah tama ahinen</i> (diucapkan- mengajak- ayo buat lingkaran/spoken - inviting - let's make a circle) <i>Ahap ghr'ainiden</i> (diucapkan- mengajak- Maju lagi/spoken - inviting - Move forward again)
SA	: 5 5 . 7 7 . 1̣ 1̣ 7 .   5 5 3 5 5 . . :
	Wai mbia waninggap Samb awekaet
S1	<i>Ahap ghr'ainidem mbia hyakod</i> (diucapkan- mengajak- siap maju sama-sama/spoken - inviting - ready to move forward together)
SA	: 3 3 5 . . .   1̣ 1̣ . xxxx xxxx x   ≠ (diulang-ulang/reapets)
	Makinde kamak
S1	<i>Kipa ahap ihwetokem</i> (diucapkan- mengajak- siap angkat Kipa/spoken - invited - ready to lift Kipa)

The Samanim's oral opera asserts its cultural identity through linguistic choices in addition to the call-and-response rhythm, which is a cultural marker that represents social ties in Malind culture. Sung in Malind, a mother tongue ingrained in the community's memories and way of life, the complete nine-part repertory serves as the performance's narrative framework. The usage of the Malind language is a cultural and political position as well as an artistic decision. The Malind language's use on stage serves as a form of protest against the marginalization of regional languages in a world that is becoming more interconnected and controlled by majority languages. It became a means of bolstering the relationship between language, identity, and location while reviving a language that was on the verge of being extinct. The Samanim oral stories are expressed in the Malind language with genuine emotional depth and

significance that cannot be adequately conveyed in other languages. It has intonations that influence the general cadence of society, metaphors that emerge from the region itself, and language that contains local knowledge.

Figure 4:  
Excerpts from Indonesian and  
Malind lyrics together with  
English translations from the  
Samanim's oral opera. The  
complete repertoire is  
performed in the Malind  
language of Merauke.  
(Researcher Documentation)

Bahasa Indonesia	Bahasa Malind	English
Satu		
1. Oh... sang pencipta Ilahi	1. Oh.... Ahiya ilahi sang paya anem	1. Oh... the divine creator
2. Terima kasih untuk tanah yang subur..	2. Mbia ghr'aedeh kapip makan nanggo	2. Thank you for the fertile land...
3. Terima Kasih untuk hutan sumber makanan kami.	3. Mbia ghr'aedeh deg nanggo tamughr' ghr'ahwighr'	3. Thank you for the forest, our source of food.
4. Terima Kasih untuk air dan udara yang bersih,	4. Mbia ghr'aedeh Halai adaka, a..... ah'am kuhwadak	4. Thank you for clean water and air.
5. Terima kasih untuk tumbuhan dan binatang,	5. Mbia ghr'aedeh Ipala, dea, Namakid yanai	5. Thank you for plants and animals.
6. Terima kasih untuk keluarga.	6. Mbia ghr'aedeh Mitanim nanggo	6. Thank you for family.

4.2 Women's Struggles

The struggles faced by women in the Samanim's oral opera are clearly illustrated through the portrayal of female characters who hold significant positions in both the narrative and the performance. This work portrays women not merely as symbolic figures but as dynamic individuals who share knowledge, values, and the collective strength found within society. The narrative of the Samanim plays a crucial role in examining how women serve as custodians of memory, narrators of history, and guardians of cultural traditions passed down through generations.

This opera vividly illustrates how women play a crucial role in preserving cultural traditions and knowledge, highlighting their significant responsibilities in this regard. Their contribution to maintaining traditional lifestyles, including sago harvesting, hunting, and fishing, is expressed through musical elements that emphasize the power of female vocals and position them in key moments. Women from the Samanim dynasty are depicted as dynamic individuals who actively express the stories and cultural values they represent. This work also emphasizes the remarkable resilience of women as they navigate social change and confront the challenges of their times, such as colonization and marginalization, through their solidarity, wisdom, and powerful narratives. This opera serves as a platform for sharing the narratives of women throughout history, while making an artistic statement that celebrates the presence and voices of the women of Malind, who have frequently been marginalized.



