

SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN THE TRADITIONAL RITUAL OF "PURUNG TA LIANG MARAPU" IN THE COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL SUMBA REGENCY

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Abstrak

Ritual Purung Ta Liang Marapu merupakan praktik budaya sakral masyarakat Sumba Tengah yang menggunakan ragam bahasa khusus sebagai media komunikasi transendental dengan leluhur (Marapu). Namun, pemahaman terhadap makna dan fungsi bahasa ritual tersebut masih terbatas pada kalangan tertentu, khususnya pemangku adat (Ratu). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penggunaan bahasa dalam ritual tersebut serta mengungkap fungsi sosial, budaya, dan religius-magis dalam perspektif sosiolinguistik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif sosiolinguistik. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan Ratu dan tokoh adat, serta dokumentasi audio-visual. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bahasa ritual merupakan register sakral yang ditandai oleh penggunaan diksi arkais, struktur paralelisme, serta bentuk tuturan yang formulaik. Secara sosiolinguistik, bahasa ritual berfungsi sebagai legitimasi otoritas adat, alat kohesi sosial, serta media transmisi nilai budaya dan kepercayaan Marapu. Selain itu, bahasa ritual memiliki sifat performatif yang berperan dalam menjaga keseimbangan hubungan antara manusia, leluhur, dan alam. Keterbatasan pemahaman masyarakat disebabkan oleh sistem transmisi lisan yang eksklusif. Oleh karena itu, dokumentasi linguistik terhadap ritual ini menjadi penting untuk menjaga keberlanjutan budaya serta menjembatani kesenjangan pengetahuan antargenerasi di tengah arus modernisasi.

Kata Kunci: bahasa ritual, Marapu, sosiolinguistik, budaya, register sakral

Abstract

The Purung Ta Liang Marapu ritual represents a sacred cultural practice of the Central Sumba community, employing a specialized form of language as a medium of transcendental communication with ancestral entities (Marapu). However, the meanings and functions of this ritual language remain largely inaccessible to the general community and are primarily confined to traditional authorities (Ratu). This study aims to analyze the use of language in the ritual and to identify its social, cultural, and religious-magical functions from a sociolinguistic perspective. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive sociolinguistic method. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with Ratu and traditional elders, and audio-visual documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that ritual language constitutes a sacred register characterized by archaic diction, parallelism, and formulaic expressions. Sociolinguistically, it functions as a mechanism of social legitimacy, a tool for social cohesion, and a medium for transmitting cultural values and Marapu beliefs. Additionally, ritual language exhibits performative properties that contribute to maintaining the balance between humans, ancestors, and the natural world. The limited public understanding is attributed to the exclusivity of oral transmission. Therefore, systematic linguistic documentation is essential to preserve cultural continuity and to bridge intergenerational knowledge gaps in the context of modernization.

Keywords: ritual language, Marapu, sociolinguistics, culture, sacred register

1. INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only as an instrument of interaction but also as a manifestation of cultural identity that integrates the collective memory and philosophical principles of a community. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is understood as a social phenomenon whose use is influenced by situational and cultural contexts (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). One of the most complex and meaning-laden manifestations of language use can be found in the domain of traditional rituals. Language in traditional ceremonies often serves as a cultural boundary that distinguishes the identity of an ethnic group from others (Fishman, 2021; Barth, 2010; Lytra, 2016; Riley, 2007; Kramsch, 2014; Hodos, 2010).

As a cultural agent, the community plays a crucial role in preserving and maintaining cultural heritage. Society can be defined as a group of individuals who interact consistently within a system of norms and traditions and are bound by a shared sense of collective identity (Soekanto 2020: 34). In Indonesia, each community possesses unique characteristics that shape its cultural identity.

Indonesia's linguistic diversity encompasses a wide range of unique ritual speech forms, one of which is found in the community of Central Sumba Regency through the traditional ritual Purung Ta Liang Marapu. This ritual is a sacred ceremony dedicated to honoring ancestral spirits (Marapu) and involves specialized forms of speech that are not used in everyday communication. According to Chaer and Agustina (2014), language variation based on function is referred to as a register, in which diction and sentence structures in ritual contexts are typically archaic and metaphorical.

