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The aesthetic transformation of Kaili traditional oral literature into theater: A cross-art and interdisciplinary approach

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Abstract: *Kaili oral literature is a living cultural resource in Central Sulawesi, where poetic language, music, gesture, social interaction, and cultural memory are interwoven. This article examines how selected aesthetic features of Kaili oral traditions, particularly Vaino, may be reconfigured for theatrical performance through a cross-art and interdisciplinary framework. The study uses descriptive qualitative interpretation of published cultural documentation and relevant scholarship. The analysis maps narrative, linguistic, vocal-musical, bodily, visualsymbolic, and dramaturgical features to possible theatrical forms. Vaino's reciprocal poetic exchanges can inform dramatic dialogue and choral speech, while rhythm, vocal delivery, movement, costume, and culturally meaningful objects can contribute to the performance's sonic and visual composition. These are analytical possibilities, not claims that one staging represents all Kaili traditions. The proposed model moves from cultural identification and aesthetic mapping to contextual interpretation, dramaturgical reconstruction, collaborative performance, and reflective evaluation. It emphasizes consultation with tradition bearers, differentiation between documented practices and artistic invention, and respect for the social contexts of cultural expressions. Theater may provide an additional pathway for intergenerational engagement with Kaili oral literature when artistic innovation remains accountable to cultural knowledge and community perspectives.*

Keywords: *Kaili oral literature, aesthetic transformation, Vaino, theater, interdisciplinary arts*

INTRODUCTION

Oral literature is one of the most important forms of cultural expression because it stores collective memory, cultural values, social norms, worldview, and aesthetic knowledge within a community. Unlike written literature, oral literature develops through performance, repetition, interaction, memory, and direct transmission between generations. Consequently, its existence cannot be separated from the community that performs, listens to, interprets, and reproduces it. Oral literature is therefore simultaneously a literary, social, cultural, and performative phenomenon. Within the cultural landscape of Central Sulawesi, the Kaili community possesses a diverse repertoire of oral traditions. Among these are Vaino, Dadendate, Kayori, and Rego. Vaino, for example, is a form of Kaili folk poetry presented through reciprocal exchanges between male and female groups. Documentation from the Central Sulawesi Language Office describes Vaino as a form of reciprocal pantun (short poems) performed by two groups, generally mombine (women) and langgai (men), in wedding celebrations, thanksgiving events, and mourning contexts. The performance can also be accompanied by traditional instruments such as lalove and drums. This characteristic demonstrates that Kaili oral literature cannot be understood merely as a collection of verbal texts. Its

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aesthetic dimension emerges from the relationship between language, voice, rhythm, music, bodily expression, social interaction, and performance space. The verbal component becomes meaningful because it is performed within a particular social and cultural context. In Vaino, for example, the reciprocal structure of speech creates a dialogic aesthetic. The poetic utterance is simultaneously a form of communication, entertainment, social interaction, and cultural transmission. Documentation concerning Kaili cultural heritage also shows that Vaino contains expressions of advice, reprimand, love, separation, humor, and other forms of social communication. Its performance can function as entertainment as well as a medium of communication within the community. These characteristics provide considerable potential for creative transformation into contemporary performing arts, particularly theater. The problem is that the sustainability of oral traditions depends heavily on regeneration. Contemporary social changes, shifts in entertainment preferences, and decreasing numbers of traditional practitioners can create difficulties in transmitting oral traditions to younger generations. A report on Kaili oral traditions in Central Sulawesi notes that traditions such as Dadendate, Vaino, Kayori, and Rego require regeneration because the continuity of cultural practices cannot depend indefinitely on older generations of performers. In this context, transformation into theater may constitute one strategy for bringing oral tradition into a contemporary aesthetic environment. Transformation, however, should not be understood as merely modernizing traditional material. It involves a complex process of selection, reinterpretation, reconstruction, and aesthetic negotiation. Oral narrative must be reorganized according to dramaturgical requirements, while its cultural meanings need to remain recognizable. Previous research demonstrates that oral literature has considerable potential as a source for performing arts. Santosa, Siswantari, and Mukarromah (2021), for example, show that transforming folklore into stage performance can strengthen local cultural resilience. Their research employs a multidisciplinary perspective and demonstrates how oral narratives can become more complex when transferred into performing arts. Research on the transformation of Onduo into contemporary theater likewise demonstrates that oral tradition can be transformed through narrative text, actors' bodily expression, set design, props, lighting, makeup, costume, and music. The transformation is not limited to the verbal text but encompasses the entire theatrical system. These studies establish an important state of the art: oral tradition has been examined as a source for theatrical creation, cultural revitalization, and contemporary artistic expression. Nevertheless, the aesthetic transformation of Kaili oral literature into theater requires more specific attention, particularly because Kaili oral traditions possess their own linguistic, musical, symbolic, and social structures. The transformation process should therefore consider not only the narrative content but also the aesthetic logic embedded in the original performance. The novelty of this study lies in positioning Kaili oral literature as a cross-art and interdisciplinary source of theatrical creation. The term interart refers to the interaction of literary, musical, visual, movement, and theatrical elements, while interdisciplinary refers to the integration of perspectives from literary studies, theater studies, anthropology, cultural studies, music, and education. Through this perspective, oral literature is not reduced to a source of stories but understood as an aesthetic system capable of generating new forms of artistic expression. The central question of this study

