

Socio-Cultural Changes of Hananu Mate in the Death Song Bei Mate of The Tetun Tribe

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How to cite: Sanan, T.T., & Mulyana, A.R. (2025). Socio-Cultural Changes of Hananu Mate in the Death Song Bei Mate of The Tetun Tribe. *Gondang: Jurnal Seni dan Budaya*, Vol 9(2): Page. 493-503.

Article History : Received: May 23, 2025. Revised: Sep 21, 2025. Accepted: Dec 16, 2025

ABSTRACT

This study examines Hananu Mate , a traditional funeral song of the Tetun people of Timor, East Nusa Tenggara, within the context of the Bei Mate ceremony . As a form of oral expression, Hananu Mate not only expresses grief over the passing of a person but also contains the narrative of the deceased's life, social values, local spirituality, and the community's collective hopes. This study aims to uncover the narrative in Hananu Mate lyrics and the socio-cultural dynamics of the Tetun community as reflected in the changing form and meaning of the song in the modern era. This study uses a narrative approach based on Walter Fisher's narrative theory, which positions narrative as a primary form of human communication and a means of conveying collective values and meanings. In addition, social change theory as explained by Anthony Giddens and Inglehart-Baker is used to understand the cultural dynamics and transition of Hananu Mate's meaning in the context of modernizing Tetun society. The research method used is a qualitative approach with narrative ethnography techniques, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and lyrical text analysis. The findings indicate that Hananu Mate has a distinctive elegiac narrative structure, involving the flow of introducing the deceased, depicting social relations, spiritual reflection, and closing with hopes for future generations. This research confirms that Hananu Mate is a dynamic community narrative, continually transforming in response to modernization, education, and technological developments. Despite changes in form and meaning, this song continues to play a vital role in maintaining the cultural identity and continuity of Tetun social values.

KEYWORDS

Hananu Mate
Tetun Tribe
Socio-cultural change
Death Song
Bei Mate

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INTRODUCTION

Death rituals are universal events faced by all humans, but how communities interpret them depends heavily on their cultural values, belief systems, and social structures. In many societies, death rituals serve not only as a means of honoring the deceased but also as a means of affirming the community's social and spiritual values. One important element often present in death rites is the death song, a form of oral and musical expression that serves as an introduction, a tribute, and a symbolic bridge between the living world and the spirit world.

Ethnomusicological studies show that death songs are present as an integral part in various traditions around the world, from mourning songs in West Africa, dirges in ancient Greek culture, to *tanis-mate* and *Hananu Mate* in Timor (Holon et al., 2018; Costa, 2020). These songs are not only emotional expressions, but also contain a narrative of a person's life, build social structures, and affirm the community's spiritual relationship to death. In the context of indigenous communities, death songs also serve as a medium for transmitting

collective cultural and historical values that are passed down across generations (Martins, 2020).

Ethnomusicological studies have also demonstrated the importance of funeral songs in other Indonesian cultures, such as the Toraja and Batak. In Toraja, funeral songs are known as 'pangngae,' which involve the use of the voice in long, emotional melodies, conveying respect for ancestral spirits and encouraging the family to remember the deceased (Dewi, 2016). Similarly, in the Batak tradition, mourning songs such as 'horja' are used to express loss and convey poignant spiritual messages about life and death (Sitorus, 2017). These two traditions, despite having their own unique lyrical patterns and musical structures, serve as a powerful medium of cultural communication between the living and the dead, as well as maintaining the continuity of ancestral values in the social life of the community.

Bei Mate tradition in the Tetun community on Timor Island is a very unique death rite, and the *Hananu Mate* song is the center of expression in this ceremony. This song depicts the narrative of the deceased's life, his social relationships, and the spiritual hopes of the community. However, this song does not exist in a cultural vacuum. Similar practices are also found in the Atoni community with the nifun rite, or the Lio community in ngilo and wai witi (Ximenes, 2021), showing that the presence of singing in death rites is a widespread phenomenon in various indigenous communities of Timor and Flores. However, changing times bring serious challenges to the sustainability of this tradition. Modernization, globalization, and the entry of religious institutions have shifted the meaning and form of death songs (Bere, 2023). The younger generation is increasingly less likely to inherit these songs directly, and in some places they are even marginalized because they are considered irrelevant to the values of modern life. Therefore, it is important to examine the *Hananu Mate* songs not only as cultural artifacts, but as living and continually transforming collective narratives.

