

STREAKS OF AESTHETIC  
MEANING OF VERA  
DISCOURSE TRADITION OF  
RONGGA ETHNIC IN EAST  
MANGGARAI, EAST NUSA  
TENGGARA (In the Perspective  
of Cultural Linguistics)

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STREAKS OF AESTHETIC MEANING OF *VERA* DISCOURSE TRADITION OF  
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(In the Perspective of Cultural Linguistics)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the aesthetical meaning of *Vera* tradition which is one form of ritual traditions in a form of dances and songs belonging to Rongga ethnic located in East Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara. This study is examined from the perspective of cultural linguistic as one of the theoretical perspectives in cognitive linguistics which examines the relationship of language and culture of a society. This study was a descriptive qualitative research with ethnographic approach. The method of data collection is observation, interviews, and documentation, while the data collection techniques are recording and note taking technique. The main data source is the citizens of Rongga ethnic who live in the village of Tanarata, Watu Nggene, bamo and Komba village of which are in the sub-district of Komba, East Manggarai district, represented by four key informants. The data were analyzed qualitatively using inductive and coding techniques. The results showed that the aesthetical meaning of *Vera* discourse implies value of an artistry element and beauty of sensual pleasure, in addition to the value of usability. The sense of the value of art is characterized by the use of some form of linguistic units in the form of a poem by exploiting parallelism features, such as assonance and alliteration, and rhyme, in addition to the use of lexical cohesion in the form of repetition that forms musical effect when the lyrics is sung in order to arouse the emotions of listeners. It is expected that the results of this study can be used as a source of reference in conducting research on aesthetic meaning of dances and folk songs found in the life of a society.

Keywords: *meaning, aesthetics, Vera tradition, Rongga ethnic*

## 1. Introduction

The existence of a human society is characterized by the presence of language. In this regard Soeparno (2002: 5) says that there is no human society without language and there is also no language without human society. The language carry out very important functions and role in the context of the life of a community because of the language is the most effective means of communication to reveal the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the world. This view suggests that the <sup>2</sup> language used in the context of the life of a community is not a stand-alone entity, but from semantic point of view it relates to the culture of the people concerned. However, the relationship of language and culture of a society is symbiotic and reciprocal because there is language in culture and there is culture in the language, in the same manner the language contained in the community and in society there is language. Language is the main feature that distinguishes the human qualities with other species. In addition, the language also serves as a vehicle which determines human existence as individual beings, social creatures, and creatures cultured. Embodiments of the use of language as a marker of human selfhood as individual beings, social creatures, and cultured creatures are reflected in linguistic phenomena that they <sup>11</sup> use in the context of social and cultural context.

Regardless of the role of language as a marker of human selfhood as individual beings, social creatures and cultured organisms, reality of language use as one of the elements forming the content of the culture of a society can be seen in various traditions such as speech rituals, folklore, folk, traditional expressions, puzzle , proverb, and so on. Unit of language used in the text of that culture has distinct characteristics in terms of both form and meaning in the context of socio-cultural society that underlies their use.

This study examined the role of Rongga language as an element of culture content-forming of Rongga ethnic<sup>1</sup> in link with its function as a marker of selfhood and distinguishing features with other ethnicities in East Manggarai. The main focus of the study is the language phenomena used in *vera* tradition which is a reflection of the Rongga ethnic culture that is still alive and thriving. *Vera* tradition serves as load of meaning that reveals a picture of Rongga ethnic community worldview corresponding plurality of socio-cultural realities it faces. Related to its function as a means of entertainment, the most prominent streaks of meaning contained in the form of textual linguistic units used in the *Vera* discourse is the meaning of aesthetic form of artistic taste value containing the value of the beauty of form and the value of sensual pleasure when listened to, in addition to the value of usability (Aminuddin, 1990).

Based on some of the ideas described above as background thought in this study, the aesthetic meaning of *Vera* discourse on ethnic Rongga is examined. *Vera* is an oral tradition which is a product and cultural practices of Rongga inherited from generation to generation including folklore category (Sumitri and Arka, 2013: 728). These characteristics meet the general criteria for the definition of folklore, which is part of a collective culture that spread and passed down traditionally in different versions, delivered orally and is also accompanied by gestures or relevant memory aids (mnemonic device) (Danandjaja 1986: 2).

