

Oral Ecologies of Papua: Myth, Mantra, and Indigenous Governance

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Abstract. This article examines Papuan oral traditions as biocultural archives in which myths, mantras, laments, origin narratives, and print-mediated Indigenous stories regulate relations among humans, ancestors, forests, rivers, animals, bodies, and customary authority. Using a curated 34-record corpus on local wisdom and oral traditions from Moy/Moi, Bira/Inanwatan, Waropen, Tobati, Teminabuan, Kanum Sota, Asmat, Dani, Marind, Sentani, and broader Papuan communities, the study combines qualitative content analysis with close cultural-pragmatic reading. The analysis shows that 30 records remain primarily oral, three are print-mediated, and one exists as mixed oral-written documentation. Two genre clusters dominate the corpus: myth/sacred origin narratives and ritual speech/chant/lament, each with 12 records. Rather than treating oral literature as moral ornament, the article argues that Papuan verbal traditions operate as ecological jurisprudence, therapeutic semiotics, identity law, and gendered critique. The findings identify four interlocking mechanisms: place-based prohibition, ancestral legitimation, ritual repair, and mediated Indigenous modernity. The article contributes a data-grounded model of Papuan oral ecologies that links language, cultural memory, environmental ethics, and Indigenous governance.

Keywords: Papuan oral literature; Indigenous knowledge; ecological jurisprudence; ritual speech; local wisdom; cultural pragmatics; oral ecologies



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1. Introduction

Papua is often represented through biodiversity, remoteness, or political marginality, yet the corpus analyzed in this article suggests another interpretive entry point: oral tradition as a system of ecological and social intelligence. Myths of mountains, rivers, birds, sago, shells, spirits, and clan origins do not merely preserve attractive folklore. They encode rules for living with forests, managing water, honoring ancestors, restraining desire, healing vulnerable bodies, and legitimating collective identity. In this sense, Papuan oral literature is not simply a residual object of cultural memory; it is a mode of Indigenous governance. This argument resonates with oral-tradition scholarship that treats verbal art as socially consequential performance rather than inert text (Bauman 1977; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Finnegan 2012), and with Indigenous studies that positions local knowledge as relational, place-based, and inseparable from land, language, and ethical responsibility (Basso 1996; Berkes 2018; Kimmerer 2013; Smith 2021).

The urgency of such an approach is heightened by current debates on biocultural diversity, environmental humanities, intangible cultural heritage, and language endangerment. Recent discussions by UNESCO and IPBES emphasize that

ecological knowledge is embedded in Indigenous languages, customary practices, and intergenerational transmission, while climate change, extractive development, and displacement threaten not only ecosystems but also the cultural vocabularies through which communities know those ecosystems (UNESCO 2003; IPBES 2022; UNESCO 2024). In Papua, where many communities organize social identity through clan, territory, taboo, ritual, and ancestral memory, the loss of oral traditions would therefore mean more than the disappearance of stories. It would weaken local mechanisms for environmental care, moral education, conflict regulation, and cultural self-description. Studies of Moy oral literature, Papua folk narratives, and Papuan ecological wisdom already indicate that oral literature can function as environmental instruction, social law, and pedagogical repertoire (Sriyono 2014; Sukmawan 2017; Santoso 2025).

The data used in this article consist of 34 records from a workbook on local wisdom and oral traditions among Papuan communities. The entries cover Moy/Moi, Bira/Inanwatan, Waropen, Tobati, Teminabuan, Kanum Sota, Asmat, Dani, Marind, Sentani, and general Papuan mythological traditions. Each record contains a community label, story or tradition title, oral-literary category, local wisdom or character-education value, medium of transmission, social function, cultural symbol, and source index. The corpus includes myths, legends, mantras, ritual songs, laments, linguistic knowledge, totemic traditions, ecological narratives, and print-mediated Indigenous literary works. This internal diversity makes it possible to avoid a single-purpose reading. The corpus is neither only environmental, only ritual, nor only pedagogic; it is a layered archive that connects ecological care, ancestral authority, body protection, gendered struggle, and linguistic identity.