Table 4. The Struggle of Women as Depicted in the Samanim's Oral Opera




Aspects	Description	Real Evidence
Selection of Female Figures (Figure 6)	This opera presents female characters who play a pivotal role in the story and on stage, like Samanim, serving as guardians of memory and bearers of history. Furthermore, it acts as an opposing force to patriarchal practices, highlighting a contrast with Samanim's own story.	The c hoice of the Samanim character as the central figure in the narrative illustrating the challenges faced by women in Malind culture (the photo of the actress portraying Samanim).
Active Roles of Women	Women are depicted as active agents who disseminate the collective knowledge and values of society, not merely as symbolic figures.	The inclusion of women in significant scenes, along with the incorporation of female vocal performances, enhances the roles presented on stage.  The artwork can be accessed by scanning the QR code or by clicking the following link: <a href="#">Peran Aktif Perempuan [Active Roles of Women]</a>
Guardians of Tradition and Identity (Figure 7)	Women, especially the Samanim, play a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of traditions, such as pounding sago, hunting, and cooking using natural methods.	A story illustrating how women impart traditional knowledge to the younger generation, set against the context of Malind culture (a full score text).
Women's Resilience	This work shows the ways in which women adapt to shifting circumstances, colonization, and marginalization through the power of solidarity and wisdom.	Women from the Samanim's dynasty played a crucial role in safeguarding cultural values, even when confronted with external pressures.  The artwork can be accessed by scanning the QR code or by clicking the following link: <a href="#">Ketahanan Perempuan [women's Resilience]</a>
Women's Existence and Agency (Figure 8)	This opera celebrates the presence and voices of Malind women throughout history and culture, acting as both an artistic expression and a political statement.	This opera shows women as dynamic participants in cultural transformation and preservation, highlighting their roles as driving forces for change (the photo capturing the performance).
Sound guard	In the opera, the narrative of women's struggle is evident in the expression "amame," which means "darling, oh..."	The singers passionately expressed their feelings, calling out, "Amame... amame..." (Figure 5)


Figure 5:  
Excerpts from the lyrics of "Amame" (Researcher Documentation)

SA




Amam ee

PL




Wai temohob oge? (wee, ko bikin apa?-Hey, what are you doing?) ko jual tanah?- Why are you selling the land?)

SA



Amam ee

PL



Entagolek mobab oleb makan? (kenapa)

The Samanim's oral opera features the female voice as a vital element that animates the narrative. Women play a vital role in preserving culture, sharing poetry, and imparting cherished traditional values. In contrast to the common marginalization of women's voices, the Samanim highlighted them as the central voices in their discourse. The recitation of these poems serves as a powerful means of cultural resistance, allowing women to safeguard language, traditions, and knowledge against the tides of modernization and external influence. Furthermore, women contribute significantly to the preservation of social values. This work illustrates a profound sense of unity, shared strength, and bravery in confronting injustice. The challenges faced by women in the Samanim's oral opera reflect both a shared and individual journey. The efforts of women in safeguarding cultural heritage for society represent a shared endeavor. At the same time, the fight for these issues is deeply intertwined with the ways in which women courageously invest their voices, souls, and bodies as a form of resistance. This narrative portrays women not just as keepers of tradition, but as essential forces in maintaining and celebrating the identity of Malind society.

"Mother not only gives birth to children but also to new life, including trees, plants, and the entire natural world." (Ani)

**Figure 6:**  
The actor playing SAMANIM in the Samanim's oral opera.  
(Researcher Documentation)  
Anarta Indonesia Bertutur Stage, August 17, 2024