*Vera* ritual tradition is owned by Rongga ethnic society, involving song and motion that have aesthetic value, which is performed in groups for certain activities. *Vera* is performed in house of tribal drums owner, at midnight to early morning before sunrise. As a ritual tradition, *Vera* has been used since, a heritage and full of cultural meanings.

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<sup>1</sup> Ethnic Rongga is one of the ethnic minorities in Indonesia, which are in the district of the city Komba, East Manggarai regency, East Nusa Tenggara. Ethnic Rongga is scattered in villages Tanarata, Watu Nggene, Bamo village and Komba village with an estimated population of about 8.000 from a population of 11.957 (Komba City Statistics, 2011).

Based on the context of the underlying implementation, in general Vera ritual traditions that live and thrive in the social reality of Rongga ethnic can be classified into two groups, namely *sarajawa vera* (sad vera) and *haimelo vera* (happy Vera). There are several types of Vera belonging to haimelo, one of them is *vera haimelo mbuku sa'o mbasa wini* hereinafter is abbreviated VHMM that is related to agriculture that is the focus of study in this research.

Lexically, the word *mbasa* means 'wet' and *wini* meaning 'seed'. The term *mbasa wini* means spreading the seed with the blood victim (chicken or pork) as an requests expression to God who delivered through the ancestors through so the seed being prepared would blessed to be planted to grow lush and give abundant results in the coming season. VHMM implemented at the beginning of the planting season, which usually falls in October.

VHMM is carried out with the purpose of (1) offers the food / offerings to the ancestors; (2) ask for the blessings of God and the ancestral spirits so that the seeds will be planted in the field in the new season will be flourish and bring abundant results; (3) reminding the whole tribe so they work hard to cultivate land / garden if you want to obtain abundant harvests; (4) fostering a sense of unity and cohesion between the various tribes; and (5) creating an order of healthy and prosperous life as it gets the living.

VHMM tradition as part of the ritual is a traditional dance performance accompanied by singing. The vera dance is performed by adults' dancers, both men and women in the form of two lines under the guidance of a dance leader called *noa Lako*. Female dancers called *daghe* standing in the front row and male dancers called *woghu* standing in the back row<sup>2</sup>. All the

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<sup>2</sup> In accordance with customary rules, each row, both rows of male dancers (*woghu*) and rows of female dancers (*daghe*), minimum must be danced by ten dancers as well as dance leader called *noa lako* danced by a *woghu* (male dancers)

dancers are dancing and singing in the form of two lines and holding hands follow the signposts that guided by *noa Lako*.

Based on linguistic units used VHMM discourse is expressed in the form of poems in Rongga with applying parallelism as a characteristic of oral feature. Text VHMM is exposed in the 163 and 326 line stanzas that the essence of his message reveals cultural conceptualization of Rongga ethnic toward the world.

Researchers are interested in doing this research on the grounds that the choice and order of words used in the VHMM discourse text imply a set of aesthetic meanings that is full of art sense value that contains the beauty of form and sensual pleasure when listening to. This research was done because there is no research that specifically examines the depth of the meaning of the aesthetic features of the VHMM discourse text viewed <sup>16</sup> from the perspective of cultural linguistics.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework used in this study is a linguistic theory of culture. According to Palmer (1996: 10), linguistic culture is <sup>2</sup> one of the theoretical perspectives in cognitive linguistics which examines the relationship between language and culture of a society. The aims of this study focused on the excavation and crawl <sup>15</sup> the meaning of language as a reflection of the cultural meanings <sup>14</sup> that are shared by members of the community concerned. Cultural linguistic analysis aims to determine the cultural understanding of the people concerned in looking at the world, as reflected in the conceptual framework that is imprinted in the map of their knowledge (Foley, 1997:3-5).