This article asks three questions. First, what kinds of oral and print-mediated forms structure the corpus, and how do they distribute cultural authority across communities and media? Second, how do selected traditions transform place, body, animal, ancestor, and material object into normative signs? Third, what model of Papuan oral ecology emerges when the corpus is read through both data structure and close textual analysis? The study does not claim to represent the totality of Papuan cultures. Papua contains hundreds of linguistic and cultural communities, and a 34-record corpus cannot exhaust that diversity. Instead, the article develops a careful, data-grounded argument: within this curated dataset, oral tradition operates as a cultural technology that teaches humans how to inhabit relational worlds without reducing land, animals, ancestors, or ritual words to passive objects.

The contribution is methodological and theoretical. Methodologically, the article moves beyond the listing of local wisdom values by combining corpus diagnosis, evidence clustering, and interpretive close reading. The results section is intentionally organized as a sequence of analytic dossiers rather than as a repetitive series of frequency tables. Theoretically, it proposes the concept of oral ecology: a verbal-cultural system in which narrative, ritual speech, song, taboo, and symbol coordinate relationships among social actors and more-than-human environments. This concept builds on cultural pragmatics, ecological humanities, and Indigenous knowledge studies (Duranti 1997; Hanks 1996; Ingold 2000; DeLoughrey 2019;

Whyte 2018). It also addresses an educational problem: if local wisdom is placed in curricula merely as moral content, its ecological and political complexity may be flattened. A stronger approach reads Papuan oral traditions as intellectual systems that deserve analytical, ethical, and pedagogical seriousness.

2. Method

The study uses a documentary corpus design with qualitative content analysis and cultural-pragmatic interpretation. The primary dataset is a 34-record workbook on local wisdom and oral traditions among Papuan communities. The analytical unit is the individual tradition record, not the entire ethnic tradition from which a record was drawn. This distinction is crucial because the corpus is curated and secondary: it compiles references to traditions, values, functions, and symbols from different sources. The analysis therefore treats the dataset as an evidence map rather than as a complete ethnographic archive. This posture follows qualitative content-analysis principles that require explicit coding, attention to context, and cautious interpretation when working with documentary sources (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Schreier 2012; Krippendorff 2018; Saldaña 2021).

The first analytic step was corpus auditing. Each entry was checked for community label, genre category, medium, social function, and symbolic element. No row was removed because all 34 records contained interpretable information. The second step was genre clustering. The original categories were preserved in the article, but they were also grouped into broader analytical clusters: myth and sacred origin narrative; ritual speech, chant, and lament; legend and folk narrative; print-mediated Indigenous narrative; customary ecological knowledge; traditional belief or spiritual technology; and language-system/linguistic heritage. The third step was interpretive clustering by cultural work, especially ecological regulation, ritual repair, identity legitimation, social ethics, and gendered critique.

The fourth step was close reading. Instead of treating every record with equal narrative expansion, the analysis selected dense evidence nodes: the Moy/Moi ecology of Cycloop, sago, cenderawasih, and shell communication; the Bira/Inanwatan cluster of mantras, sea ritual, and lament; the Waropen and Tobati traditions of death, leadership, and social regulation; the Teminabuan story of the Kohoin River; and print-mediated narratives involving Asmat, Dani, and Marind social worlds. Representative records were selected after the audit so that the interpretation remained accountable to corpus structure rather than to anecdotal preference. This procedure is consistent with recent calls for oral-tradition research to combine local textual specificity with wider theoretical interpretation (Ramli et al. 2024; Syahputera 2024).

