

Cultural Identity Construction of Lampung in Traditional Songs

Jafar Fakhrurozi^{1*)}, M. Ghufroni An'ars¹⁾

¹⁾ Teknokrat University of Indonesia, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia

^{*)}Correspondence Email: jafar.fakhrurozi@teknokrat.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the construction of Lampung cultural identity in traditional songs of the Saibatin and Pepadun communities. Employing a qualitative approach with an ethnographic method, the study analyzes 18 Lampung traditional songs obtained from the YouTube platform. Data were collected through documentation and non-participant observation of song lyrics, audio-visual performances, and their contexts of presentation, and were analyzed interpretatively through thematic and symbolic coding. The analysis applies Stuart Hall's theory of representation and cultural identity, reinforced by Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality and a symbolic anthropology approach. The findings indicate that Lampung traditional songs represent cultural elements including religion, kinship, knowledge systems, language, arts, livelihoods, and material culture, which are constructed through the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Traditional songs function as cultural texts that represent, transmit, and negotiate Lampung cultural identity dynamically, including within the context of digital media transformation.

Keywords: *Cultural Construction, Cultural Identity, Lampung Traditional Songs, Oral Tradition, Representation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Lampung society is rich in traditions that have been transmitted from generation to generation and continue to exist today. One of the most prominent traditions within Lampung society is oral tradition in the form of song. This is in line with Sanusi (2014), who argues that oral literature constitutes a form of cultural expression transmitted across generations through speech, singing, and other oral forms. Oral traditions function not only as aesthetic expressions but also as media for transmitting values, strengthening group identity, and maintaining cultural continuity within a community (Wardani et al., 2025). In addition, oral-based traditional texts function as cultural media that negotiate values and identity while maintaining local traditions (Fadillah & Supriyadi, 2025). Ariyani and Revi Liana (2018) further emphasize that among the various forms of Lampung literature, including proverbs, riddles, spells, poetry, and folktales, poetic forms such as syair and pantun are the most dominant. In contemporary contexts, songs based on syair and pantun have increasingly been adapted into modern musical formats such as pop, dangdut, and other popular genres. According to Luxemburg (1989:35), traditional poetic verses are frequently used as song lyrics, a phenomenon influenced by socio-cultural change. Koentjaraningrat (1986) notes that regional music may transform over time; nevertheless, it continues to retain its traditional nuances (Purnomo & Subagyo, 2010:3).

At present, traditional Lampung songs are widely disseminated through social media platforms, particularly YouTube, which provides significant advantages for the preservation of local culture. Contemporary society, especially the millennial generation, is highly familiar with YouTube. Based on ComScore data from March 2021, YouTube has reached more than 100 million adult users in Indonesia (Feliciano, 2021), positioning Indonesia as one of the ten countries with the largest number of YouTube users globally. Moreover, Indonesia currently has approximately 9,500 YouTube channels with more than one million subscribers. On a global scale, YouTube's internal

data from June 2021 indicate that around two billion users log in to the platform each month, with more than 500 hours of video content uploaded every minute worldwide.

In the context of Lampung, the utilization of YouTube as a medium for disseminating local arts and culture is evident in the presence of several channels that consistently feature Lampung cultural content, including traditional songs. Based on monitoring conducted as of 21 January 2026, these channels include Lampung Sai Official with approximately 3.84 thousand subscribers, Sai Betik with around 65.2 thousand subscribers, and Hulu Balang with about 19.1 thousand subscribers. In addition to thematic channels, several Lampung singers actively produce and distribute traditional songs through YouTube, such as @kanjengandyachmadofficial7867 with approximately 2.68 thousand subscribers and @hilahambala5846 with around 7.05 thousand subscribers.