Mbete, (1997) stated that the linguistic culture is one of the new horizons in the study of linguistics. In the perspective of cultural linguistics, language used in the context of the life of a society is not only understood as a linguistic phenomenon, but also interpreted as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The goal of the description in the cultural linguistic is the analysis of the behavior and patterns of use of language as a means of communication and the most effective interaction in the context of the life of a society. Associated with it, the study of cultural linguistic more focused on networking sense, extracting meaning, and the discovery of explicit and implicit values behind the use of language in the context of the life of a community. The target networking is done with the main objective to find out their views of the world according to plurality of reality faced and perceived.

According to Hasan (1985: 105) and Ochs (1988: 9), meaning that conceptualized in culture of a language is not universal or common to all languages in the world. Cultural meaning conceptualized in a language is unique and special because it applies only in the order of a society which is the subject of the respective speakers. Differences in cultural meaning system as a reflection of differences of opinion or worldview (culture) of a society, according to Spradley (1997: 123), embodied in symbols. Symbols include what is perceived and experienced by humans, while the reference point on the object that is a reference in the form of things that can be considered in the human experience. Relationship between symbols and objects that become the referent or reference of symbol is called meanings. System of meaning is encoded in symbols and symbol systems that encode major significance is a language in addition to encode the meaning, language is also a major symbol that embodies and signs the disclosure intended meaning (Palmer: 2003: 9; Bungin, 2007: 181-185).

### 3. RESEARCH METODE

This study was a descriptive-qualitative research (Muhadjir, 1995). Referring to Bungin view (2007: 107-123), data collection methods used in this study is the observation, interviews (open and in-depth interviews) and the documentation study, while the data collection technique is listen and record, record, and elicitation. The main data source is the Rongga ethnic community who reside in the district of Komba including the villages of Tanarata, Watu Nggene, Bamo village, and the village of Koma. The data were analyzed qualitatively using the inductive method (analysis that is moving from data towards the concept) and coding techniques.

### 4. RESEARCH RESULT

Based on the research results, a general idea was obtained that the meaning of aesthetic features etched in the form of textual units of language used in the text VHMM has its own peculiarities. The distinctiveness as an aesthetic feature of meaning contains in the text of VHMM discourse. The fact that textual form of linguistic units appear physically on the surface structure, is also closely related to the context of agricultural rituals that underlie the presence of VHMM discourse text.

In regard to the role and function as a means of entertainment, textual form of linguistic units selected and used in the VHMM discourse text implied aesthetic meaning. The aesthetic meaning is embodied in the value of the sense of art that not only contains the beauty of shape when viewed, but also invited to sensual pleasure when listened to and heard. The streak values are interwoven in the artistic sense of unity with the use of forms of linguistic units, characterized by a poetic form of assonance and alliteration. Both form of the linguistic aspects of the musical effect when VHMM discourse is chanted and sung by vera dancers.



As a toehold in assessing aesthetic significance as a problem that became the main object of this research, below the text of VHMM discourse is presented in Rongga language and its translations in Indonesian in the form of assonance and alliteration, and rhyme.

#### 1) Assonance

Formally linguistic text of VHMM discourse is arranged in lines and stanzas which showed fusion through repetition and use of lexical parallelism features that characterize the ritual language in Eastern Indonesia (Fox, 1974: 73, Grimes et al, 1997, Arka 2010). The beauty of the language used in the text of VHMM discourse is not located in a row of words that make it up, but is determined by the sound that emerged through repetition, both in vowel and consonant phonemes, either in part or in whole forming words. Recurrence was found at the level of phonological related to assonance and alliteration as a key pillar in determining the pattern of sound harmonization configuration, the use of which also characterize the existence of VHMM discourse as oral tradition discourse of literary style.

The use of sound patterns with assonance is one of the most prominent characteristics of the phonological parallelism in VHMM discourse text. Assonance is the use of the same vowel sound in words adjacent followed or surrounded by a wide variety of consonant sounds (Reaske, 1966: 21; cf. Pradopo, 1996). Knitted function and significance of high value supported sound pattern that was memorable in the minds of listeners. Assonance sound pattern at the level of the word is dyadic basis with one or more words as expansion. The basic dyadic makes VHMM discourse text appear as an intact text discourse. Mechanism of aesthetic meaning study was conducted by a sense of appearance in each stanza, each of which consists of two lines with the essence of the message content support each other meaningfully as shown in the following example.