is: How can the aesthetic elements of Kaili oral literary traditions be transformed into theatrical performance through a cross-art and interdisciplinary approach? This question is elaborated through three dimensions: first, the transformation of oral narrative and poetic language; second, the transformation of musical, vocal, bodily, and visual elements; and third, the negotiation between cultural continuity and aesthetic innovation. The study is important because contemporary cultural preservation increasingly requires strategies that allow traditional expressions to remain meaningful in changing social environments. Theater provides a space in which oral traditions can be reinterpreted without necessarily eliminating their cultural identity. The process also provides opportunities for young artists, teachers, students, and cultural communities to encounter local traditions through an artistic medium familiar to contemporary audiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Oral literature as a cultural aesthetic system

Oral literature should be understood as a cultural system rather than simply an oral version of written literature. Its aesthetic qualities emerge from the interaction of text, performer, audience, context, voice, gesture, rhythm, and memory. The meaning of an oral expression can therefore change according to the situation of performance. In Kaili culture, Vaino illustrates this characteristic clearly. The tradition is organized through reciprocal poetic exchanges between groups of performers. The Central Sulawesi Language Office records Vaino as Kaili pantun and describes its performance in various social events, including weddings, thanksgiving, and mourning. Its aesthetic structure is consequently dialogic, rhythmic, musical, and social. The poetic quality of Vaino is produced through linguistic selection, rhyme, metaphor, repetition, rhythm, and the interaction between speakers. When performed, these verbal elements are reinforced by intonation, facial expression, gesture, music, and audience response. Therefore, the transformation of Vaino into theater should preserve the performative dimension of the tradition rather than extracting only its written or verbal content.

Transformation and adaptation in theater

Transformation is an interpretive process that changes the form of an artistic object while maintaining particular relationships with its source. In theater, transformation from oral literature involves at least two levels. The first is textual transformation, namely the conversion of oral narratives into dramatic structures. The second is performative transformation, namely the conversion of verbal and cultural elements into acting, movement, music, visual design, and spatial composition. Research on the transformation of Onduo shows that oral tradition can become a contemporary theatrical work through the integration of narrative text, actors' bodies, artistic elements, lighting, costume, makeup, and music. This demonstrates that adaptation is not simply a literary process but an artistic reconstruction. Santosa et al. (2021) also emphasizes the contribution of oral traditions to modern theater. Oral traditions can provide creative resources for drama writing and performance, including the transformation of major traditional narratives into modern theatrical works. Thus, transformation creates a meeting point between cultural memory and contemporary

artistic language. The theater becomes a new medium for the old cultural material, while the oral tradition provides distinctive cultural resources for theatrical creation.

Performance aesthetics

Theatrical aesthetics involve the organization of various artistic elements into a coherent performance. These include script, acting, voice, movement, music, set, property, lighting, costume, makeup, and spatial composition. The aesthetic unity of theater is created through relationships among these elements rather than through any single component. In the context of oral tradition, the aesthetic transformation must therefore examine which elements should be retained, which may be modified, and which can be creatively developed. The principle is not mechanical reproduction but meaningful transformation. Research on folk theater has demonstrated the importance of examining both narrative and performance aspects. The study of Khabar Mati, for example, analyzes the aesthetic dimensions of folk theater through the relationship between text and enactment.