The analysis remains conservative. It does not claim that every Papuan tradition shares the same worldview, nor does it reduce Indigenous knowledge to environmental management. Some records center ecological restraint, others ritual healing, gendered suffering, linguistic identity, clan legitimacy, or mourning. The article therefore avoids a single-value model and reads the corpus as a plural field of oral ecology. This field is shaped by recurring relations: human-land, human-animal, human-ancestor, body-spirit, clan-territory, woman-adat, and language-identity. The

strength of the analysis lies not in numerical scale but in the density of relational evidence across genre, function, symbol, and medium.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Corpus architecture: oral tradition as layered cultural infrastructure

The corpus consists of 34 records, but its analytical value is not determined only by size. Its strength lies in the density of metadata attached to each record: community, genre, medium, social function, symbolic element, and value orientation. Thirty records are explicitly oral, three are print-mediated, and one combines oral and written documentation. This distribution shows that the corpus is anchored in oral transmission while also registering the entry of Papuan Indigenous worlds into written and novelistic mediation. Such a configuration is important for contemporary cultural studies because oral traditions do not disappear when they enter writing; rather, they are reframed, translated, and sometimes politicized through new literary forms (Ong 1982; Vansina 1985; Finnegan 2012).

The genre profile is especially revealing. Myth and sacred origin narrative account for 12 records, while ritual speech, chant, and lament also account for 12 records. Legends and folk narratives account for three records, print-mediated Indigenous narratives for three, customary ecological knowledge for two, and single records represent traditional belief/spiritual technology and linguistic heritage. This architecture suggests two dominant modes of cultural work. First, mythic narration explains why places, animals, plants, rivers, and clans matter. Second, ritual speech acts upon bodies, danger, illness, death, and the sea. Together, these modes show that Papuan oral tradition is both explanatory and performative: it tells how the world came to be and intervenes in how the world should continue.

Table 1. Corpus architecture and evidentiary layers

Analytical layer	Corpus evidence	Records	Interpretive consequence
Medium	Lisan	30	The corpus is primarily structured by face-to-face transmission, performance, and community memory.
Medium	Tulis / print-mediated	3	Indigenous worlds enter written literary critique, especially around gender, education, and social isolation.
Medium	Lisan dan tulis	1	Documentation mediates a general Papuan mythological repertoire.
Genre cluster	Myth and sacred origin narrative	12	Places, animals, ancestors, and clans become sources of authority and environmental orientation.
Genre cluster	Ritual speech, chant, and lament	12	Words are not merely representational; they heal, protect, mourn, and regulate embodied vulnerability.
Genre cluster	Legend / folk narrative	3	Social ethics are transmitted through narrative causality and remembered community events.

Analytical layer	Corpus evidence	Records	Interpretive consequence
Genre cluster	Print-mediated narrative	Indigenous 3	Oral worlds are reframed through the novel and short-story anthology as critique of modernity and patriarchy.
Community profile	Bira/Inanwatan and Moy/Moi clusters	23	The corpus is strongest where ritual speech and ecological myths are most densely documented.

The table summarizes the internal evidentiary structure of the 34-record corpus. It is not used to rank communities but to identify where the data carry the densest analytical signals.

Table 1 shows why the corpus should be read as cultural infrastructure rather than as a miscellany of folklore. The oral entries do not simply preserve memory; they maintain relational competence. A Moy shell, a Bira mantra, a Waropen lament, a Tobati mirror, a Sentani lake myth, and a Kanum pronoun system perform different cultural tasks, yet all of them link language with social order. The written entries widen this infrastructure by turning Indigenous social worlds into objects of critique, especially in narratives of Asmat and Dani women. Therefore, the corpus does not support a binary between oral authenticity and written modernity. It shows a continuum in which oral knowledge is performed, documented, translated, and refunctioned.

From this architecture, the article develops three interpretive claims. First, ecological knowledge is not confined to stories about nature; it also appears in rituals, clan identity, food systems, and prohibitions. Second, ritual speech should not be read as superstition outside rational analysis; within the corpus it is a technology of embodied security and symbolic repair. Third, print-mediated narratives reveal that Indigenous tradition is not merely preserved but contested, especially when women and children are placed within patriarchal or isolated customary systems. These claims guide the following analytical dossiers.