(1) *Jara Mosa bhara posa jara ngarha*

Horse male white say horse famous

The white stallion known as famous horse

*Peko maju pengga mbau mbau pengga*

Chase deer stab not so not so stab

Chasing deer want to stab but did not do it

(2) *Embo sosa ndau lau wiri nonga*

The waves sound there to the south line beach

'The waves sound there, to the south beach line.'

*Meti ndili seli meti, reta Wiri Penda*

Recede under dark recade, stop Limit Pandanus

'Recede and dark down there and stop at the limit of pandanus.'

From data (01), it can be seen that the form of textual linguistic unit in the verse implies the meaning of aesthetic characterized by the use of some linguistic phenomena characterized by poetic such as symmetrical and asymmetrical assonance structure. Symmetrical assonance structure is vowel a-a in the word *jara* 'horse' has symmetrical assonance vowel with *bhara* 'white' and *jara* 'horse' with *ngarha* 'famous', while assonance vowel is vowel o-a asymmetric structure on said *mosa* 'male' and *posa* 'be', of which the essence of the message is revealed that someone who has been actively working when there is an obstacle cannot do anything. Success factors of a person can not only be determined by himself, but it is also determined by factors outside himself. Asymmetric assonance structure is vocal o-a contained in the data (02) in the word *sosa* and *nonga*. Asymmetric assonance is in a form of the combination of vocal au-au in the words *ndau* and *lau*. Word *meti* 'downs' has assonance asymmetric vocal with the word *seli* 'dark', the word *ndili* 'under' has assonance symmetric vocals with *wiri* 'limit', and the word *reta* 'stop' vocal has assonance symmetric vocals with the word *penda* 'pandan'. The sound of the

vowel phonemes that has assonance both asymmetric and symmetric is the sound of the vowel phonemes e-i, i-i, and e-a.

Of the two types of assonance above, the use of asymmetric assonance is more dominant. Of the 238 number contained in the text assonance VHMM discourse, symmetrical structure assonance number by 99 (40.23%) and assonance asymmetric structure as much as 139 (59.77%) of the 326 number of lines and 163 number of stanzas. This linguistic phenomenon occurs because the diction and the diversity of the phonemes performance to create aesthetic meaning concentrations physically and sensually, in addition to support the chanting of songs, and for the creation and retention effect of musicality. Frequency of occurrence of type assonance in VHMM discourse can be seen in the following table.

**Table 01**

**The type frequency of use of assonance phoneme vocals in discourse VHMM**

Number	Type assonance	Type assonance phoneme vocals	The Amount	Percentage (%)
1.	Symmetrical structure	a-a = 37 i-i = 3 e-e = 36 u-u = 3 o-o = 20	99	40,23
2.	Asymmetris structure	a-e = 38 a-i = 24 a-u = 16 a-o = 14 o-i = 6 e-i = 10 e-u = 6 i-u = 7 e-o = 18	139	59,77
	<b>The amount</b>		<b>238</b>	<b>100</b>

## 2) Alliteration

Alliteration sounds associated with the performance in the form of repetition of consonants or consonant clusters at the beginning of a syllable or word sequentially. Alliteration has a function to deepen a sense, in addition to featuring shades orchestra and facilitate speech (Kridalaksana, 1984: 9; Pradopo, 1987: 37). Alliteration as one of parallelism at the level of phonological features is found in the text of VHMM discourse, with diverse patterns so it is difficult to be clearly rolled. Phonological form of parallelism in the form of alliteration lies in the dyadic basic elements with one or more words as the expansion on both devices of the dyadic. This form of parallelism makes knitted expression meaning is more pronounced and memorable in the minds of the owners and supporters of VHMM discourse text. Based on the consonant sounds in words alliterated in the word of each dyadic, some kinds of alliteration were found that include, among others, consonant alliteration on each element of dyadic, consonant alliteration is one element of dyadic, consonant alliteration between dyadic elements. In the text VHMM discourse, is found only consonant alliteration of each element in dyadic, at the first and end position, as shown in the following data.