A cross-art and interdisciplinary approach

A cross-art approach recognizes that a theatrical performance is inherently multimodal. Literature can interact with music, visual arts, dance, architecture, and digital media. In the case of Kaili oral literature, this approach is particularly relevant because the traditions themselves already contain relationships among verbal, musical, and performative elements. The interdisciplinary dimension extends the analysis beyond aesthetics. Anthropology contributes an understanding of cultural context; literary studies analyze narrative and language; theater studies examine dramaturgy and performance; music studies analyze rhythm and traditional instruments; cultural studies investigate identity and representation; while education examines the potential for cultural transmission. A contemporary study on adaptation strategies in Banten theater, for example, demonstrates that the combination of different traditional artistic elements can generate new aesthetics while maintaining connections with local identity. The study of Mendu theater similarly shows that oral performance transmits language, customary knowledge, cultural values, and ways of thinking through embodied theatrical practices. This interdisciplinary framework provides an appropriate basis for understanding the transformation of Kaili oral literature because its cultural meanings are distributed across multiple forms of expression.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with an interpretive orientation to examine how aesthetic features documented in Kaili oral literature may be translated into theatrical form. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for interpreting meanings, practices, and contexts rather than measuring variables numerically (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This article is a document-based analysis of published cultural documentation and scholarship; it does not claim to report new interviews, field observations, or an experimentally tested theatrical production. The principal cultural focus is Vaino, a Kaili poetic tradition documented by Asri, Rahmah, and Amin (2016). Other traditions, including Dadendate, Kayori, and Rego, are mentioned as contextual examples only where supported by available documentation; they are not treated as if each had been examined in equal depth. Published research on Kaili cultural symbols and on the

transformation of other Indonesian oral traditions into performance provides comparative context (Agustan et al., 2025; Fadhli et al., 2023; Santosa et al., 2021). The analytical material is organized into five related categories: (1) verbal and narrative features, including poetic expressions, patterns of exchange, repetition, metaphor, and forms of address; (2) vocal and musical features, including rhythm, intonation, and documented relationships with traditional instruments; (3) performative features, including gesture, movement, interaction, and spatial arrangement where documented; (4) visual and symbolic features, including costume, objects, and signs associated with cultural identity; and (5) dramaturgical features, including character relations, conflict, scene structure, and performance organization. Data were gathered through a focused literature and document review. Sources were selected for their relevance to Kaili oral literature, cultural context, or adaptation of oral traditions into performance. The material was compared across cultural documentation and scholarly publications to distinguish source-based information from interpretive proposals. Because this study relies on documents, its findings are limited by the scope, detail, and reliability of the available sources. Analysis proceeded through three linked operations. First, identification recorded aesthetic features described in each source. Second, contextual interpretation considered the possible linguistic, social, symbolic, and performative significance of those features in relation to the source documentation. Third, transformation mapping proposed possible theatrical equivalents without treating them as definitive or culturally universal. Interpretive credibility was supported by comparing different source types and distinguishing documented cultural features from the authors' analytical suggestions. Future practice-based research should additionally involve consultation with cultural practitioners and audience reflection. The method therefore offers an analytical framework, not a claim that one theatrical production can represent the full diversity of Kaili traditions. Its purpose is to clarify how selected, documented features may inform theatrical creation while preserving cultural context and allowing responsible artistic innovation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The analysis indicates that the aesthetic transformation of Kaili oral literature into theater can be mapped into six interconnected dimensions: (1) narrative transformation, (2) linguistic transformation, (3) vocal and musical transformation, (4) bodily and movement transformation, (5) visual-symbolic transformation, and (6) dramaturgical transformation, as shown in tabel 1.

Table 1. Aesthetic Elements of Kaili Oral Literature and Their Theatrical Transformation Potential

NO.	ELEMENTS OF KAILI ORAL LITERATURE	ORIGINAL FORM	THEATRICAL TRANSFORMATION POTENTIAL
1	Narrative	Stories, experiences, cultural messages	Plot, conflict, scenes
2	Language	Pantun (short poems), idioms, metaphors, dialogue	Dramatic dialogue, monologue, chorus
3	Voice	Intonation, rhythm, vocals	Dialogue, singing, dramatic vocals
4	Music	Lalove, drums, traditional rhythms	Background music, scene music, atmosphere
5	Movement	Gestures and interaction patterns	Blocking, choreography, actor expression
6	Symbols	Clothing, cultural objects, space	Set, props, costumes, visuals
7	Social structure	Relationships among characters and the community	Character relationships and conflict
8	Cultural values	Advice, solidarity, identity	Themes, messages, ethical conflicts

Vaino provides particularly strong material for theatrical dialogue because its fundamental structure involves reciprocal verbal exchange. Its traditional performance by male and female groups creates a dramatic situation based on interaction. This structure can be transformed into dialogue among dramatic characters while retaining the poetic qualities of the source. The transformation also reveals that the oral tradition contains an inherent theatricality. The use of voice, rhythm, response, audience interaction, and musical accompaniment indicates that the distance between oral literature and theater is not absolute. Theatrical adaptation therefore develops potentials that are already embedded within the original cultural practice.