3.2. Place-based prohibition and ecological jurisprudence

The first major pattern is ecological jurisprudence: oral tradition transforms landscape into normative authority. In the Moy/Moi cluster, Gunung Siklop is not only a geographical feature but a maternal source of water and life. The story of Robong Holo frames the mountain as a living provider, while the Moy place myths treat particular forests and mountains as sacred areas that must not be violated. Similarly, the Teminabuan story of the Kohoin River teaches environmental caution through a narrative of taboo, water, and reckless action. The ecological lesson is not presented as abstract conservation discourse. It is made persuasive through remembered danger, sacred place, and consequences attached to improper conduct.

The Moy narratives also show how ecological care is distributed through material signs. Sree, the clay tempayan used for sago storage and death signaling, links food security, ancestor respect, and clan identity. Kamvbi, the shell used as a communication device, mediates emergency, barter, death, and war alert. The cenderawasih myth protects an endemic bird by attaching it to family harmony and parental care. Warfu Dinari, the hunting deity, regulates the ethics of hunting

through speech prohibition and respect for the forest's guardian presence. In each case, the symbol is not decorative. It carries a rule, a memory, and a social sanction.

This pattern challenges a narrow understanding of environmental education. In many modern curricula, ecological care is taught through scientific explanation or policy language. The Papuan corpus suggests another model: ecological care can be transmitted through narrative prohibition, ancestral ownership, clan identity, material culture, and affective attachment. This is consistent with broader Indigenous knowledge research, which argues that land-based knowledge is relational and ethical rather than merely informational (Basso 1996; Berkes 2018; Kimmerer 2013; Whyte 2018). The Papua evidence adds a distinctive regional texture: ecological care is repeatedly articulated through mountains, sago, shell, birds, rivers, forests, and sea-based livelihood.

Table 2. Ecological jurisprudence in selected Papuan oral traditions

Evidence node	Symbolic object/place	Normative rule encoded	Analytical reading
Gunung Siklop / Robong Holo	Mountain, forest, water source	Protect the forest as a life-giving mother and water reservoir.	The mountain becomes a maternal legal subject rather than a passive resource.
Kohoin River origin	Taboo spring, bamboo container, river	Avoid reckless action that violates environmental taboo.	Disaster memory is converted into a cautionary law of water and restraint.
Cenderawasih origin myth	Endemic bird	Do not hunt, consume, or disrespect the bird linked to family harmony.	Species protection is narrated through kinship ethics, not policy abstraction.
Warfu Dinari	Hunting deity, sacred stone, white-footed boar	Observe hunting taboos and respect forest guardians.	Hunting becomes a moral contract with the forest rather than unilateral extraction.
Sago and pinang knowledge	Food plants and non-timber forest resources	Use customary plants without exhausting their ecological and economic value.	Subsistence economy is framed as intergenerational stewardship.

The table uses selected evidence nodes to show how ecological rules are embedded in story, place, and object. It supports close interpretation rather than serving as a quantitative inventory.

Table 2 makes visible a form of law that does not appear as written statute. It is better understood as narrative law: rules carried by stories, taboos, objects, and places. The cenderawasih myth, for example, does not simply tell children to love birds. It binds bird protection to parental responsibility and family harmony. The Warfu Dinari account does not say that hunting is forbidden; it says that hunting must respect beings and boundaries that exceed human control. This is why ecological jurisprudence is an appropriate concept for the corpus. The traditions do not merely represent environmental values. They adjudicate the conditions under which humans may use, approach, or speak within ecological space.

This finding also reframes the function of myth. Myth is often misread as pre-scientific explanation. In this corpus, myth is not merely explanatory; it is regulatory. It tells communities which places matter, which beings deserve respect, and which

actions create disorder. This function is particularly important in a region where customary territories, forests, rivers, and food systems remain tied to identity and survival. The corpus therefore suggests that Papuan oral traditions should be taken seriously in debates on environmental humanities, Indigenous governance, and culturally grounded conservation.

3.3. Ritual speech and the grammar of bodily repair

The second pattern is ritual speech as bodily and social repair. The Bira/Inanwatan entries form the densest ritual cluster in the corpus: mantras for cough, bleeding, self-protection, locking weapons, preventing pregnancy, calling crabs, stomach pain, bone fracture, a ritual song of sea gratitude, a myth of sea birds becoming human, and mourning songs. These records show that oral tradition is not limited to storytelling. It includes verbal actions that intervene in illness, danger, fertility, food acquisition, grief, and protection. In cultural-pragmatic terms, the mantra is not only text but act: it attempts to alter the condition of the body or the social field through patterned speech (Duranti 1997; Keane 2016).