The phenomenon of language use in the Purung Ta Liang Marapu ritual is important to investigate, particularly in light of the ongoing sociolinguistic shift among younger generations in Central Sumba. Holmes (2022) warns that without a comprehensive understanding of the sociolinguistic functions of ritual language, communities are at risk of losing

their local wisdom due to modernization. Although previous studies have examined Marapu culture in general, research that specifically explores sociolinguistic aspects such as speech types, language functions, and power relations between the Ratu (ritual speaker) and the audience remains limited.

Sociolinguistic studies view language as a reflection of the social and cultural dynamics of its speakers (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2008; Adli & Guy, 2022; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Heller et al., 2024). In this context, language use in traditional rituals extends beyond communication; it also functions as a mechanism for maintaining relationships between individuals and the wider community (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). Thus, the sociolinguistic approach emphasizes the interconnection between language and society.

The urgency of this research lies in the limited understanding among the Central Sumba community regarding the meaning and social functions of the indigenous language used in the Purung Ta Liang Marapu ritual, which remains largely restricted to traditional authorities.

The novelty of this study lies in its sociolinguistic exploration of the Purung Ta Liang Marapu ritual in Central Sumba, an area that has received less scholarly attention compared to similar studies in East and West Sumba, which have predominantly focused on the Pasola tradition. Therefore, this research is important to conduct because it provides a deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic characteristics of local dialects, particularly the Anakalang dialect, which exhibits complex parallelism structures and distinctive archaic lexicon. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the documentation and preservation of linguistic variation in Central Sumba, enrich sociolinguistic studies on ritual language, and serve as a useful reference for future research on local languages, oral traditions, and cultural heritage in Sumba.

In the context of Sumba society, Kuipers (1998) has demonstrated that ritual speech is not

merely a poetic aesthetic but also a mechanism of legal authority and religiosity. More recent research by Satyawati (2020) on the phonology and morphology of the Marapu language highlights the unique linguistic complexity found among the Sumba people. Furthermore, Budasi and Satyawati (2021), in their ethnolinguistic studies, emphasize that language in oral traditions reflects the relationship between humans and supernatural entities.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on Sumba communities, research specifically examining the use of language in the Purung Ta Liang Marapu ritual in Central Sumba remains limited. Most previous studies focus on East or West Sumba, which have different dialectal characteristics. The Purung Ta Liang Marapu ritual is distinguished by its use of the Taugu Lii register, characterized by agrarian metaphors and complex parallelism structures that have not yet been thoroughly explored within modern sociolinguistic frameworks. This gap in the literature constitutes the primary focus of the present study.

Based on these identified research gaps, this study offers a new sociolinguistic perspective on the use of language in the Purung Ta Liang Marapu ritual in Central Sumba. The objective of this research is to identify and analyze language use within the ritual from a sociolinguistic perspective. This study is expected to contribute to the development of sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic theories, particularly in understanding the relationship between language, culture, and indigenous communities. Moreover, it provides insights into how language functions in preserving traditions and cultural identity, as well as how it reflects social and cultural changes in communities that continue to maintain indigenous languages.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method within a sociolinguistic framework to examine the use of language in the traditional ritual of Purung Ta Liang Marapu. The focus of the study is on ritual speech delivered by

traditional leaders (Ratu) as the primary agents of communication in the ritual context. A qualitative design is considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of linguistic forms, meanings, and functions embedded within specific socio-cultural contexts. In particular, this study adopts an interactional sociolinguistic perspective (Gumperz, 1982; Goffman, 1981) to analyze how language is used as a symbolic resource to negotiate relationships between humans and ancestral entities (Marapu), as well as to construct social meaning and authority within the ritual setting.