Discussion

The findings presented in Table 1, "Aesthetic Elements of Kaili Oral Literature and Their Theatrical Transformation Potential," demonstrate that the transformation of Kaili oral literature into theater involves eight interconnected aesthetic elements: narrative, language, voice, music, movement, symbols, social structure, and cultural values. These elements indicate that Kaili oral literature constitutes a multidimensional cultural expression rather than merely a collection of verbal narratives. Each element provides a distinct creative resource for theatrical development while maintaining its relationship with the original cultural context.

As shown in Table 1, narrative structures can be reorganized into dramatic plots, conflicts, and scenes, while poetic language can be transformed into dramatic dialogue, monologues, and choral expressions. Vocal characteristics and traditional musical elements, particularly lalove and drums, offer possibilities for developing theatrical soundscapes and dramatic atmospheres. Bodily expressions and patterns of social interaction can be reconstructed through actor movements, choreography, and stage

blocking. Meanwhile, cultural symbols, traditional objects, and social values can be incorporated into visual dramaturgy and thematic development.

Importantly, the transformation potential identified in Table 1 should not be interpreted as a standardized formula for reproducing Kaili traditions on stage. Rather, it represents an analytical framework for identifying relationships between documented cultural elements and possible theatrical expressions. The creative process must distinguish inherited cultural practices from newly developed artistic interpretations. This distinction is essential to ensure that theatrical innovation does not distort the cultural meanings embedded in Kaili oral literature.

Narrative transformation: from utterance to dramaturgy

The first transformation occurs at the narrative level. Oral traditions frequently develop through episodic, associative, and performative structures. Theater, however, generally requires a clearer organization of scenes, conflicts, character relationships, climax, and resolution. The transformation process should therefore not simply reproduce the entire oral narrative. Instead, the creator identifies its central conflict and cultural significance. A long oral narrative can be condensed into several dramatic sequences. Repetitive sections may be retained when they have aesthetic or ritual functions, while other sections may be reorganized to create dramatic continuity. This process can be called dramaturgical condensation. The creator selects narrative units that possess dramatic potential and reorganizes them according to the temporal structure of stage performance. Recent research on the transformation of Dideng into Jambi Malay opera illustrates a similar process. The study describes how an episodic oral narrative can be reorganized into a more linear dramaturgical structure while retaining indigenous verbal forms such as dideng, pantun, and seloko. For Kaili material, dramaturgical condensation should prioritize cultural meanings rather than simply shortening the story. The question is not "Which parts of the story can be removed?" but "Which cultural relationships must remain visible after transformation?"

Language transformation: from poetic utterance to dramatic dialogue

Language is the central aesthetic resource of oral literature. In Vaino, poetic language is created through reciprocal exchanges, metaphorical expressions, rhythm, and contextual meanings. When transferred into theater, these elements can become dramatic dialogue. There are at least three strategies. First, the original Kaili expressions can be retained as much as possible. This strategy strengthens linguistic identity and allows the audience to hear the distinctive sound of the local language. Second, Kaili expressions can be combined with Indonesian translations or contextual dialogue. This strategy can accommodate audiences who do not understand Kaili while maintaining the cultural authenticity of the performance. Third, the poetic structure can be transformed into a chorus, chant, monologue, or collective speech. In this form, the literary quality of the oral tradition becomes part of the theatrical composition. The choice among these strategies depends on the artistic objective and audience. A performance intended primarily for a Kaili cultural community may preserve a larger proportion of the original language, whereas a national or international performance may employ bilingual strategies. The essential principle is that translation should not eliminate the aesthetic characteristics of the source. The sound, rhythm, metaphor, and

expressive intensity of Kaili should remain part of the performance whenever they are structurally important.