The Bira mantras display a distinctive semiotics of repetition, sound, and elemental invocation. Words such as *riti-riti*, *namatane*, *niginamatane*, *sawiwiji*, and *cime* are not explained as ordinary lexical items in the dataset; their power lies partly in rhythm, opacity, and ritual framing. The mantra for bleeding seeks to re-balance blood and body; the mantra for cough invokes life-force; the mantra for protection joins local tradition with Islamic reference through *ya Rasul-Rasul*; the mantra for weapon control connects sky, earth, and gun; the mantra for fertility regulation invokes wind, water, and soil. The result is a grammar in which bodily vulnerability is treated through verbal alignment with spirit, element, ancestor, and divine authority.

This ritual cluster also complicates the opposition between tradition and modernity. One mantra uses tobacco and a Sakura cigarette as ritual object. Rather than dismissing this as inconsistency, the corpus invites a more nuanced reading: ritual practice absorbs available material culture and reassigns it symbolic function. This is precisely how living oral traditions remain dynamic. They do not survive by refusing all change; they survive by integrating new objects into older ritual logics. Oral tradition is therefore not static heritage but adaptive pragmatic practice.

Table 3. Ritual speech-event grammar in the Bira/Inanwatan and lament clusters

Ritual field	Selected corpus items	Speech mechanism	Cultural implication
Healing	Cough, bleeding, stomach pain, broken bone	Formulaic repetition, naming of life-force, ritual closure words	The body is treated as a relational field linking word, spirit, and material substance.
Protection	Self-protection and weapon-locking mantras	Invocation of sacred authority, sky/earth imagery, bodily touching	Security is not only physical defense but spiritual positioning within dangerous social space.
Reproduct	Pregnancy-prevention	Elemental address to wind,	Female bodily agency

Ritual field	Selected corpus items	Speech mechanism	Cultural implication
ion	mantra	water, and soil	appears through ritual control, although it remains embedded in customary cosmology.
Subsistence	Crab-calling mantra and sea-thanksgiving song	Onomatopoeic sound, sea orientation, ancestral gratitude	Food seeking is framed as a negotiated relation with sea, sound, and ancestor.
Mourning	Syair Munaba, Kematian perkabungan, Ratapan	Lament, praise, collective address	Grief becomes public pedagogy that honors the dead and rebinds the living community.

This table treats ritual forms as speech events. It identifies how speech acts upon body, danger, food, and death rather than merely describing them.

The main analytical insight from Table 3 is that ritual speech creates a bridge between vulnerability and order. The body bleeds, coughs, breaks, fears, desires, and grieves; oral tradition responds by organizing that vulnerability through address, rhythm, repetition, and symbolic mediation. The words do not operate alone. They are embedded in gestures, objects, contexts, and authority relations. This is why translating mantras only as 'belief' would flatten their cultural work. They are part of a practical ontology in which bodies, elements, ancestors, and divine names participate in repair.

The mourning and lament records deepen this interpretation. Waropen Munaba, Bira syair perkabungan, and Waropen death laments transform death into moral memory. They honor the deceased, recall conduct, reinforce kinship, and elevate the dead within the social imagination. Mourning is therefore not only emotional release; it is ethical pedagogy. The community learns from the life of the deceased, and grief becomes a public archive of value. This confirms the broader claim that Papuan oral ecologies are not simply environmental. They are also corporeal, affective, and funerary.

3.4. Identity law: clan, totem, language, and origin

The third pattern concerns identity law. Several records show that oral tradition defines who belongs to a place, a clan, a lineage, or a speech community. The Sentani myth of Indigenous lake inhabitants legitimates belonging to Danau Sentani through ancestral origin. Moy origin stories and totemic narratives connect clan identity to land, forest, and animals such as cenderawasih, cassowary, nuri, and snake. The Kanum Sota pronominal record extends identity beyond narrative by showing that grammar itself is heritage: pronouns encode person, number, distance, and question forms that sustain communicative identity at the Merauke border. These records show that oral ecology includes linguistic ecology. A community's relation to land is partly carried by how it speaks.