Walter Fisher's theory emphasizes that humans are essentially homo narrans - creatures who tell stories. Fisher believed that humans understand the world around them through stories. In this emphasis, the story told by Fisher includes cultural rituals associated with the *Hananu Mate* song of the Tetun tribe. Fisher's narrative theory is then used as a knife to dissect *Hananu Mate* not only as a ritual communication but also as a way for the Tetun community to transmit ancestral values.

Hananu Mate, which is present as a form of symbolic communication, becomes serious when it experiences a shift in meaning that develops in line with the times. The changes in the form and meaning of the *Hananu Mate* song become a perspective on the problems in the socio-cultural dynamics of the Tetun people. This problem is certainly a concern and a serious matter that must be studied so that it is not sustainable, considering that this change has occurred due to the developments of the times followed by the younger generation of the Tetun tribe. The social changes that occurred influenced the meaning and value of the *Bei Mate* death song, becoming an important basis for understanding how the tradition can survive, change, or even be threatened with extinction. Through this research, the researcher tries to analyze the socio-cultural dynamics of the Tetun tribe which are reflected through changes in the form, function and meaning of the *Hananu Mate* song.

The aim of this study is to reveal how *Hananu Mate's* narrative analysis study uses theory. Walter Fisher, and the socio-cultural dynamics of the Tetun community. This research is expected to contribute to the scientific fields of cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, and narrative studies. Furthermore, it also serves as a concrete effort to preserve local culture rich in meaning and value, as well as to strengthen the cultural identity of the Tetun community amidst global change.

METHOD

The approach in the form of ethnographic-based narrative analysis was chosen to research the phenomenon of death songs because it is able to capture the dynamics of cultural practices in a contextual and holistic manner. This approach allows researchers to understand *Hananu Mate* not only as a text but also as a social practice that lives in everyday community interactions. This approach also emphasizes the importance of direct participation and observation of the chanting process, performance, and the symbolic meanings that accompany the chanting (Spradley, 1980; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

This type of research is qualitative research. This study aims to deeply understand the meaning, structure, and function of the narrative of the death song in the *Bei Mate tradition* of the Tetun people in Timor, as well as the socio-cultural changes that accompany it. This narrative analysis approach is used because it allows researchers to directly delve into the cultural context by interacting intensively with the community being studied (Spradley, 1980).

This research was conducted in Weklekat Village, an area located in Lakanmau Village, Lasiolat District, Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Weklekat is one of the areas that still maintains traditional cultural practices, including the *Bei Mate tradition*, the main focus of this research. Geographically, this location is located north of Mount Lakaan and west of Mauhalek waterfall, an hour and thirty minutes by road from Atambua, the capital of Belu Regency. Access to Lianain Hamlet is relatively challenging due to road conditions and limited public transportation, but this area remains a culturally significant place for the Tetun people.

The primary data in this study consists of the lyrics of the *Hananu Mate song* and a sound recording of the song, which is an integral part of the death traditions of the Tetun people in Lianain Hamlet, Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The *Hananu Mate* song is a form of oral narrative used in death ceremonies (*Bei Mate*) as a means of conveying spiritual messages, cultural values, and social reflections on life and death. Therefore, the text (lyrics) and context (voice and delivery) of this song are the primary data sources for analysis.