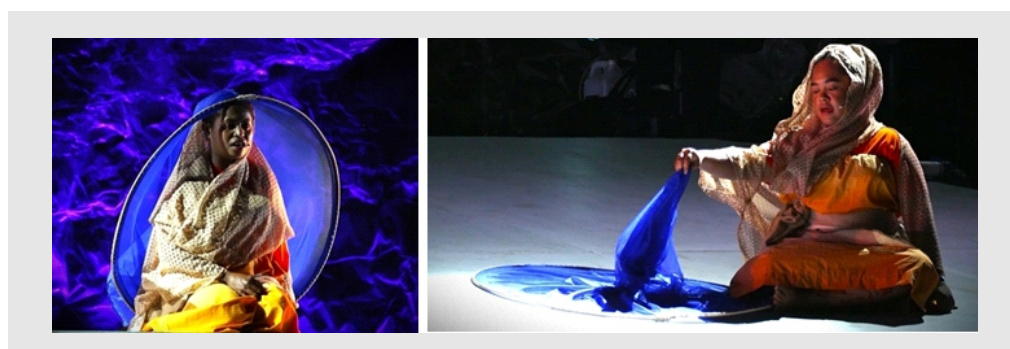


Figure 6 demonstrates that in the Samanim's oral opera, the female figure plays a pivotal role in the narrative and stage action. This is intrinsically linked to Samanim as the custodian of memory and the transmitter of history.

**Figure 7:**  
A narrative illustrating women teach traditional methods to the younger generation within the framework of Malind culture  
(Researcher Documentation)

SA	5 5 .	7 7 .	1 1 7 .		5	5 3 5 5 .	
	Wai	mbia	waninggap		Samb	awekaet	
S1	5 5 .	6 6 6 6	5 5 3 .	≠	5 5 .	7 7 7 .	1 7 .   5 5 5 . 5 5 3 .
S2	3 3 .	4 4 4 4	3 3 1 .	≠	3 3 .	5 5 5 .	5 5 .   3 3 3 . 3 3 1 .
	Nokke	ekakena	Imbalak		Ihe	tradisi	ehe kamopya idehe
A	1 1 0	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 .	≠	1 1 0	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 .   1 1 0 1 1 1 1 1 .
	Nokke	ekakena	Imbalak		Nokke	ekakena	Imbalak
S1	1 1 .	1 1 .	6 6 6 .	6 6 5 .		≠	0 0 0
S2	5 5 .	1 1 .	4 4 4 .	4 4 3 .		≠	0 0 0
A1	3 3 .	5 5 .	2 2 2 .	2 2 1 .		≠	0 0 0
A2	1 1 .	3 3 .	7 7 7 .	7 7 1 .		≠	0 0 0
	Alam	ehe	kamopya	idehe			

**Figure 8:**  
This opera presents women as active subjects in cultural change and preservation, portraying them as agents of change.  
(Researcher Documentation)  
Merauke Performance,  
November 23, 2024



#### 4.3 Ecological Knowledge

In addition to being a character who protects cultural heritage, Samanim is also portrayed as a custodian and promoter of ecological knowledge, which is crucial to the survival of the Malind society. This ecological knowledge is crucial in creating a peaceful coexistence between people and the natural world through traditional lessons on how to hunt, fish, and process sago. The opera also portrays the conflict that exists between the Samanim's traditional ecological wisdom and the contemporary ecological reality, which has changed significantly as a result of modernity. The impact of capitalism and development initiatives that have harmed ecosystems and disregarded more sustainable regional practices is criticized in this opera. This work highlights the significance of reverting to long-standing ecological principles and offers a comment on the profound shifts in the interaction between humans and environment. This opera serves as a place for reflection, encouraging the audience to consider the harm done to the ecosystem and to keep in mind the significance of conserving current ecological knowledge. The narrative challenges us to see and value how important it is to preserve nature's sustainability for the benefit of coming generations.