Music and vocal transformation

Oral literature is closely connected with musicality. The documentation of Vaino notes that its performance can involve lalove and drums. Thus, music is not simply an external accompaniment added to the literary text; it is part of the performance identity. In theater, traditional musical elements can serve several functions. First, music can establish cultural atmosphere. Second, it can mark transitions between scenes. Third, it can support the emotional development of characters. Fourth, it can function as a dramaturgical voice. The lalove, for instance, may be used not merely as background music but as an acoustic sign of place and cultural identity. Similarly, drum rhythms can structure transitions, intensify conflict, or signal changes in dramatic situations. The transformation should avoid turning traditional instruments into decorative objects. Their cultural meanings and performance contexts should be considered. The integration of traditional music with contemporary sound design should therefore be based on dialogue rather than replacement. This principle corresponds with research demonstrating that oral traditions can become contemporary performance material precisely because their vocal and musical qualities contain dramatic potential. The transformation of Onduo, for example, integrates oral poetry with bodily expression and musical elements within a contemporary theatrical framework.

Body and movement transformation

The body is another important medium of transformation. In oral performance, meaning is often communicated not only through words but also through facial expressions, gestures, posture, movement, and interaction. Theatrical transformation can make these implicit bodily elements more explicit. The actor's body becomes a cultural text. For example, reciprocal patterns in Vaino can be translated into spatial relationships between two groups of actors. The division between mombine and langgai can inspire stage composition, provided that the transformation respects the cultural context of the original tradition. Movement can also be used to represent social relationships. A movement toward another character can symbolize communication or reconciliation, while withdrawal may represent disagreement or separation. In this way, cultural interaction becomes physical dramaturgy. However, cultural gestures should not be invented arbitrarily and then presented as authentic Kaili tradition. The distinction between documented cultural elements and creative theatrical invention must remain clear. This is essential to prevent the theatrical representation from becoming a stereotypical reconstruction.

Symbolic and visual transformation

Theater also transforms oral traditions into visual signs. Costumes, colors, traditional objects, spatial arrangements, lighting, and stage properties can function as cultural symbols. The transformation should prioritize symbolic relevance rather than visual exoticism. A traditional object should not be placed on stage merely because it "looks traditional." Its meaning, function, and cultural associations should inform its theatrical use. The same principle applies to costume. The costume can indicate social position, cultural identity, gender, age, or dramatic transformation. Traditional motifs

can become part of visual dramaturgy without necessarily reproducing ceremonial clothing inappropriately. The use of visual symbols also opens an opportunity to introduce local cultural knowledge to audiences unfamiliar with Kaili culture. Theater can therefore become an interpretive space in which cultural symbols are encountered through embodied experience.

Dramaturgical transformation as a cross-art process

The most substantial transformation takes place when verbal, musical, bodily, and visual elements are brought together within a unified dramaturgical framework. At this stage, the adaptation becomes genuinely interartistic, as different artistic media interact to construct a cohesive theatrical experience. For example, a Kaili oral narrative originally delivered through spoken storytelling may be reconfigured as theatrical dialogue, with the rhythm and intonation of oral expression translated into musical elements, cultural interactions embodied through movement, and symbolic objects represented through stage properties. Although the resulting performance differs from the original oral tradition, it retains meaningful connections to its cultural and aesthetic foundations. The transformation of Kaili oral literature into theatrical performance can be conceptualized as a systematic and iterative process involving documentation, aesthetic analysis, cultural interpretation, dramaturgical adaptation, artistic integration, performance, and evaluation. The process begins with documenting Kaili oral literary traditions, followed by identifying their distinctive aesthetic features and interpreting their cultural meanings within their respective sociocultural contexts. Selected materials are then adapted dramaturgically, with particular attention to preserving their narrative structures, symbolic meanings, and cultural values while exploring their potential for contemporary theatrical expression. Literary, musical, movement-based, and visual elements are subsequently integrated to create a cohesive performance that reflects the expressive richness of Kaili cultural traditions. The resulting production is refined through rehearsals and staged performances, followed by evaluation involving cultural practitioners and reflection on audience responses. This evaluative stage provides insights into the artistic effectiveness, cultural relevance, and communicative potential of the performance, informing further revisions where necessary. Through this iterative process, the transformation of Kaili oral literature extends beyond artistic adaptation to encompass cultural preservation, creative reinterpretation, and the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. This sequence should not be understood as a strictly linear procedure but as a cyclical process of cultural reinterpretation. Kaili oral literature provides the foundational material for theatrical creation, while theatrical adaptation recontextualizes its narratives, symbols, and performance practices for new audiences. Subsequent evaluations and audience responses may, in turn, inform further interpretations and adaptations. Similarly, Santosa et al. (2021) suggest that transforming oral literature into stage performance can enrich the complexity of traditional narratives and contribute to the resilience of local culture.