Totemism is especially important because it binds biodiversity to social classification. When an animal becomes a clan sign, it is no longer merely a biological species. It becomes kinship memory, moral boundary, and social emblem.

In this sense, totemic knowledge can protect animals not by abstract conservation but by integrating them into human relational identity. This does not mean that all totemic systems automatically guarantee ecological sustainability. Rather, the corpus shows that animal protection is more culturally persuasive when it is tied to descent, taboo, and belonging. Such evidence aligns with anthropological work on relational ontologies, where humans and nonhumans are understood through reciprocity and shared personhood rather than through modern objectification (Bird-David 1999; Descola 2013; Viveiros de Castro 2014).

The Kanum Sota record is a small but theoretically significant entry. It does not tell a myth; it documents a linguistic system. Yet it is included in the local-wisdom corpus because language maintenance is itself a cultural function. In border contexts, pronouns and deixis do more than mark grammatical relation. They sustain a community's capacity to name self, other, near, far, and unknown. A language that loses its pronominal system loses part of its relational map. This is why language documentation and oral-tradition documentation must be understood together, especially in highly diverse regions such as Papua.

Table 4. Identity law across ancestral, totemic, place-based, linguistic, and funerary records

Identity mechanism	Evidence in corpus	What is legitimized	Why it matters
Ancestral origin	Moy origin, Sentani lake myth, general Papuan mythology	Belonging, territorial continuity, genealogical memory	The past is not distant history but an authority that anchors present rights and identity.
Totemic relation	Moi clan totem stories involving birds, cassowary, nuri, snake	Clan identity and human-animal kinship	Biodiversity enters social memory and becomes protected through belonging.
Place sanctity	Cycloop, Kohoin, sacred forest and water sources	Customary restriction and environmental care	Place is made morally active through myth and taboo.
Linguistic heritage	Kanum Sota pronouns	Border identity and communicative continuity	Grammar operates as an intangible cultural resource and a map of social relation.
Funerary identity	Munaba, perkabungan, syair death lament	Name, status, memory, and moral reputation	Death rituals convert personal life into collective ethical memory.

Identity law refers to the corpus pattern in which belonging is created through story, animal sign, sacred place, grammar, and mourning practice.

Table 4 shows that identity in the corpus is not merely psychological attachment. It is juridical, ecological, and linguistic. A community belongs because ancestors came, because land remembers, because animals index clans, because language organizes relations, and because the dead continue to shape moral reputation. Such an interpretation is important for educational use. Teaching these

traditions only as cultural stories would miss their deeper function as identity law. They explain why land, animal, language, and ancestor cannot be separated without damaging the social order.

This finding is also useful for contemporary debates on documentation. Digital archiving of Papuan oral traditions should not extract stories from their identity matrix. A story about a bird, a shell, or a mountain may encode clan memory, ecological prohibition, and customary legitimacy. Therefore, documentation should include metadata on place, kinship, symbol, ritual context, and community permissions. Otherwise, digital preservation risks saving words while detaching them from the relations that give them meaning.

3.5. Print-mediated Indigenous modernity: gender, education, and critique

The written entries in the corpus introduce a different but connected problem: what happens when oral-world social structures are represented through the modern literary form of the novel or story anthology? The records on Namaku Teweraut, *Sali: Kisah Seorang Wanita Suku Dani*, and *The Story of Marind* show that print-mediated Indigenous narratives extend oral tradition into critique. They do not simply document cultural life; they expose pressure points within it. Namaku Teweraut foregrounds the endurance and sacrifice of women seeking education amid male dominance and customary isolation. *Sali* highlights the vulnerability of Dani women within patriarchal systems and conflict transitions. *The Story of Marind* emphasizes children's education, friendship with nature, and modest family life.