Table 5: Ecological Knowledge in the Samanim's Oral Opera

Aspects	Descriptions	Real Evidnce
Nature as home and source of life (Figure 9)	The Samanim shared vital ecological insights, including techniques for planting sago, fishing, and utilizing natural ingredients in cooking, which nurtured a balanced connection between people and the environment.	Scenes showing the Samanim character teaching the Imbalak method, which is based on indigenous knowledge, for fishing and tapping sago. (A snapshot of the action during creation)
The current reality of nature (Figure 10)	This opera critiques the impact of modernization on traditional ecological knowledge and depicts the tension between traditional heritage and current ecological realities.	Scenes that illustrate traditional ecological knowledge are increasingly at risk because of environmental degradation and exploitation (a full score text).
Criticism toward capitalism (Figure 11)	This opera raises criticism against capitalism and development programs that damage ecosystems and marginalize more sustainable local practices.	A presentation on how the ecology, which is crucial to the existence of the Malind people, is harmed by capitalism and the exploitation of natural resources (a full score text).
Ecological reflection (Figure 12)	This opera serves as a space for reflection on the relationship between humans and nature, encouraging the audience to return to more sustainable traditional ecological principles.	A narrative that encourages the audience to think over the future of our environment, engaging them in thoughtful reflection (a full score text).
Reflections on Destructions (Figure 13)	This work encourages viewers to reflect and recognize the environmental harm that is taking place, along with the significance of safeguarding our existing ecological wisdom.	Encouraging the audience to examine the different events taking place, aiming to inspire empathy and influence personal or community choices related to the ongoing issues. (An image of a photographic setting)

Figure 9:  
A scene illustrating the Samanim character imparting skills for tapping sago and fishing through the Imbalak technique, rooted in local wisdom. (Researcher Documentation) Anarta Indonesia Bertutur Stage, August 17, 2024





**Figure 10:**  
The section of the full score text that reflects traditional ecological knowledge is increasingly at risk due to the harm and exploitation of the natural environment (Researcher Documentation)

Figure 10 displays a section of the full score text. It features three vocal parts (S) with lyrics in Indonesian and English. The lyrics discuss traditional ecological knowledge and the impact of human activities on the environment.

**Lyrics (Indonesian):**

S 5 , 6 5 3 5 5 7 7 1 5, 6 5 3  
Amame Tuhan, kambo a samb ndom ghr'aedehka, Takamboi\_\_\_\_\_ kanine iwis yah Amai samb anem,

S 5 7 7 1 5 3, 6 5 3 5 7 7 1 5 3  
Wikim wayalek anai ogepe, Misalau yah mowi anim naggi kaet, Wikim wayokla epetamokoip kisatla,

S 6 5 3 5 5 7 7 1 5, 6 5 3  
Amam ee, Tuhan a... kambo aa, waninggap kaet, Mbia ghr'aedeh samb dom nanggo

**Lyrics (English):**

Amame Tuhan, kambo a samb ndom ghr'aedehka - sayang e, Tuhan, Leluhur dan Semesta yang baik-  
My dear God, Ancestors, and the benevolent Universe  
Takamboi kanine iwis yah Amai samb anem- dengan apa kami bisa membalas kasih Mu-  
with what can we repay Your love?  
Wikim wayalek anai ogepe- Pengetahuan, hikmat yang diberikan kepada kami Manusia-  
Knowledge, wisdom given to us Humans  
Misalau yah mowi anim naggi kaet- Bumi tempat tinggal kami begitu sempurna kau berikan-  
You have given us such a perfect place to live on Earth.  
Wikim wayokla epetamokoip kisatla- Pengetahuan kebiasaan baik menjadi pengangan hidup kami- Knowledge of good  
habits is our way of life.  
Amam ee, Tuhan a... kambo a waninggap kaet - Sayang e, Tuhan, leluhur dan semesta yang baik-  
My dear, God, ancestors, and the good universe  
Mbia ghr'aedeh samb dom nanggo- Terima kasih untuk semua ini- Thank you for all of this

**Figure 11:**  
A section of the full score text illustrates how capitalism and the exploitation of natural resources harm the ecosystem, a vital aspect of life for the Malind community (Researcher Documentation).

Figure 11 displays a section of the full score text. It features six vocal parts (SA, PL, T1, T2, B1, B2) with lyrics in Indonesian and English. The lyrics discuss the impact of capitalism and the exploitation of natural resources on the ecosystem.