The research was conducted in Umbu Papal Traditional Village, Central Sumba Regency, which serves as the primary site for observing the implementation of the Purung Ta Liang Marapu ritual. The data consist of primary data in the form of oral ritual speech, supported by audio-visual recordings and interview transcripts. Data collection techniques included (1) participant observation to capture the natural use of language across different stages of the ritual, (2) in-depth interviews with Ratu and traditional elders to obtain interpretations of ritual speech and its socio-cultural significance, and (3) documentation through audio and video recordings to ensure data accuracy and completeness. To enhance data validity, this study applied triangulation techniques, including data triangulation (comparing observational and interview data), methodological triangulation (combining observation, interviews, and documentation), and member checking by confirming interpretations with key informants.

Data analysis was conducted through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Initially, ritual speech was transcribed and translated into Indonesian and then classified based on the structural stages of the ritual, namely opening, supplication, offering, praise, and closing. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using an interactional sociolinguistic approach by identifying linguistic features such as metaphor, parallelism, politeness strategies, and performative functions of speech. The analysis also examined

how these linguistic features relate to broader social, cultural, and religious functions within the Marapu community. Finally, the findings were synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of ritual language as a form of symbolic communication, a mechanism of social legitimacy, and a medium for cultural transmission and preservation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structure of Ritual Speech in a Sociolinguistic Perspective

Based on observations and interviews conducted in Uumbu Papal Traditional Village, the use of language in the *Purung Ta Liang Marapu* ritual demonstrates a structured and systematic pattern of communication. Ritual language does not merely function as a medium for conveying messages; rather, it constitutes a form of symbolic communication that mediates the relationship between the human (profane) world and the ancestral (Marapu) realm.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, ritual speech is organized into five main stages: (1) opening (sacral orientation), (2) supplication (symbolic negotiation), (3) offering (symbolic exchange), (4) praise (reinforcement of transcendental relations), and (5) closing (termination and social restoration). Each stage is characterized by distinct interactional functions, symbolic meanings, and linguistic strategies, reflecting the complex interplay between language, social structure, and cultural belief systems within the Marapu community.

Opening Stage (Sacral Orientation)

The opening stage represents the initial phase in which the communicative space between humans and ancestral entities is established. At this stage, the *Ratu* employs ritual utterances characterized by honorific expressions and collective identification, which function to initiate and legitimize the interaction.

An example of such utterance is:

“Ina ama ma Pakabuangu ta Paraingu”

This expression demonstrates the use of **group identity markers**, particularly through the invocation of *Ina Ama* (mother and father), which symbolically refers to ancestral figures. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this strategy serves to construct emotional proximity while simultaneously maintaining reverence toward the ancestors. It establishes a shared cultural frame of reference and creates a sacralized communicative atmosphere prior to the delivery of the core ritual message.

Another utterance used in this stage is:

“Kana peku oli da ta 'pulungu ta peka ta lii ta lamma”

This utterance functions to consolidate collective unity and to signal the intention of delivering a sacred message. The use of expressions such as *ta lii ta lamma* reflects a politeness strategy marked by humility and deference, which is essential in ritual communication. In interactional sociolinguistic terms, this can be interpreted as a mechanism to align participants' expectations and to ensure that the forthcoming communication is conducted within an appropriate sacred and social framework.

Supplication Stage (Symbolic Negotiation)

The supplication stage constitutes the core of ritual communication, in which the *Ratu* articulates intentions, requests, and expectations directed toward the ancestral entities. At this stage, language functions as a medium of symbolic negotiation between humans and the supernatural realm, reflecting asymmetrical power relations and the need for ritual propriety.

An example of such utterance is:

“Na woliya na rahi jara moni mutu kaula kaka”

This utterance contains a role metaphor that portrays the *Ratu* as both powerful and humble. The metaphor of a “chosen horse” symbolizes strength,

authority, and responsibility, while the expression *kaula kaka* (faithful servant) emphasizes submission and devotion. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this reflects the use of negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), whereby the speaker deliberately minimizes imposition and acknowledges the higher status of the addressee—in this case, the ancestors. Such linguistic behavior serves to maintain the “face” of the supernatural entity while legitimizing the speaker’s position within the ritual.