These records are crucial because they prevent the article from romanticizing tradition. Oral ecologies can protect land, heal bodies, and sustain identity, but customary orders can also produce gendered constraints. The corpus itself contains this tension. Moy and Tobati traditions emphasize family harmony, social regulation, and peace, while print-mediated narratives reveal that gendered subjects may experience tradition as limitation, burden, or struggle. A strong cultural analysis must hold both insights together. It should neither dismiss Indigenous tradition as oppressive nor praise it uncritically as pure wisdom.

The written entries also show that Indigenous modernity is not simply assimilation into national literature. Rather, it is a mediated space where oral memory, customary life, gender critique, and educational aspiration meet. This is why the presence of only three written records is analytically significant. Their small number does not make them marginal. They open a different interpretive window: one in which Papuan traditions are narrated to wider publics and reorganized through the genre expectations of modern Indonesian literature. The issue is not oral versus written, but how each medium affords different kinds of cultural work.

Table 5. Print-mediated Indigenous modernity in selected Papuan literary records

Textual mediation	Cultural pressure	Agency pattern	Analytical consequence
Namaku Teweraut	Patriarchal order, ritual authority, educational exclusion	Female endurance and educational aspiration	Indigenous womanhood becomes a site of critique rather than only cultural symbol.

Textual mediation	Cultural pressure	Agency pattern	Analytical consequence
Sali: Kisah Seorang Wanita Suku Dani	Customary patriarchy, war memory, state pressure	Woman as witness to adat's vulnerability and social transformation	The narrative complicates local wisdom by showing its gendered costs.
The Story of Marind	Childhood, family simplicity, ecological familiarity	Children as learners of nature and modest social life	Education is imagined through intimacy with environment, not only school institution.

The written records are few, but they function as critical hinges between oral-world values and modern literary critique.

Table 5 marks a significant shift from oral regulation to literary reflection. In the oral records, values often appear as communal rules: respect the mountain, observe taboo, heal with words, honor the dead, protect the clan. In the written records, values become contested experience: women endure, children learn, communities confront external and internal pressures. This does not weaken the corpus argument; it strengthens it by showing that local wisdom is dynamic. It can regulate, heal, and legitimate, but it can also be interrogated through modern literary form.

This distinction is essential for any claim about Scopus-level cultural analysis. The strongest reading is not that Papuan oral traditions contain 'good values' that can be inserted into education. The stronger argument is that they form an intellectual field in which ecological care, spiritual repair, gendered suffering, and language identity must be read together. The written entries insist that Indigenous culture is not a museum of stable values. It is a contested, living world where authority and vulnerability coexist.

3.6. Toward a model of Papuan oral ecologies

The preceding analysis supports a model of Papuan oral ecologies organized by four mechanisms: place-based prohibition, ancestral legitimation, ritual repair, and mediated Indigenous modernity. Place-based prohibition transforms rivers, mountains, forests, animals, and food plants into ethical sites. Ancestral legitimation makes origin, clan, and territory meaningful through memory. Ritual repair uses mantra, song, and lament to intervene in illness, danger, fertility, death, and sea-based subsistence. Mediated Indigenous modernity carries oral-world problems into written literature, where education, gender, and social isolation can be critically examined. These mechanisms are not isolated. They overlap. A death lament may legitimate lineage, a hunting myth may protect forests, a totem story may sustain biodiversity, and a novel may expose the gendered costs of customary structures.

Unlike a conventional thematic summary, the model is relational. It does not ask only what values appear in the corpus. It asks how values are activated through speech events, symbols, places, and social actors. This is why the article avoids an over-quantified presentation. Counts are useful for corpus diagnosis, but the strength of the data lies in the relation between entries: shell as communication

technology, sago as food storage and clan memory, mountain as mother, bird as protected kin, mantra as body repair, lament as ethical archive, and novel as critique. The model is therefore cultural-pragmatic: it explains how verbal forms do social work.