**Lyrics (Indonesian):**

SA Amam ee Amam ee Amam ee Amam ee  
PL Wai temohob oge? (wee, ko bikin apa?- Hey, what are you doing?) Entagolek mobab oleb makan? (kenapa ko jual tanah?- Why are you selling the land?)  
T1 Ah nok duet manaula (ah sa perlu uang-ah, I need money). Sawit Kakwamine (sawit mo masuk!- Palm oil is coming in!) Yaba duet ndapenai og (kita pasti dapat uang banyak- we will definitely earn a lot of money)  
T2 ||: 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 | 1 . . 0 | 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 | 1 . . . :||  
B1 ||: 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 | 6 . . 0 | 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 | 6 . . . :||  
B2 ||: 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 . . 0 | 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 . . . :||  
Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina a\_\_\_\_\_ Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina

**Lyrics (English):**

Amam ee Amam ee Amam ee Amam ee  
Wai temohob oge? (wee, ko bikin apa?- Hey, what are you doing?) Entagolek mobab oleb makan? (kenapa ko jual tanah?- Why are you selling the land?)  
Ah nok duet manaula (ah sa perlu uang-ah, I need money). Sawit Kakwamine (sawit mo masuk!- Palm oil is coming in!) Yaba duet ndapenai og (kita pasti dapat uang banyak- we will definitely earn a lot of money)  
	: 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7	1 . . 0	1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7	1 . . . :	
	: 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5	6 . . 0	6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5	6 . . . :	
	: 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4	4 . . 0	4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4	4 . . . :	
Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina a\_\_\_\_\_ Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina

**Figure 12:**  
A section of the full musical text that tells a story and asks viewers to consider how mankind and the environment will develop in the future (Researcher Documentation).

Figure 12 displays a section of the full musical text. It features six vocal parts (SA, PL, T1, T2, B1, B2) with lyrics in Indonesian and English. The lyrics discuss the future of mankind and the environment.

**Lyrics (Indonesian):**

SA Amam ee Amam ee Wahani ah hwagibe (jaga diri kah!- Take care of yourself)  
PL Wai temohob oge? (wee, ko bikin apa?- Hey, what are you doing?) Epe isi namakd kait wati mbiakaet! (itu minuman keras bukan minuman adat!- It's alcohol, not a traditional drink!) ---- Ado amam eee tamebat kawaila generasi (ado sayang, jangan bikin rusak generasi kah!- Oh dear, don't ruin the next generation!)  
T1 Eh oghr'takohob oghr' (eh ko siapa)  
T2 ||: 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 | 1 . . 0 | 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 | 1 . . . :||  
B1 ||: 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 | 6 . . 0 | 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 | 6 . . . :||  
B2 ||: 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 . . 0 | 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 . . . :||  
Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina a\_\_\_\_\_ Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina

**Lyrics (English):**

Amam ee Amam ee Wahani ah hwagibe (jaga diri kah!- Take care of yourself)  
Wai temohob oge? (wee, ko bikin apa?- Hey, what are you doing?) Epe isi namakd kait wati mbiakaet! (itu minuman keras bukan minuman adat!- It's alcohol, not a traditional drink!) ---- Ado amam eee tamebat kawaila generasi (ado sayang, jangan bikin rusak generasi kah!- Oh dear, don't ruin the next generation!)  
Eh oghr'takohob oghr' (eh ko siapa)  
	: 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7	1 . . 0	1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7	1 . . . :	
	: 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5	6 . . 0	6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5	6 . . . :	
	: 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4	4 . . 0	4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4	4 . . . :	
Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina a\_\_\_\_\_ Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina Ghr'aina

**Figure 13:**  
The moment when the Samanim's oral opera performers invite the audience onto the stage allows for a more intimate engagement with the unfolding events, fostering a sense of empathy and encouraging personal or communal reflections on the relevant issues being presented. (Researcher Documentation)  
Anarta Indonesia Bertutur Stage, August 17, 2024