(03) *Kowa saka sapa lau lema lau*  
Small boat tandem canoe to depth to  
'Small boat ride tandem a canoe in the depths of the sea'  
*Wesa mani lai tenge tuu tuu tenge*  
Paddle so agile itself truly itself  
'paddle so agile by itself truly by itself'

(04) *Mbata sosa mbata mbale*  
Sound waves thunder shout

‘thunderous sound of waves shouted’

*ture watu lamba ture tepe*

stack stone barrier stack neat

‘stone barrier neatly stacked’

(05) *peko lako ona woe kita tau rame-rame*

Chase dog ona wo’e we are know festive

‘We know do dogs chase’

*Peko lako lesa, kita tau degha-degha*

Chase dog lesa, we are know play

We know the dog chase playfully lesa

In the data (03) the word *saka* 'sponger' to have consonant /s/ alliteration with the word *sapa* in *saka sapa* dyadic appear at the starting position, and the word *lau* 'sea' which has consonant /l/ alliteration with the entry word *lema* 'depth' at the dyadic *lau lema* 'deep sea' appear at the starting position. In the data (04), the word *mbata* 'thunderous' which has consonant mb alliteration with *mbale* 'shouted' on dyadic *mbata mbale* 'sea shouted' which is a combination of two consonants /mb/ lies in its starting position. The word *ture* 'stacking' to have consonant alliteration /t/ with the word *tepe* 'neat' which is located at the start position. In the data (05) the word *peko* 'chase' alliteration consonant /k/ with *lako* 'dog' at the center position

From the above description, it can be seen that alliteration is used in the text of VHMM discourse distribution at the initial position and the position of the center, which is predominantly used in the initial position. The use of alliteration in VHMM discourse as shown in table.

**Table 02**

**The type and frequency of alliteration in the early and middle position**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Type Alliteration</b>	<b>The amount</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
1.	The starting position	76	82,61
2.	Center position	16	17,39
	<b>The amount</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

As Seen in the table (02) on top of the number 92 contained in the text alliteration VHMM discourse as much as 76 (82.61%) distributed the beginning and 16 (17.39%) distributed the center position. There is no alliteration distributed in final position because language is the language vokalik cavity or us open syllabe. Nevertheless, the presence of both the position of the sound is very instrumental in assembling the meaning, not to create semantically meaning but to create aesthetic meaning.

3) Rhyme

Rhyme is a form of pattern repetition of the same sounds that appear in sequence on the level of words, phrases or clauses. Form of repetition of sounds in the form of rhyming sounds as characteristic of phonological level parallelism on a basic element that forms the phrase of VHMM discourse text with one or more words that are its dyadic expansion device. The form of phonological parallelism in the form of rhyming sounds make knitted meaning, more noticeably, memorable, the emotions and perceptible in the listener's mind. Based on the language sounds rhyming, rhyme distinguished their sound consonant and vowel rhyming sounds that appear in the form of a looping sound or rhyme or rhymes (cf. Verhaar, 1993: 33). <sup>13</sup> Based on the analysis of data in the text of VHMM discourse, language sounds with poetic consonant or rhyme is found

only in the initial rhyme. Here is an example of the use of sounds or rhyme vowel in the form of early, middle, and end rhyme of the line in the stanza.

The initial rhyme refers to sounds pattern repetition at the starting position, the middle rhyme refers to the pattern of repetition of sounds in the middle position. End rhyme point to a pattern of repetition in final position.