Data collection in this study was carried out qualitatively through several complementary main techniques, to obtain a comprehensive picture of the narrative of death in the *Hananu Mate song in the Bei Mate tradition* of the Tetun Tribe in Weklekat, Belu Regency. These techniques include recording the singing voice, writing and translating the lyrics, transcribing the lyrics into sheet music, documenting the lyrics, and conducting in-depth interviews with culturally and socially relevant informants. The interviews were conducted openly and *in-depth with 7 (seven) key informants*, consisting of 4 (four) women and 3 (three) men, who were directly involved in the death or had cultural authority. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the meaning of the song's lyrics, the context of the singing, and the social and spiritual significance of *Hananu Mate*.

Data validity in qualitative research is an effort to ensure that the data collected and used in the analysis truly depicts the reality being studied. In the context of this research, entitled "*Hananu Mate : Community Narratives in Death Songs in the Bei Mate Tradition of the Tetun Tribe*," data validity is a very important aspect considering that the data collected is narrative, symbolic, and contains high cultural values. Therefore, the researcher implemented various data validation strategies to ensure that the data obtained is valid, credible, and can be scientifically accounted for. First, credibility validity is achieved through source triangulation. Researchers interviewed several informants from various backgrounds. Second, researchers implemented dependability validity, ensuring the

consistency of the research process by keeping detailed records of all stages of data collection and analysis. Third, data confirmation (*confirmability*) was carried out by involving key informants in a member-checking process. Researchers provided the results of data interpretation back to the informants, especially to ensure that the written narratives, symbolic meanings, and lyric translations aligned with the authentic experiences and perspectives of the community.

The Data Analysis Technique in the research “*Hananu Mate* : Community Narrative in Death Songs in the *Bei Mate Tradition* of the Tetun Tribe” was designed to reveal the narrative meaning and socio-cultural dynamics contained in the *Hananu Mate death song*. Due to the qualitative nature of the research, data analysis was conducted descriptively-*interpretively* with an ethnographic approach and using Walter Fisher’s narrative theory and social change theory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Bei Mate is one of the most important and sacred death rituals in the traditions of the Tetun people in the Timor region, East Nusa Tenggara. Conceptually, *Bei Mate* is understood not only as a form of final respect for the deceased, but also as a spiritual transition ceremony that escorts the deceased's spirit to the realm of the ancestors. In Tetun, the term *Bei Mate* can be interpreted as "accepting death" or "welcoming the dead," but practically, *Bei Mate* encompasses a series of complex and symbolic traditional processes, from the moment of death to the funeral and post-funeral rituals. This tradition represents how the Tetun community treats death not as an end, but as a transition to a higher spiritual dimension and as a crucial moment for strengthening social relations within the community (Bere, 2021).

The Bei Mate ritual typically takes place immediately after a person is pronounced dead. The immediate family and close relatives immediately begin the process of laying out the body in the funeral home, which also serves as the center of the ceremony. This home is not just a physical location, but rather a genealogical symbol representing the identity of the extended family and the bonds between clans, or *uma*. This is where the entire *Bei Mate* process takes place, from welcoming mourners and singing mourning songs to the exchange of *belis* (gifts) or symbolic items between families. The atmosphere of the funeral home turns into a collective space full of spiritual and symbolic meaning, a place where communication takes place between the living and the dead. In its implementation, *Bei Mate* involves various parties who have different social and cultural roles. Attendance is not only mandatory for the deceased's immediate family, but also includes the entire network of relatives from the father's and mother's side, traditional elders (*lia nain*), and members of the traditional community who have genealogical or historical ties. Each group brings traditional donations, such as livestock, betel and areca nuts, woven cloth, or other symbolic offerings as a form of participation and solidarity. The traditional elders are tasked with leading the ritual, providing advice, and ensuring that every step is carried out in accordance with customary rules and the spiritual beliefs of the community. In this case, *Bei Mate* becomes an arena for social reconciliation, strengthening bonds between families, and cementing the social structure of the community as a whole.

Bei Mate ceremony begins at the funeral home when the deceased is pronounced dead. It then continues with the announcement of the death to all relatives and the community through traditional ceremonies. Neighbors in attendance help prepare the funeral home, including interior decorations such as the preparation of tetun cloth as a base for the coffin. The living room is decorated with purple and white fabrics, and flowers are displayed as a symbol of respect.