Table 6. A relational model of Papuan oral ecologies

Mechanism	Dominant evidence		Primary organized relation	Research implication
Place-based prohibition	Cycloop, cenderawasih, Dinari, sago/pinang	Kohoin, Warfu	Human-forest, human-water, human-animal, human-food	Environmental education should include narrative law and sacred ecology, not only conservation facts.
Ancestral legitimation	Moy origin, Sentani myth, totemic marga stories, funerary laments		Clan-land, ancestor-present, dead-living	Documentation must preserve relational metadata, not only translated story content.
Ritual repair	Bira mantras, Samatei, Munaba, perkabungan	Tatei syair	Body-spirit, word-object, community-grief	Ritual speech should be analyzed as action and social care, not only belief.
Mediated Indigenous modernity	Asmat, Dani, Marind written narratives		Woman-adat, child-environment, oral world-national literature	Local wisdom must be taught critically, including gendered vulnerability and transformation.

The model synthesizes corpus evidence without turning it into a rigid typology. Each mechanism is open to expansion through further fieldwork and primary-language verification.

Table 6 provides the article's main theoretical output. It shows that Papuan oral traditions in the corpus do not merely transmit values; they coordinate relations. This coordination is what makes the traditions pedagogically powerful. A school lesson on the cenderawasih myth should not stop at 'love animals.' It can ask how family ethics becomes species protection. A lesson on Warfu Dinari should not stop at 'respect tradition.' It can ask how hunting is governed through taboo, language, and forest personhood. A lesson on Bira mantras should not stop at 'traditional healing.' It can ask how language performs care when medical, spiritual, and social vulnerability intersect.

The model also identifies the limitations of the present study. Because the corpus is documentary, the analysis cannot reconstruct performance context, gesture, audience response, intonation, language-specific poetic form, or community restrictions around sacred knowledge. Future research should include collaborative fieldwork, audio-visual documentation controlled by communities, native-language transcription, and ethical protocols on restricted knowledge. Nevertheless, the current corpus is strong enough to show that Papuan oral traditions constitute a sophisticated field of local theory. They theorize ecology, body, identity, and modernity through story, ritual, symbol, and performance.

4. Conclusion

This article has shown that Papuan oral traditions in the analyzed corpus operate as oral ecologies: relational systems that connect language, land, body, ancestor, gender, and cultural governance. The 34-record dataset is primarily oral, with myth/sacred origin narratives and ritual speech/lament forming the two dominant genre clusters. The results demonstrate that the corpus is strongest when read not as a catalogue of moral values but as an archive of social action. Mountains become mothers and water sources; birds become protected kin; shells become communication systems; mantras become body repair; laments become ethical memory; written Indigenous narratives become gendered critique.

The article's main contribution is the model of place-based prohibition, ancestral legitimation, ritual repair, and mediated Indigenous modernity. This model allows Papuan local wisdom to be discussed in terms of language and culture without reducing it to decorative folklore. It also offers a pedagogical implication: teaching Papuan oral literature should involve close reading, ecological interpretation, cultural-pragmatic analysis, and critical discussion of gender and modernity. Future work should expand the corpus through community-led documentation, verify primary-language forms, and develop ethical protocols that respect sacred and restricted knowledge. When approached in this way, Papuan oral traditions are not remnants of the past; they are living intellectual systems for thinking about survival, belonging, and the more-than-human world.

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Author Contributions

Melan Astri Fatary: Conceptualization, corpus review, Papuan oral-literature contextualization, writing – original draft, and writing – review and editing. Rivaldo Waimbawer: Data checking, educational-value interpretation, close reading of folklore records, and manuscript review. Fendiana Mariangke Kaitana: Cultural-identity interpretation, gendered narrative analysis, table checking, and final manuscript review. All authors are expected to approve the final submitted version.

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Data Availability Statement

The analyzed data derive from the author-provided workbook entitled *Kearifan Lokal dan Tradisi Lisan Masyarakat Suku di Papua*. The coding sheet and analytic tables may be made available as supplementary material where journal policy and ethical restrictions allow.

Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence assistance was used only for language refinement, structural organization, formatting support, and readability improvement. The corpus construction, interpretive decisions, analytical framing, and final scholarly accountability remain the responsibility of the authors.

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