(06) *Kojo paka ghara, lau tolo namba*  
Crab crawl creep toward south any white ground  
'Crab crawling creep toward south on a white ground'  
*Kima mata mite, Ngata lau wena Watu*  
Snail eyes black only toward south under rock  
'only black eyed snail that toward to south under the rocks'

(07) *Lako kongo Rongo ndau, lau wena Watu*  
Dogs bark goats that, toward south under the stone '  
'The Dogs that barks goats ,toward to south under the stone '  
*Tibo miri kambi ndau, lau wena Watu*  
Goat leaned wall that, south under stone  
'The Goat that leaning to wall is in the south under the stone'

In data (06) the word *paka* 'crawl' has final vowel rhyme with the word *ghara* 'creep' in the initial position once to have vocals assonance with the word *namba*. The word *kima* 'snail' has final vowel rhyme with the word *mata* 'eye' at the center position, and the word *ngata* 'alone' to be in final vowel rhyme with the word *wena* 'bottom', at the center position, and the word *lau* 'to the (south)' is in final vowel rhyme with the word *watu* 'rock' in the final position. In data (07) the first line word *Lako* 'dog' is in final vowel rhyme with the word *kongo* 'bark', and the word *kongo* is in middle and end vowel rhyming with *Rongo* 'goat'. In the second line the word *miri*

'lean' is in end vowel rhyme with *kembi* 'wall'. Based on the results of the analysis on the data it showed that the emergence of the final vowel assonance rhyme more dominantly appears at end position.

The use of the final vowel rhyme is very dominant in the VHMM discourse text, in addition to create aesthetic harmony by combining dance movement played by Vera dancer, it also related to typology of Rongga language which is vocalist. The appearance of the final vowel rhyme appear more dominant in its final position as shown in the following table 03.

**Table 03**

**The Position and frequency of us of rhyme in discourse VHMM**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>The amount</b>	<b>Prosentage (%)</b>
1	The starting position	80	32,39
2	Center position	75	30,36
3	Final position	92	37,25
	<b>The amount</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100</b>

In addition, the form of consonant sound similarity is found only consonant sounds at the beginning of the position can be seen in (03) in the first row clause, namely *Kowa saka sapa lema lau* 'small boat ride tandem a canoe in the depths of the sea', and the clause in the second row the seminal *Wesa lai tenge tuu tuu tenge* 'paddle so agile itself actually its own'. The word Saka 'ride in tandem' has consonant rhyming with consonant / s / and at the same time with the word *sapa* 'boat' is in assonance vowel and the word *tuu* true 'and the word *tenge* 'own' 'is in assonance consonant /t/ with the word *tuu* 'true'. Rhyming consonant sound is s-s and t-t.



Demand constraints in the form of rhyme sound repetition causes the VHMM discourse text sounds beautiful, creating sonority causing a certain atmosphere for the listener.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND ADVICE

### 5.1 Conclusions

Characteristics of the aesthetic meaning of the VHMM discourse text on Rongga ethnic is unique in the context of the situation of agricultural rituals and socio-cultural contexts that underlie its existence. The specificity as discrete aesthetic categories of VHMM discourse text characterized by poetic language phenomenon by the use of utilizing features such parallelism (1) assonance with the symmetric and asymmetric structure; (2) alliteration, and (3) rhyme. The repetition of sounds is for the purpose of beauty of aesthetic sense and form. All this creates a sensual pleasure when listened to, and cause sonority and effect of musicality and arouse the emotions of listeners when VHMM discourse text is sung.

### 5.2 ADVICE

Since the tradition of *vera mbuku sa'o mbasa wini* a cultural text trickled from the past or heritage that shows the identity and distinguishing features of a society, some advice can be suggested to the Government of East Manggarai district and Rongga ethnic communities the following. First, to make an effort to document the texts of oral tradition in order to survive and develop according to the actual substance and for the preservation of Rongga ethnic identity as local culture solidarity which outcomes into the culture homogeneity and cultural imperialism. Second, song and dance competitions should be conducted on some celebrations of the national

day every year, such as the National Education Day on May 2 and the independence on 17 August.

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# STREAKS OF AESTHETIC MEANING OF VERA DISCOURSE TRADITION OF RONGGA ETHNIC IN EAST MANGGARAI, EAST NUSA TENGGARA (In the Perspective of Cultural Linguistics)

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