The negotiation between preservation and innovation

One of the central issues in transforming oral literature is the relationship between preservation and innovation. Excessive preservation can produce a performance that merely reproduces the past, while excessive innovation can disconnect

the performance from its cultural source. The solution is not to choose one side but to establish a productive negotiation between continuity and change. Continuity can be maintained through the preservation of core narrative meanings, local language, cultural symbols, musical idioms, traditional instruments, and social values. Innovation can occur through dramaturgy, stage design, lighting, multimedia, acting techniques, sound design, and new forms of audience interaction. The transformation of traditional art into contemporary theater should therefore be measured not by the degree to which it resembles the original performance, but by the degree to which the new work maintains meaningful cultural relationships with its source. Recent research on theater adaptation similarly describes adaptation as a process in which traditional elements interact and generate new aesthetic forms while continuing to reference local identity.

An interdisciplinary approach as a development model

The transformation of Kaili oral literature requires collaboration among different areas of knowledge. Literary scholars can identify narrative structures and poetic characteristics. Theater practitioners can translate them into dramaturgy and performance. Anthropologists can explain cultural contexts. Music scholars can analyze traditional musical structures. Cultural researchers can investigate identity and heritage. Educators can develop strategies for transmitting the resulting knowledge to younger generations. Such collaboration prevents the oral tradition from being reduced to a single disciplinary object. The interdisciplinary model can be formulated as follows:

Table 2. Interdisciplinary Contributions to the Aesthetic Transformation of Kaili Oral Literature into Theater

NO.	DISCIPLINARY FIELD	CONTRIBUTIONS
1	Literature	Analysis of narrative, language, symbols, and metaphors
2	Theater	Dramaturgy, acting, blocking, and directing
3	Anthropology	Social and cultural context
4	Music	Rhythm, melody, instruments, and vocals
5	Visual arts	Sets, props, costumes, and visuals
6	Education	Transmission of values and cultural learning
7	Cultural studies	Identity, representation, and cultural change
8	Digital technology	Documentation, archiving, distribution, and multimedia performances

As illustrated in Table 2, “Interdisciplinary Contributions to the Aesthetic Transformation of Kaili Oral Literature into Theater,” the development of theatrical performances based on Kaili oral traditions requires the integration of several disciplinary perspectives. Literature provides the foundation for identifying narrative structures, poetic expressions, metaphors, and cultural symbols. Theater translates these literary and cultural resources into dramaturgical structures, acting techniques, stage movements, and directorial concepts. Anthropology contributes an understanding of the sociocultural contexts in which oral traditions are produced, performed, and transmitted.

Furthermore, music provides analytical and creative resources for reconstructing traditional rhythms, melodies, vocal expressions, and instrumental characteristics. Visual arts contribute to the development of stage settings, costumes, properties, and visual compositions that communicate cultural identity. Education extends the significance of theatrical transformation beyond artistic production by facilitating the transmission of cultural knowledge and values to younger generations. Cultural studies provide a critical perspective on identity, representation, and cultural change, while digital technology supports documentation, archiving, dissemination, and the development of multimedia performances.

The contributions outlined in Table 2 demonstrate that interdisciplinary collaboration is not merely an additional component of theatrical production but a fundamental requirement for responsible cultural transformation. The integration of these disciplines enables artists and researchers to understand Kaili oral literature from multiple perspectives, thereby reducing the risk of decontextualization and superficial cultural representation. Consequently, the interdisciplinary model offers a more comprehensive framework for developing contemporary theater while sustaining the cultural significance of its traditional sources.

This model corresponds with previous studies that emphasize multidisciplinary approaches in transforming oral literature into performing arts.

Theater as a revitalization space of Kaili oral literature

Theater can function as a cultural revitalization space because it creates a new context for traditional knowledge. The audience does not encounter oral literature only as an archival object but as a living performance. This is especially significant when oral traditions face challenges in regeneration. Reports on Kaili cultural traditions indicate that several oral forms require stronger regeneration because their continuity is threatened when younger generations do not inherit performance practices from older practitioners. Theatrical adaptation can provide a bridge between generations. Young people may encounter Vaino, Dadendate, or other traditions through theater workshops, scriptwriting, acting, music, directing, stage design, and digital documentation. The theater therefore does not replace traditional practitioners. Instead, it can create another channel through which cultural knowledge is learned, interpreted, and disseminated. The implications extend to education. Schools and universities can use theatrical adaptation as a project-based learning model. Students can study the original oral tradition, interview cultural practitioners, analyze language, create scripts, rehearse, and perform the result. Such activities connect literature education with cultural education and artistic practice.