## 5. Discussions

The Samanim's oral opera showcases two significant aspects of identity: musical identity and cultural identity. The essence of musical identity is expressed through the scale modes that emerge from the diverse Malind melodies, where the note *si* stands out as a defining feature of that mode. Additional musical elements feature unique rhythms and tempos, harmonies that diverge from Western harmonic traditions, the incorporation of soundscapes and body sounds, as well as open compositional structures that resonate with the narrative. The vocal practices of the Malind people, performed without musical accompaniment, serve as a powerful expression of their cultural identity and a meaningful representation of their rich oral traditions. The *pika* wind instrument serves as a meaningful link to our ancestors, while the Malind language takes center stage in the lyrics. This initiative involves working together with local artists and cultural figures, aiming to breathe new life into the community's culture through the power of music. In the narrative, the experiences of women and their connection to ecological knowledge are illustrated through the character of Samanim. She serves as a vital figure, sharing local wisdom that includes methods for processing sago, hunting techniques, and ways to sustain the balance of nature.

The musical identity in the Samanim's oral opera emerges through the blending of distinctive Malind elements, including local tonal modes centered on the note *si*, traditional rhythms, heterophonic vocal textures, body sounds, and soundscapes. This integration aligns with the concept of acoustemology as discussed by Feld, Webb dan Niles (1990). This perspective resonates with Nettl (2005), who highlights the significance of grasping music in relation to its cultural background. This work addresses the underrepresentation of Papua's voice in the national discourse, which has largely been shaped by Javanese-Balinese aesthetics, while steering clear of the folklorization tendency that Heimarck (2003) has critiqued. This experimental approach may be seen as straying from the preservation of genuine forms (Seeger 1992) and carries the potential to obscure the spiritual context (Yampolsky 1995). In the context of musical identity theory, Turino (2008) emphasizes that music, beyond being just an aesthetic object, serves as a dynamic medium that influences, negotiates, and reinforces the shared identity of a community. This viewpoint illustrates how the Samanim Narrative Opera serves as a platform for conveying Malind identity amidst the prevailing aesthetic influences. In a study on Indigenous and Minority Diaspora Education, Msofe (2021) emphasizes the significance of ensuring that minority groups have representation and support for their voices within educational and cultural contexts. When viewed through the lens of the Samanim's oral opera, the musical portrayal of Malind emerges as a powerful act of defiance and a



celebration of cultural identity, particularly in a social framework that frequently overlooks and suppresses marginalized voices.

The Samanim's oral opera highlights the development of cultural identity through unaccompanied vocal practices and the use of the Malind language, serving as a symbol of spiritual connection with ancestors. This illustrates 'Hall's (1996) perspective that cultural identity is shaped through performance and is built together within specific historical and social settings. Working together with local artists highlights the commitment to challenge the prevailing influence of mainstream culture and to uplift the voices of indigenous communities (Smith-Christopher 2006). However, this work faces criticism concerning its authenticity and the potential for aestheticizing identity within a contemporary performance context (Barber 2007). By placing the shared experiences of Malind in context, the Samanim's oral opera transforms into a venue for both active healing and thoughtful reflection, allowing for the expression of cultural identity.

When viewed through a postcolonial and decolonial lens, cultural representations frequently carry inherent biases. Said (1979) warned that cultural representations frequently stay within the framework of colonialism, even when they are meant to challenge it. The Samanim's oral opera can be viewed as a site of resistance; however, it also runs the risk of perpetuating existing power dynamics due to its foundation in Western aesthetics. Bhabha (1994) introduces the idea of a third space, a realm where identity emerges from the blending of local traditions and global influences, resulting in a complex understanding of authenticity. Morris (2010) explores the complex issue of whether subalterns can genuinely express themselves, or if their voices are inevitably filtered through dominant structures. (Smith (2022) emphasizes that the representation of indigenous cultures plays a crucial role in decolonizing methodologies, allowing individuals to reclaim the authority to define their own identities. In light of the potential dangers of aestheticizing and domesticating identity, Opera Tatur Samanim must prioritize the genuine needs of the Malind community. It should focus on being a practice that fosters identity and recovers local knowledge, rather than merely serving as a form of cultural consumption.