Another relevant utterance is:

“Hambu pangu, hambu laku; ta lii ta lamma”

This expression demonstrates the use of cautious and humble language in delivering requests. The phrase *ta lii ta lamma* indicates a deferential stance, functioning as a linguistic strategy to reduce the risk of rejection and to enhance the acceptability of the supplication. In interactional sociolinguistic terms, this reflects an effort to align communicative expectations and to negotiate meaning within a highly structured ritual context. Overall, this stage highlights that ritual language operates as a mechanism of symbolic negotiation, through which hierarchical relationships between humans and ancestral entities are constructed, maintained, and reaffirmed.

Offering Stage (Symbolic Exchange)

At the offering stage, language is employed to legitimize and ritualize the presentation of offerings to the ancestral entities. In this phase, speech does not merely describe the act of giving but actively constructs its symbolic meaning within the ritual framework.

An example of such utterance is:

“Ta uma bakul leli belarr’u, hi tadu manu hi tadu wua”

This utterance emphasizes both the spatial context (*uma bakul*, ‘great house’) and the types of offerings presented, such as buffalo horns and chicken feathers. The use of parallelism—a defining feature of ritual language—reflects a

formal and aesthetic structure that reinforces symbolic balance and ritual precision. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this serves as a marker of situational context, affirming that the offering is conducted within a legitimate and culturally sanctioned space.

Another utterance:

“Paka-uli na hangu, paka-wala na lii”

illustrates the concept of symbolic exchange between humans and ancestors, in which the offering is framed as the fulfillment of a promise or customary obligation. This reflects a reciprocal relationship, where material offerings are linguistically transformed into acts of devotion and compliance.

In sociolinguistic terms, the language used at this stage is inherently **performative** (Austin, 1962), as it does not simply convey information but enacts social and spiritual actions. Through ritual speech, the offering is validated, the relationship with the ancestors is reaffirmed, and the symbolic transaction between the human and spiritual realms is completed.

Praise Stage (Reinforcement of Transcendental Relations)

The praise stage functions to strengthen the relational bond between humans and ancestral entities through acts of glorification and symbolic elevation. At this stage, language is employed to construct a heightened spiritual atmosphere, emphasizing reverence, admiration, and the presence of the sacred.

An example of such utterance is:

“Mangihi pa kanyura, malala pa kanyuru”

This expression utilizes sensory symbolism, particularly references to fragrance and light, to evoke the perceived presence of the ancestors. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this can be understood as a form of conversational inference (Gumperz, 1982), in which meaning is not explicitly stated but collaboratively constructed by

participants through shared cultural knowledge. The utterance invites the audience to interpret sensory cues as indicators of spiritual presence, thereby reinforcing a collectively imagined sacred reality.

Another utterance:

“Dewa pa-mangu, lulu pa-lamma; ndara manggu, nggalu lara”

employs metaphorical expressions to exalt the ancestors as sources of power and guidance. The use of metaphors such as *ndara* (horse) and *lara* (path) symbolically represents strength, direction, and protection. In sociolinguistic terms, this strategy functions to reduce the symbolic distance between humans and ancestral entities, fostering a sense of closeness and relational continuity.

Overall, the praise stage highlights the role of ritual language as a means of symbolic elevation and relational intensification, through which the spiritual legitimacy of the ritual is reinforced and the presence of the ancestral realm is collectively affirmed

Closing Stage (Termination and Social Restoration)

The closing stage represents the final phase of the ritual, functioning to formally terminate the sacred communication and restore the social order to its ordinary state. At this stage, language plays a crucial role in ensuring that the interaction between the human and ancestral realms is properly concluded, thereby maintaining cosmological balance.

An example of such utterance is:

“Manda pa hapa, manda pa hiangu”

This utterance carries perlocutionary force (Austin, 1962), as it produces a tangible effect on the participants, namely a sense of protection, safety, and spiritual assurance. Through this expression, the Ratu symbolically conveys blessings from the ancestors, marking the successful completion of the ritual interaction.