The existence of these channels and artist accounts indicates sustained audience interest and engagement with Lampung cultural content in digital spaces. The relatively significant number of subscribers, particularly on the Sai Betik channel, suggests that Lampung traditional arts and songs continue to demonstrate appeal and cultural relevance amid the dominance of popular entertainment content. Thus, digital media, especially YouTube, functions not merely as a platform for entertainment, but also as a strategic arena for the preservation, maintenance, and ongoing transformation of Lampung cultural identity in contemporary society.

The extensive public access to YouTube opens significant opportunities for the preservation, maintenance, and development of local culture. As a participatory medium, YouTube enables the documentation and dissemination of cultural traditions, including traditional songs, to wider and cross-generational audiences (Burgess & Green, 2009). The high penetration of YouTube in Indonesia makes the platform a strategic arena for distributing local cultural content (Feliciana, 2021). In this regard, Jenkins (2006) emphasizes that digital media fosters participatory culture, allowing cultural traditions to remain alive and adaptive in response to social change.

Oral tradition, including folk songs, constitutes an important medium for representing the culture of a society. The creation of folk songs cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts of the communities that sustain them, as these songs emerge from collective experiences, value systems, and worldviews. Consequently, folk songs function not merely as forms of aesthetic expression but also as representations of social life and the cultural identity of their communities. Hestiyana (2015:89) argues that oral tradition is rooted in the conceptual frameworks that exist within the collective consciousness of a society. Similarly, Finnegan (as cited in Fakhrurozi, 2016:28) asserts that oral tradition is a cultural phenomenon whose content relates to events, experiences, and meaning systems of the community that owns the tradition. Thus, oral tradition serves as a medium for the transmission and construction of cultural identity across generations.

Studies of social identity cannot be separated from cultural elements. Santoso (2006:49) explains that ethnic identity is closely related to cultural identity, as cultural characteristics function as primary markers for categorizing social groups. In this sense, culture serves as a fundamental component in the formation of collective identity. Mulyana (2010:58) notes that cultural identity is reflected through various aspects, including language and communication, values and norms, social relations, and belief systems. Koentjaraningrat (2015) further elaborates that cultural elements encompass language, knowledge systems, social organization, livelihood systems, technology, religion, and the arts. As part of both artistic expression and oral tradition, traditional songs function as spaces for articulating these cultural elements and thus play a crucial role in the process of constructing cultural identity.

Within the Lampung context, oral tradition, particularly traditional songs, also functions as a medium for maintaining regional languages. However, the existence of Lampung oral traditions has begun to decline in terms of both the number of speakers and the intensity of production. This condition is concerning, as oral tradition is often regarded as the last bastion for the preservation of the Lampung language, which continues to experience a decrease in active speakers. In the digital era, society, especially younger generations, tends to be more familiar with popular culture disseminated through mass media and digital platforms such as YouTube. Nevertheless, digital spaces simultaneously provide new opportunities for revitalizing oral traditions through transformation and adaptation, enabling Lampung traditional songs to continue functioning as instruments of language preservation and cultural identity construction amid ongoing social change.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using an ethnographic method. The research data consist of 18 traditional Lampung songs originating from the Saibatin and Pepadun adat systems, obtained through the YouTube platform. Data were collected through documentation and non-participant observation of song lyrics, audio-visual performances, and their contextual presentation. Data analysis was conducted interpretatively through several stages, including lyric transcription, coding of cultural themes and symbols, and classification of representations of customary values and worldviews of Lampung society.

The analysis of cultural identity construction applies Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation and cultural identity, which conceptualizes identity as a discursive process constructed through representational practices. The songs are analyzed as cultural texts that represent systems of meaning, customary values, and social relations within Saibatin and Pepadun communities. This analytical framework is further strengthened by Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality, particularly the dialectical processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, to explain how cultural values are expressed in song lyrics, institutionalized as socially shared realities, and internalized as collective identities among Lampung society. The analysis is also reinforced by a symbolic anthropology approach (Geertz, 1973) to interpret symbolic meanings and cultural metaphors in song lyrics, as well as concepts of ethnic and cultural identity (Santoso, 2006; Koentjaraningrat, 2015) to explain the relationship between cultural elements and the formation of collective identity. The results of the analysis are synthesized to reveal patterns of cultural identity construction in Lampung traditional songs.