A Proposed Model for the Aesthetic Transformation of Kaili Oral Literature into Theater

The analysis supports a proposed model comprising five iterative stages. The model is intended as a practical guide for artists and researchers and should be adapted to the specific tradition, community, and performance context rather than applied as a fixed formula. Stage 1 — Cultural identification. Identify the particular oral tradition and document its practitioners, language, narrative or poetic structure, performance setting, social functions, and relevant protocols. Record the provenance of source materials and

obtain permission where required. Stage 2 — Aesthetic mapping. Organize documented features into verbal-narrative, vocal-musical, bodily-performative, visual-symbolic, and spatial-dramaturgical dimensions. Clearly record which details are documented and which remain uncertain. Stage 3 — Contextual interpretation. Interpret the meanings and appropriate uses of selected features in their original cultural context, consulting reliable documentation and relevant cultural practitioners where feasible. This helps prevent decontextualization, stereotyping, or inappropriate use of culturally restricted material. Stage 4 — Dramaturgical and cross-art reconstruction. Select elements relevant to the artistic purpose and develop them into scenes, dialogue, choral speech, movement, music, sound, costume, objects, and spatial composition. Preserve key cultural relationships while identifying newly created theatrical elements as artistic adaptation. Stage 5 — Performance, evaluation, and reflection. Rehearse and present the work, document the process, and invite feedback from cultural practitioners, collaborators, and audiences. Use the feedback to revise the work and consider how documentation, education, and future transmission can support cultural continuity. The proposed sequence can be summarized as follows: Cultural identification and documentation → aesthetic mapping → contextual interpretation → dramaturgical reconstruction and cross-art collaboration → performance → community-informed reflection and revision. This model emphasizes that cultural transformation is an iterative process. The performance should be open to evaluation and revision, especially when cultural practitioners identify inaccuracies or inappropriate representations.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Kaili oral literature into theater is not simply the conversion of oral stories into drama scripts. It is an aesthetic and cultural process that involves the reconstruction of verbal, musical, bodily, visual, symbolic, and social elements into a theatrical system. Vaino demonstrates particularly strong theatrical potential because its reciprocal poetic structure already contains dialogue, rhythm, interaction, performance, and musical accompaniment. Its documentation as Kaili folk poetry performed by male and female groups in various social contexts confirms the inseparability of verbal expression and performance. The transformation can be realized through six principal dimensions: narrative, language, vocal-musical expression, bodily movement, visual- symbolic representation, and dramaturgy. Each dimension provides a different pathway for artistic development. The resulting theatrical work does not need to reproduce the original oral tradition literally. Rather, it should maintain meaningful relationships with the source while creating new aesthetic possibilities. The interart approach is important because Kaili oral traditions themselves involve multiple artistic forms. Literature interacts with music, voice, movement, visual symbols, and social performance. Meanwhile, the interdisciplinary approach allows the transformation to be examined through literary studies, theater, anthropology, music, cultural studies, education, and digital technology. The broader implication is that theater can become one of the mechanisms for revitalizing Kaili oral literature. It creates opportunities for cultural knowledge to be experienced by younger generations through contemporary artistic practices. This is relevant in a context where regeneration of several Kaili oral traditions has become an important cultural concern. The transformation nevertheless requires cultural responsibility. Artists and researchers

should distinguish between documented traditional elements and newly created theatrical elements. Cultural practitioners should be involved in the process so that innovation does not erase the meaning of the source tradition. In this sense, successful transformation is not determined by how closely the theatrical performance imitates tradition, but by how creatively it sustains cultural meaning while opening new aesthetic possibilities. The proposed model—cultural identification, aesthetic mapping, cultural interpretation, dramaturgical transformation, interart collaboration, performance, and reflection—can serve as a framework for future research and artistic creation based on Kaili oral literature. Such a model also opens possibilities for the development of educational programs, community theater, cultural documentation, and digital archives that position Kaili oral literature as a living source of contemporary artistic creativity.

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