Another utterance:

“Kandu pangu, kandu laku”

demonstrates a boundary-marking strategy, which linguistically separates the sacred space from the profane world. In sociolinguistic terms, this functions as a mechanism of spatial and symbolic regulation, ensuring that the interaction with the ancestral realm does not extend beyond its appropriate limits. Such boundary construction is essential in maintaining the integrity of both the sacred and everyday domains within the Marapu belief system.

Therefore, the closing stage serves not only as the termination of ritual communication but also as a process of social and cosmological restoration, in which participants are reintegrated into normal social life following the completion of the sacred interaction.

Social and Cultural Functions of Ritual Language

The findings of this study indicate that the use of language in the *Purung Ta Liang Marapu* ritual extends beyond its linguistic function and plays a significant role in shaping, maintaining, and reproducing the social structure, cultural identity, and belief system of the Marapu community. Ritual language operates as a symbolic instrument that integrates social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions within a structured communicative practice

Social Function

From a social perspective, ritual language functions as a mechanism of social cohesion and the reinforcement of collective solidarity. Through ritual speech, community members are not only engaged in religious activities but also participate in the construction of shared identity and social integration.

An example of such utterance is:

“Kambaniru parunggu, kalimbana parangga”

This expression serves as a metaphor for

unity, indicating that all members of the community have reached a state of collective agreement prior to the ritual. Sociologically, this reflects the function of language as a mechanism of social reconciliation, where internal conflicts are resolved before the ritual is performed. Thus, ritual language not only reflects solidarity but also actively constructs and sustains social stability within the community.

Cultural Function

In the cultural domain, ritual language functions as a medium for preserving traditional values and the collective identity of the Marapu community. It serves as the primary vehicle for transmitting norms, ethics, historical narratives, and indigenous knowledge across generations.

An example of such utterance is:

“*Pau lulu ma-hala, kaba lulu ma-ngura*”

This utterance emphasizes the permanence and immutability of tradition. Culturally, it represents a commitment to maintaining the authenticity of ancestral heritage and serves as a form of legitimization of customary practices.

In this context, ritual language acts as a living cultural archive, preserving not only the memory of the past but also actively reproducing cultural identity within contemporary social practices. Through ritual performance, language becomes a central medium for sustaining cultural continuity in the face of modernization.

Religious-Magical Function

In addition to its social and cultural roles, ritual language also serves a strong religious and magical function. It operates as a medium of transcendental communication between humans and ancestral entities (*Marapu*), while simultaneously maintaining cosmological balance.

An example of such utterance is:

“*Ambu tana ma-ngapaka, ambu watu mangadu*”

This expression reflects the belief that elements of nature possess consciousness and can respond to human language. In this context, language is not merely symbolic but is believed to have performative power capable of influencing spiritual reality.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this indicates that ritual language operates within a sacred and performative domain, where utterances do not simply convey meaning but enact actions that have direct spiritual and social consequences. Therefore, accuracy in the use of language becomes a crucial requirement for the success of the ritual, as any deviation may be perceived as a violation of cosmological order.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that the use of language in the *Purung Ta Liang Marapu* ritual represents a highly structured sociolinguistic system in which language functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a symbolic medium that reflects social hierarchy, cultural values, and spiritual beliefs. The structured stages of ritual speech opening, supplication, offering, praise, and closing demonstrate that ritual communication is governed by specific norms and conventions. This aligns with Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021), who argue that language use is always shaped by social context and cultural expectations. In this case, ritual language operates as a specialized register that is deeply embedded in the social and cosmological order of the Marapu community.

Furthermore, the exclusive use of ritual language by the *Ratu* indicates that language serves as a form of symbolic power and social authority. This finding supports Kuipers (1998), who emphasizes that ritual speech in Sumba is not merely an aesthetic expression but also a mechanism of legitimizing authority and maintaining social order. The restriction of linguistic competence to specific individuals reinforces hierarchical structures within the community, where mastery of ritual language becomes a marker of status and legitimacy. Thus,

language functions as both a communicative and socio-political instrument.