After the body is laid out, family, neighbors, and representatives from various ethnic groups will come to pay their last respects. They bring *their share*, namely offerings or donations that usually include money, traditional cloth, betel nut, or even livestock. Cries from family members, especially the deceased's children, will be heard as an expression of deep grief. These cries are then joined by other mourners, who chant laments (oral narratives) describing the deceased's life during his lifetime.

During the period of lying in state, family members have an obligation to guard the body continuously, starting from the first day to the third day. Every guest or mourner who comes to the funeral home usually sings a funeral hymn as part of the procession of respect for the deceased. This song is a form of expression of grief that is ritualistic and contains spiritual meaning, which has become part of the local cultural tradition. The song was greeted by the deceased's family with great emotion as a symbol of acceptance of the sympathy and solidarity given.

The function of organizing *Bei Mate* is very broad, covering spiritual, social, cultural and psychological aspects. From a spiritual perspective, this ritual aims to ensure that the spirit of the deceased is properly received in the spirit realm and does not cause disturbance in the human world. Socially, *Bei Mate* serves as a means of strengthening social solidarity, mitigating family conflict, and strengthening cohesion among members of the indigenous community. From a cultural perspective, this ritual plays a role in maintaining the continuity of traditions, social norms, and noble values of the Tetun people, which have been passed down through generations. Psychologically, this ritual provides a shared space for families and communities to express grief, internalize loss, and manage collective trauma through structured customary mechanisms.

In the *Bei Mate tradition* of the Tetun people, one of the most central and inseparable elements of the death rite is the presence of *Hananu Mate*, a death song sung orally by family and community members. *Hananu Mate* serves not only as an expression of grief but also as an oral narrative that conveys the life story of the deceased, reflects social values, and articulates the spiritual relationship between the living and the dead. Through this song, the community not only expresses a sense of loss, but also reaffirms the social structure and collective meaning of death as part of the cycle of life.

Hananu Mate is structurally and functionally a complex form of communication. It combines verbal, musical, and symbolic aspects into a meaningful cultural performance. The lyrics in these songs are typically elegiac, conveying personal stories about the deceased, such as their character, social roles, and emotional relationships. In many cases, these songs are improvised based on the situation and context, so they are flexible but still maintain certain thematic forms. It is this emphasis on the spontaneous and participatory elements that makes *Hananu Mate* a unique form of communal narrative—told not to be heard aesthetically, but to be felt emotionally and interpreted collectively.

This tradition prioritizes the role of women in chanting *Hananu Mate*. The Tetun tribe makes women play an important role in guarding the coffin, tending the kitchen, and crying for the deceased. They are responsible for collective emotional expression in death ceremonies, while men are involved in discussing customary matters, belis, burial processions, and other matters related to death rites.

Furthermore, *Hananu Mate* also functions as a cultural pedagogical instrument. It conveys life values such as loyalty, sincerity, respect for parents and ancestors, and the importance of social relations within society. The lyrics of these songs often contain moral and spiritual messages, both personal and collective. In these songs, death is not positioned as the end of life, but as a transition to a higher realm where the deceased's spirit becomes

part of the ancestral community. Therefore, singing *Hananu Mate* is not only an act of mourning, but also a form of prayer, spiritual communication, and a re-formation of the community's collective memory of the deceased.

As a collective narrative, *Hananu Mate* is not only constructed by individual singers, but also by the entire social and cultural structure that supports them. From a narrative perspective, as stated by Walter Fisher (1984), this song has a harmony of story structure (*coherence*) and a suitability of values with community experience (*fidelity*). The Tetun people accept this song as a representation of valid and true values, because it faithfully depicts their worldview and beliefs about death, life, and relations between generations. Within this framework, *Hananu Mate* becomes a kind of living text that transmits social and spiritual meanings from generation to generation, as well as being a means of building and maintaining a collective cultural identity.