Table 1. List of Lampung Traditional Songs

No	Title	Composer/Vocalist	Genre	Language	Customary Origin
1	Khasan Mak Jadi	Zufli/Hila Hambala	Solo Guitar/Gambus	Dialect A	Saibatin
2	Tepik Tanggungan	Hila Hambala	Solo Guitar/Gambus	Dialect A	Saibatin
3	Lipang Lipangdang	A Romi HS/ Hila Hambala	Solo Guitar/Gambus	Dialect A	Saibatin
4	Lampung Sai Agung	A Roni HAS	Solo Guitar/Gambus	Dialect A	Saibatin
5	Kekalau	A Roni HS	Solo Guitar/Gambus	Dialect A	Saibatin
6	Saka Mak Tungga	Edi Pulampas	Gitar Gambus	Dialect A	Saibatin
7	Seminung	Anonim	Pop	Dialect A	Saibatin
8	Kacak Angkon Jak Totokh	Rusdy MU	Pop	Dialect A	Saibatin
9	Cakak Perahu Layar	Anonim	Dangdut Remix	Dialect A	Saibatin
10	Sanak Aguk	Supirman AS	Solo Guitar	Dialect O	Pepadun
11	Bekebun Kopi Lada	Supirman AS	Solo Guitar	Dialect O	Pepadun
12	Tani Mak Bekundeu	Supirman AS	Solo Guitar	Dialect O	Pepadun
13	Mak Lupo	Supirman AS	Solo Guitar	Dialect O	Pepadun
14	Wasiat Jak Lom Kubur	Supirman AS	Solo Guitar	Dialect O	Pepadun
15	Tanggohkeu	Supirman AS	Solo Guitar	Dialect O	Pepadun
16	Tanoh Lado	Fath Syahbudin/Andi Achmad	Pop/Dangdut	Dialect O	Pepadun
17	Pung Kelapi Kupung	Andi Achmad	Pop/Dangdut	Dialect O	Pepadun
18	Cangget Agung	Syaiful Anwar	Pop	Dialect O	Pepadun
19	Khasan Mak Jadi	Zufli/Hila Hambala	Solo Guitar/Gambus	Dialect A	Saibatin

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Elements of Lampung in Traditional Songs

Based on the analysis of the research data, it was found that the lyrics of Lampung traditional songs represent various cultural elements that live and develop within Lampung society. Referring to Koentjaraningrat's (2015) framework of cultural elements, the cultural components represented in these songs include the religious system, kinship and social organization, knowledge system, language, arts, livelihood system, as well as technology and material culture.

Music and traditional songs, as products of art and oral tradition, do not emerge in a cultural vacuum; rather, they represent the thoughts, experiences, and socio-cultural conditions of the communities that sustain them. Kistanto (2017:1) emphasizes that humans and culture are inseparable elements that mutually shape one another within the dynamics of life. Art, including traditional songs, constitutes a cultural product that embodies values, norms, and systems of meaning within society. In line with this view, Tylor (as cited in Ma'rufi & Ardi, 2021:17) defines culture as a complex whole encompassing knowledge, art, belief, law, customs, and habits acquired by humans as members of society.

As traditional cultural expressions, Lampung songs function not only as media for transmitting the regional language but also as vehicles for preserving and disseminating cultural values, philosophies of life, and the collective identity of Lampung society. Therefore, traditional songs can be understood as holistic representations of Lampung culture.

Religious System and Ritual Practices

Religious elements in Lampung traditional songs predominantly represent Islamic values. Several songs, such as *Khasan Mak Jadi* composed by Zufli and *Kumbang Debi* by Saleh Gunawan, explicitly mention the concept of faith (iman). Meanwhile, the song *Pung Kelapo Kupung* highlights the concepts of destiny and marriage as divine decrees, as reflected in the verse *Lamun kak takdir / Makko sai dapok cawo / Segalo jodoh / Dipegung sai kuaso*, which affirms the belief that marital destiny lies in God's authority. This religious representation aligns with Lampung oral literary traditions, such as *wawancan*, which consistently employ Islamic greetings and prayers as markers of the community's religious identity (Fakhrurozi, 2016).