The use of archaic diction and parallelism in ritual speech also highlights the role of language as a cultural preservation mechanism. As noted by Chaer and Agustina (2014), linguistic registers in ritual contexts often involve distinctive vocabulary and structural patterns that differ from everyday language. In the *Purung Ta Liang Marapu* ritual, these features not only enhance the aesthetic quality of speech but also serve to maintain continuity with ancestral traditions. This supports Fishman's (2021) argument that language plays a crucial role in preserving ethnic identity and cultural boundaries.

In addition, the findings reveal that ritual language functions as a mechanism of social cohesion and conflict resolution. The requirement that all community members must be in a state of harmony before the ritual is performed indicates that language plays a central role in constructing social solidarity. This is consistent with Holmes and Wilson (2022), who state that language is a key instrument in maintaining social relationships and group cohesion. Through ritual speech, collective identity is reinforced, and social tensions are symbolically resolved.

From a cultural perspective, ritual language acts as a medium of intergenerational knowledge transmission. The use of fixed expressions and narrative elements allows the preservation of moral values, historical memory, and cultural norms. Laksana (2021) highlights that local languages play a significant role in maintaining cultural identity, particularly in the face of globalization. In this study, ritual language functions as a "living archive" that ensures the continuity of Marapu traditions, despite external pressures from modernization.

Moreover, the performative nature of ritual language underscores its role in shaping spiritual reality. In line with Austin's (1962) speech act theory, ritual utterances do not merely describe actions but actively perform them. For example, expressions used in offering and closing stages are

believed to legitimize sacrifices and invoke protection from ancestral entities. This finding is supported by Budasi and Satyawati (2021), who argue that language in oral traditions often serves as a bridge between humans and supernatural forces.

Finally, the study highlights the vulnerability of ritual language in the context of modernization. The limited understanding of ritual language among younger generations suggests a potential shift in sociolinguistic competence, which may lead to language loss. Crystal (2014) warns that the decline of specialized linguistic registers can result in the erosion of cultural identity. Therefore, the documentation and preservation of ritual language, as emphasized in this study, are crucial for maintaining the socio-cultural sustainability of the Marapu community in Central Sumba.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of language in the *Purung Ta Liang Marapu* ritual constitutes a highly specialized sacred register with complex structural, functional, and symbolic dimensions within the Marapu community. Ritual language does not merely function as a medium of communication; rather, it operates as a symbolic system that mediates the relationship between humans and ancestral entities within a cosmological framework. The structured organization of ritual speech into five stages—opening, supplication, offering, praise, and closing—demonstrates that linguistic practices in this ritual are systematic and governed by deeply embedded cultural norms.

Linguistically, ritual language is characterized by the use of archaic diction, parallelism, and formulaic expressions that are rigid and resistant to change. These features indicate that ritual language represents a "high variety" within a diglossic system, used exclusively in sacred contexts and by specific social actors, particularly the Ratu. This exclusivity reinforces the role of language as a marker of social hierarchy and a mechanism for legitimizing traditional authority within the community (Woolard, 2020; DiMaggio, 2019; Jaffe, 2013).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, ritual language performs three primary functions: social, cultural, and religious-magical. Socially, it functions as a mechanism of cohesion, strengthening collective solidarity and facilitating conflict resolution within the community. Culturally, it serves as a medium for transmitting values, norms, and collective identity across generations. Religiously, it operates as a form of transcendental communication with ancestral entities and possesses performative power in maintaining cosmological balance between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm (Northcott, 2023; Chattopadhyay, 2024).

However, this study also identifies significant challenges in the preservation of ritual language, particularly due to its exclusive oral transmission and limited accessibility among younger generations. This condition creates a gap in intergenerational knowledge transfer and poses a potential threat to the sustainability of ritual practices in the context of modernization.

Therefore, systematic documentation and scholarly analysis of ritual language are essential to ensure its preservation and continuity. Such efforts not only contribute to safeguarding local cultural heritage but also enrich sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic studies, particularly in understanding the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and social structure. Ultimately, the preservation of ritual language in *Purung Ta Liang Marapu* is crucial for maintaining the cultural identity and socio-cultural resilience of the Central Sumba community in the future.

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