However, in the context of a society experiencing social transformation due to modernization, *Hananu Mate* began to experience a shift in meaning and form. The influence of religion, formal education, and modern media has caused the younger generation to no longer understand the structure or meaning of this song in depth. In some communities, these songs have begun to be formalized, recorded, or even shortened to adapt to the times and busyness of modern society. Even so, the presence of *Hananu Mate* still shows vitality as part of the cultural identity of the Tetun people which has not disappeared, even though it continues to be negotiated. Thus, *Hananu Mate* is not just a song in the musical sense, but is a living cultural text—containing a narrative structure, symbolic meaning, and performative power that shapes the collective experience of the Tetun people in facing death. It is a form of emotional, spiritual, and social communication that encapsulates the entire human experience of a community in one form of expression: the sound of grief that echoes from the world of the living to the world of the eternal.

1. Narrative Analysis of *Hananu Mate* Based on Walter Fisher's *Theory*

Hananu Mate's narrative analysis based on Walter Fisher's theory provides an in-depth approach to understanding death songs as communication practices containing collective cultural narratives. Fisher's narrative theory holds that humans are *homo narrans*—creatures who understand the world through stories. Within this framework, *Hananu Mate* can be analyzed as a collective narrative that constructs story logic through *coherence* and *fidelity*—consistency and conformity with cultural values (Fisher, 1984). Through its lyrics, *Hananu Mate* not only reflects individual life, but also reflects community values, moral expectations, and spiritual beliefs internalized in Tetun society (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008; Riessman, 2008). According to Fisher (1984), all forms of communication can be seen as narratives, whether they are everyday conversations, political speeches, news, or cultural rituals. Fisher proposed two main concepts in evaluating narratives: *coherence* and *fidelity*. *Coherence* refers to how well a story is internally structured—whether it makes sense, is consistent, and is free from contradictions. Meanwhile, narrative *fidelity* refers to whether the story is consistent with the values and experiences that the listener or audience holds true.

Hananu Mate is not just a series of words arranged in a song, but rather a form of communication that constructs meaning about life and death as believed by the Tetun community. Fisher put forward two main concepts in evaluating narratives, namely *coherence* and *fidelity*. *Coherence* refers to the internal structure of the narrative—whether the song's storyline is logical, consistent, and understandable within the framework of the community's cultural values. In *Hananu Mate*, coherence is evident through the narrative

structure, which begins with the introduction of characters (usually by referring to relationships such as "Mama," "Bapa," or "Anak"), continues with expressions of grief and longing, reflections on the goodness of life, and concludes with a prayer or spiritual hope. This plot is not arbitrarily constructed, but rather follows an emotional and cultural logic that has been internalized over generations. In this way, the structure becomes recognizable and acceptable to all members of the community.

Meanwhile, narrative *fidelity* relates to the extent to which the story conveyed aligns with the moral values and beliefs held by the audience or community. In *Hananu Mate*, *Fidelity* is evident through the lyrics, which reflect important values of the Tetun people, such as respect for ancestors, affection for family, social solidarity, and acceptance of death as part of the cosmic cycle. When the lyrics convey a request that the deceased not leave quietly or that their spirit meet with ancestors who have already passed, it is not simply an expression of longing but also a reflection of a deep belief in the ongoing relationship between the living and the dead. These values strengthen the narrative's *fidelity* because they touch on and affirm beliefs that are inherent in the community's collective consciousness.

Furthermore, Fisher emphasized that the power of a narrative lies not in how rational it sounds according to formal logic, but in the extent to which it taps into the logic of shared experience and values. *Hananu Mate*, for all its simplicity as a song of mourning, possesses great narrative power because it is rooted in the community's lived experiences: of loss, love, and hope. The narratives in *Hananu Mate* are not only understood intellectually but also felt emotionally by the listener. That is why *Hananu Mate* remains a powerful form of cultural communication, even as Tetun society begins to experience a shift in values due to modernization and globalization.