Kinship System and Social Organization

The kinship system and social organization of Lampung society are represented through the relationship between the two main adat systems, namely Saibatin and Pepadun. The song *Sai Bumi Ruwa Jurai* by Andi Achmad emphasizes the importance of unity between coastal (Saibatin) communities and Pepadun within a single social entity. The expression *Pesisir rik Pepadun / Jadi sai dilom lamban* represents Lampung's motto as a region inhabited by two cultural adat systems.

Differences in kinship characteristics are also reflected, with Saibatin based on lineage, while Pepadun is more democratic and egalitarian. In addition, social relations such as *muli mekhanai* (harmonious relationships between young men and women) and the tradition of *angkon muwarei* (ritual adoption of kinship) are also represented, for example in the song *Kacak Angkon Jak Totokh* by Rusdy MU. These representations affirm that Lampung cultural identity is constructed upon values of kinship and social solidarity.

Knowledge System

The knowledge system of Lampung society in traditional songs is represented through the philosophy of *Piil Pesengiri*, which comprises four core values: *Juluk Adek*, *Nemui Nyimah*, *Nengah Nyappur*, and *Sakai Sambaian* (Ariyani, 2015). These values, both explicitly and implicitly, appear in song lyrics as ethical and moral guidelines for social life in Lampung society. *Piil Pesengiri* functions as a cultural strategy for maintaining dignity and identity amid social dynamics and the presence of migrants.

In addition, the knowledge system is also represented through references to the *Kaganga* script or *Had Lampung*, as found in the song *Tanoh Lado* by Fath Syahbudin. *Kaganga* is a traditional script that developed in southern Sumatra and has been used to write Lampung and Malay languages (Koentjaraningrat, 2015).

Language Element

Language in Lampung traditional songs is expressed through the use of Lampung language dialects A and O. The song lyrics employ poetic language with distinctive stylistic features, including metaphors and proverbs. Roveneldo (2019:138) states that figurative language facilitates the expression of thoughts and emotions so that meanings can be conveyed aesthetically. For example, a proverb in the song Mak Lupo teaches the value of accepting destiny and maintaining emotional resilience in facing life's challenges.

Arts

Artistic elements in Lampung songs are represented through references to traditional dances such as Bedana, Cangget Agung, Melinting, and Sigh Penguten, as well as the tradition of pantun. Songs such as Saka Mak Tungga and Seminung mention pantun as a medium of emotional and social expression. Pantun, also known as segata or adi-adi, is a form of Lampung poetry used in various customary events and youth social interactions (Ariyani & Revi, 2018).

Livelihood System

The livelihood system of Lampung society is represented through agrarian activities such as cultivating pepper, coffee, and cloves, as depicted in the songs Bekebun Kopi Lada, Tanoh Lado, and Sai Bumi Ruwa Jurai. In addition to farming, shifting cultivation (*huma*) is also mentioned in the song Seminung. These representations demonstrate the close relationship between Lampung society, nature, and traditional economic systems.

Technology and Material Culture

Elements of technology and material culture are reflected through references to the *lumbung* (granary) as a rice storage facility in the song Tepik Tanggungan by Hila Hambala. Furthermore, the song Cangget Agung by Syaiful Anwar mentions various traditional Lampung artifacts and symbols, such as the *sesat agung* traditional house, *kutomaro*, and *jepanada*. The representation of sailing boats in the song *Cakak Perahu Layar*, as well as traditional foods such as *seruit* and *tempoyak*, further enriches the portrayal of Lampung cultural identity.