The Samanim's oral opera highlights the pivotal role of women within its narrative, symbolizing the shared effort to safeguard local knowledge, spirituality, and their environment. The Samanim figure embodies a spirit of resistance against marginalization, resonating with postcolonial feminist theory (Mohanty 2003) and the concept of embodied knowledge, which refers to the understanding that is rooted in our bodies and everyday life practices (Haraway 2015). This portrayal further emphasizes the concept of ecofeminism, which underscores the connection between

the subjugation of women and the environment (Siddiqui et al. 2018). However, the aestheticization present in art performances can sometimes hide the very structural realities that they aim to critique (Kaplan 2005), and the focus on individual heroic narratives may eclipse the collective efforts of women (Hochberg, 1988). Nonetheless, this work successfully creates a reflective and political platform that allows for the expression of indigenous women's experiences as engaged participants in the ecological and cultural struggles in Papua, while depicting the figure of Samanim through the lens of two individuals as a unified endeavor.

The Samanim's oral opera centers on ecological knowledge, highlighting local traditions like sago processing, hunting, and the enduring principle of natural balance that has been shared through generations. This representation resonates with the idea of traditional ecological knowledge (Berkes 1999) and questions the prevailing academic narratives that have often neglected the local knowledge rooted in the lived experiences of indigenous women. The Baal's study (1968) primarily examined male value systems and the concept of Anim Ha, while overlooking other important figures, particularly women, who also possessed valuable ecological knowledge. This study addresses that gap by examining the oral traditions that have often been overlooked in scholarly discussions. In an interview with Ndiken (2024), it was shared that the Samanim also impart knowledge about Seplik Anim, referring to wise individuals who emerge through a process of maturation initiation within rituals established by the Samanim. While the performance format may sometimes overshadow the spiritual context (Yampolsky 1995), Samanim's oral opera creates an opportunity for contemplation that connects artistic expression with ecological advocacy. It acts as a dynamic platform to revitalize the ecological understanding of the Malind community, presenting it in a relatable and engaging manner.

The research findings on the Samanim's oral opera offer valuable insights and relatable narratives that contribute to the preservation of culture and the enhancement of art education within the context. This research invites us to think deeply about the prevailing cultural narratives and creates opportunities for alternative voices to emerge, particularly from the often-overlooked local perspective of Malind. These findings can be effectively applied in creating art curricula that draw from local wisdom. This includes developing musical compositions that embody traditional knowledge, offering community-based art training that is grounded in cultural heritage, and incorporating ecological education that aligns with local values and practices. This work highlights the voices of women and the knowledge found in the everyday experiences of communities. It acts as both a record of culture and a basis for meaningful social and educational change that is fair and deeply connected to the local environment.

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## 6. Conclusions

Research indicates that the Samanim's oral opera encompasses three interrelated principal findings: firstly, a musical identity established through the amalgamation of characteristic Malind elements, including local tonal modes, vocal texture, and an open compositional framework; secondly, a cultural identity represented through language, traditional musical instruments, and unaccompanied vocal practices as a reflection of oral tradition; and thirdly, a portrayal of struggle and local knowledge that positions Samanim as a pivotal figure embodying ecological and spiritual values within the narrative of the Malind community.

This research exhibits limits regarding overall performance. The primary emphasis remains on the musical and cultural narrative aspects, neglecting other significant components of the production, like dramaturgy, choreography, dramatic structure, and overall artistic design, all of which enhance the emotive potency of *Opera Tatur Samanim*. Consequently, extensive follow-up research on the performance dimension is strongly advised.

This research significantly contributes to educational and cultural literature. The *Opera Tatur Samanim* exemplifies the effective conversion of oral narratives into a performance medium, preserving local cultural values while enhancing accessibility, appreciation, and transmission to younger generations through a contextual and creative intertextual approach.

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policymakers in their efforts to sustain and revitalize local artistic traditions. We encourage ongoing dialogue to turn research into meaningful action.

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