Within Fisher's theoretical framework, *Hananu Mate* can also be seen as an arena for collective identity negotiation. When the Tetun community sings *Hananu Mate*, *they are essentially affirming who they are, where they come from, and what values they wish to pass on to the next generation*. The narrative contained in this song strengthens a sense of belonging to tradition, maintains spiritual continuity, and strengthens social bonds. Even when the form and context of the song undergo changes, for example with the presence of digital documentation or the influence of modern music, the narrative essence of *Hananu Mate* remains intact because its underlying values are still considered true, relevant, and meaningful. Using Walter Fisher's theory, research into *Hananu Mate* goes beyond mere descriptive analysis but reaches a deeper meaning: that every verse, pause, and intonation in the song is part of a collective narrative that revives the memories, values, and spirituality of the Tetun people. This analysis reveals that the power of *Hananu Mate* lies not only in its aesthetic beauty, but in its ability to unite emotions, beliefs, and social solidarity through a narrative structure that is coherent and faithful to cultural reality. The musical notation for the song *Hananu Mate* can be seen in the following image:



Figure 1. *Hananu Mate's* singing block notation .

2. Social and Cultural Changes in Society

Hananu Mate is not a static text. Rather, it is a living form of cultural expression, continually negotiating meaning and form along with social, generational, and value changes within Tetun society. In the context of modernity, *Hananu Mate* reflects the dynamics of society through transformations in pronunciation, language use, social functions, and even preservation methods . Meanwhile, Social Change Theory is used to understand the dynamics occurring in the current practice of *Hananu Mate* . Globalization, migration, education, and the dominance of major religions have created pressure for the continuation of this practice. With a social change perspective, researchers can trace how *Hananu Mate* experiences transformation, resistance, or even rearticulation in the context of a constantly changing society (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Appadurai, 1996). This theory also helps explain how *Hananu Mate* functions as a space for negotiation between traditional values and contemporary realities.

Changes in the Form of Delivery of *Hananu Mate*

Field findings indicate that the form of delivery of *Hananu Mate* is no longer completely spontaneous as in traditional practice. In the past, these songs were sung live by family members or traditional elders during ceremonies, often without a script or special practice. However, now, some Tetun people, especially in Weklekat and the surrounding area, have implemented a semi-structured model in delivering *Hananu Mate* . For example, as conveyed by the source Ba'i Agus (66 years old), several singers had prepared the lyrics in advance and practiced certain rhythmic patterns so that they would be more harmonious when sung together.

These changes reflect Kingsley Davis's theory of shifting social structures and functions. The expressive-spiritual function which was previously strongly attached to the form of singing, is now starting to be adapted to the function of performance or cultural representation. The singer not only voices grief but also builds collective harmony within the ceremonial atmosphere, even incorporating it into the aesthetics of the death ritual. Therefore, it can be said that the form of *Hananu Mate* delivery has undergone a re-ritualization, moving from spontaneity to organization, in line with changes in the Tetun social structure, which is increasingly open to formality and musical aesthetics.

Language Shift and Youth Access

In an interview with Thres Mutik (39 years old) and Ovi Lottu (37 years old), it was discovered that the younger generation is starting to experience a disconnect with the classical Tetun language used in the lyrics of *Hananu Mate*. Some singers even find it difficult to understand the meaning of certain words, especially when delivered in an old style or metaphorically. As a result, there is a simplification in the choice of diction and translation of some lyrics into Indonesian so that it can be understood and accepted by the entire family or audience present.

This condition aligns with William F. Ogburn's concept of cultural lag, where non-material elements such as language and spirituality do not develop as rapidly as material elements such as education and media. In the Tetun community, the dominance of formal education and the use of Indonesian have accelerated the imbalance in the preservation of the Tetun spoken language. Therefore, the simplification of the lyrics can be seen as an adaptive effort to maintain *Hananu Mate* amidst the crisis in local language transmission.