The Construction of Lampung Cultural Identity in Traditional Songs

Based on the mapping of Lampung cultural elements in traditional song lyrics, it can be understood that songs function not merely as aesthetic expressions but also as an important medium in the process of constructing cultural identity in Lampung society. Cultural identity in this context is not perceived as fixed or essential, but as the result of ongoing social and cultural processes. This view is consistent with Stuart Hall's (1997) argument that cultural identity is constructed through practices of representation and discourse, including cultural texts such as songs.

Lampung traditional songs function as cultural texts that represent systems of meaning, customary values, and worldviews of Saibatin and Pepadun communities. The representation of Islamic religious values, kinship systems, the *Piil Pesenggiri* philosophy, regional language, arts, livelihood practices, as well as technology and material culture in song lyrics indicates that Lampung cultural identity is constructed through the presence of cultural symbols that are collectively recognized and interpreted. In this sense, songs do not merely reflect social reality, but actively shape how Lampung society understands and negotiates its cultural identity.

The process of constructing Lampung cultural identity through traditional songs can be explained using Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality, which emphasizes the dialectical relationship between externalization, objectivation, and internalization. At the stage of externalization, cultural values, lived experiences, and worldviews of Lampung society are expressed by song creators through lyrics and music. Elements such as religiosity, kinship solidarity, agrarian work ethics, and respect for *adat* and regional language constitute forms of externalized social and cultural experience embedded in song lyrics.

The next stage is objectivation, in which these cultural expressions gain social recognition and become institutionalized as shared realities. Lampung traditional songs that are performed in customary rituals, collective entertainment, or disseminated through digital media such as YouTube no longer belong solely to individual creators, but transform into symbols of collective cultural identity. At this stage, songs function as cultural markers that represent "Lampungness" and become

shared references in defining Lampung cultural identity, both at the local level and in broader public spheres.

Subsequently, at the stage of internalization, the cultural values that have been objectivated are reabsorbed by individuals and become part of their self-consciousness. Through listening to, singing, and appreciating Lampung traditional songs, individuals, particularly younger generations, internalize values of religiosity, social solidarity, respect for adat, and pride in the Lampung language and culture. This process demonstrates that traditional songs play a crucial role as a medium for transmitting cultural identity from one generation to the next, as emphasized in studies of oral tradition (Finnegan, 1992; Fakhrurozi, 2021).

From the perspective of symbolic anthropology (Geertz, 1973), Lampung traditional songs can be understood as systems of symbols that carry cultural meanings. Symbols such as traditional dances, customary houses, kinship systems, and material artifacts function not only as descriptions of culture but also as mechanisms for affirming identity. These symbols form a “web of meanings” through which Lampung society understands itself and its position within social and cultural structures.

Thus, the construction of Lampung cultural identity through traditional songs is a dynamic and continuous process. Cultural identity is not only reproduced through the preservation of traditional forms but is also negotiated through the transformation of songs into new contexts and media. Lampung traditional songs function simultaneously as representational media, vehicles for value transmission, and constructive instruments that sustain the continuity of Lampung cultural identity amid social change and the pressures of globalization.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Lampung traditional songs function not merely as aesthetic expressions but also as media for representing and constructing the cultural identity of Lampung society. The song lyrics represent various cultural elements, including religious systems, kinship and social organization, knowledge systems, language, arts, livelihood systems, as well as technology and material culture. These elements reflect the worldview, customary values, and social experiences of Saibatin and Pepadun communities, indicating that traditional songs can be understood as comprehensive representations of Lampung culture.

The construction of Lampung cultural identity through traditional songs occurs through the dialectical processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization as proposed by Berger and Luckmann. Within Stuart Hall’s theory of representation, traditional songs function as cultural texts that not only reflect social reality but also shape and negotiate meanings of cultural identity. The transformation of songs into new contexts and media, including digital platforms, does not diminish traditional values; rather, it creates opportunities for the preservation and revitalization of Lampung cultural identity amid social dynamics and the forces of globalization.

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