Reinterpretation of Meaning: From Sacred to Representative

The transformation of the meaning of *Hananu Mate* also emerged significantly in field observations. For example, *Hananu Mate*, which was previously only sung in mourning situations, is now sometimes sung at cultural events, seminars, or documented on video. The recording and distribution of lyrics as conducted by researchers in sound documentation and transcription of musical notation shows that society is starting to open up space for *Hananu Mate* to appear in cultural representation spaces. This reflects the re-articulation of meaning as explained in Anthony Giddens' theory through reflective structuration. People no longer see *Hananu Mate* solely as a medium for spiritual communication with spirits, but also as a means of framing a collective identity that can be introduced outside the community. This is a form of cultural agency, in which the community renegotiates *Hananu Mate's* role within the wider social landscape. Therefore, this song experienced a transition in value, from spiritual meaning to a symbol of cultural identity.

Technology and Digitalization: Consequences of Global Cultural Flow

Researchers noted that there was encouragement from several young generations to record *Hananu Mate* and share it through social media as a form of preservation. Although this documentation has not been carried out on a large scale, this trend shows the symptoms of global *cultural flow* as put forward by Arjun Appadurai. Through digital media, *Hananu Mate* moves from closed sacred spaces to open public spaces, and from inter-world communication to inter-generational and inter-community communication.

However, this transformation did not occur without resistance. Resource person Ba'i Ose (69 years old) expressed concern that public documentation could diminish the sacred aura of this song. This highlights an internal tension within the community: between preservation through adaptation and the fear of losing meaning within spiritual practices. Therefore, the digitization of *Hananu Mate* needs to be balanced with an ethnographic understanding that respects the symbolic meaning and traditional context in which this song was born and developed.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that *Hananu Mate* is not merely a ritual lament within the Bei Mate tradition of the Tetun people, but a complex and living narrative system that articulates collective memory, moral values, spiritual beliefs, and social relations surrounding death. Through a narrative-ethnographic approach grounded in Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm, this research confirms that *Hananu Mate* operates as a form of communal storytelling whose coherence and fidelity are deeply embedded in Tetun cosmology and lived experience. The song's narrative structure—ranging from the introduction of the deceased, reflection on social relationships, spiritual mediation, to intergenerational hopes—reveals how death is culturally framed as a meaningful transition rather than an end.

The findings further indicate that *Hananu Mate* plays a vital role in maintaining social cohesion and cultural continuity. Functioning simultaneously as an emotional outlet, a spiritual prayer, and a pedagogical medium, the song reinforces values such as respect for ancestors, kinship solidarity, sincerity, and acceptance of life's cyclical nature. The prominence of women as primary performers highlights the gendered distribution of emotional and ritual labor within Tetun society, underscoring the song's role in shaping communal affect and social balance during moments of loss.

At the same time, this study reveals that *Hananu Mate* is undergoing significant socio-cultural transformation. Influenced by modernization, formal education, religious discourse, and digital technology, the song has experienced shifts in language use, modes of delivery, and contextual meaning. These changes reflect broader processes of cultural negotiation rather than simple decline. While the movement toward semi-structured performance, linguistic simplification, and digital documentation may risk diminishing the song's sacred aura, they also represent adaptive strategies aimed at cultural survival in a rapidly changing social environment. In this sense, *Hananu Mate* exemplifies a dynamic tradition that continuously rearticulates its relevance amid shifting generational values.

The implications of this research emphasize the urgency of cultural transmission and critical preservation efforts. Without meaningful engagement of younger generations—particularly through education, contextual documentation, and culturally sensitive revitalization strategies—the narrative depth and ethical values embedded in *Hananu Mate* risk being reduced to mere symbolic representation. Therefore, preservation should not be limited to archiving or performance display, but must involve sustained community-based dialogue that respects ritual contexts and local epistemologies.

In conclusion, *Hananu Mate* stands as a powerful testament to the Tetun people's narrative intelligence and cultural resilience. As a living cultural text, it continues to mediate between past and present, the living and the dead, tradition and modernity. Recognizing and supporting this narrative vitality is essential not only for safeguarding Tetun cultural identity, but also for enriching broader discussions in ethnomusicology, narrative studies, and the anthropology of death.

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