

## From ‘artifact’ to stage ‘performance’: A comparison of the romantic-nationalist and performative paradigms in folklore studies

*Dari “artefak” ke panggung “pergelaran”: Perbandingan paradigma romantik-nasionalisme dengan performatif dalam studi folklore*

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### Article History

Received 4 February 2025

Revised 9 April 2025

Accepted 21 April 2025

Published 21 May 2025

### Keywords

romantic-nationalism;  
performance; paradigm  
comparison; folklore studies.

### Kata Kunci

romantik-nasionalisme;  
performatif; perbandingan  
paradigma; studi folklor.

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### Abstract

The emergence of the text/context debate in folklore research has facilitated new interpretations of how researchers approach their objects. Folklore research focusing solely on "text" has faced criticism for disregarding the contextual factors surrounding the genesis of folklore. This study compares the paradigm that perceives folklore textually with the paradigm that contextualizes it by examining the Romantic-nationalist and Performative paradigms. The use of the Romantic nationalism paradigm as a representative of item-oriented research is based on its historical, epistemological, and practical aspects. This study uses a qualitative methodology with a literature review to evaluate and synthesize existing research on the Romantic-nationalist and Performative paradigms in folklore studies. The primary distinction lies in focus: Romantic-nationalism views folklore as a traditional artifact that fosters collective identity, while the performative paradigm sees folklore as a dynamic social event in constant flux. While each paradigm has distinct strengths and limitations, synthesizing both offers a comprehensive perspective encompassing the static and dynamic dimensions of folklore. This study provides a framework for understanding folklore as both cultural heritage and a mechanism for constructing identity within dynamic social change.

### Abstrak

Perdebatan teks/konteks dalam penelitian folklor memunculkan pemahaman baru terhadap cara pandang peneliti dalam melihat obyek materialnya. Penelitian folklor yang melihat hanya persoalan "teks" mendapat kritik karena mengabaikan konteks yang melatarbelakangi lahirnya folklor. Tulisan ini membandingkan kerangka paradigma penelitian yang melihat folklor secara tekstual dengan paradigma yang melihatnya dalam kerangka kontekstual dengan membandingkan paradigma romantik-nasionalisme dengan paradigma performatif. Paradigma romantik-nasionalisme digunakan sebagai paradigma yang mewakili model penelitian *item-oriented* berdasarkan aspek historis, epistemologis, dan praktis. Penelitian ini berjenis kualitatif menggunakan metode kajian pustaka untuk mengumpulkan, mengevaluasi, dan menyintesis literatur mengenai paradigma Romantik-nasionalis dengan Performatif dalam studi folklor. Perbandingan menunjukkan perbedaan utama terletak pada fokus utamanya: *Romantic-nationalism* melihat folklor sebagai artefak tradisional yang berfungsi membangun identitas kolektif, sementara paradigma Performatif melihat folklor sebagai peristiwa sosial yang terus berubah. Selain aspek kelebihan dan kekurangan tiap paradigma, diperlukan integrasi keduanya untuk menciptakan cara pandang holistik yang menangkap aspek statis dan dinamis folklor. Studi ini menawarkan kerangka kerja komprehensif untuk folklor tidak hanya sebagai warisan budaya, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme membangun dan menegosiasikan identitas dalam konteks perubahan sosial yang dinamis.

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### How to cite this article with APA style 7th ed.

Andalas, E. F., Sudibyo, S., Saktimulya, S. R., & Indrastuti, N. S. K. (2025). From ‘artifact’ to stage ‘performance’: A comparison of the romantic-nationalist and performative paradigms in folklore studies. *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 8(2), 393—408. <https://doi.org/10.30872/diglosia.v8i2.1225>



Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya

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## A. Introduction

The discipline of folklore studies has a rich historical trajectory. The Romanticism and Nationalism movements in nineteenth-century Germany represent the initial phase of a systematic investigation of oral culture (Finnegan, 1979; Oring, 1986; Sims & Stephens, 2011). In contrast, the Study of Antiquities, which emerged in eighteenth-century England, was considered by some scholars as an early form of folklore study (Dorson, 1969). Early folklore scholars focused on documenting various forms of folklore within communities (Pratiwi et al., 2018). They amassed a diverse collection of folkloric materials, including folktales, folk songs, proverbs, and oral poems, which constituted vibrant elements of the community's cultural heritage (Dorson, 1969; Harvilahti, 1997; Kelin, 1997; Oring, 1986). These fieldworkers recorded, transcribed, and utilized the materials for research. Subsequent analyses of the collected folklore items were conducted to identify fundamental motifs, trace global distribution, understand the cognitive systems of communities based on the structure of oral narratives, and determine their functions within a community (Sulistiyorini & Andalas, 2017).

During the mid-20th century, specifically from 1965 to 1979, a significant transformation occurred in the field of folklore studies. In his edited volume, *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (1972), Dorson identified a burgeoning trend among emerging folklorists who began to prioritize a contextual approach. This marked a departure from the previously dominant monolithic methodology used in folklore research. These scholars aimed to understand folklore by considering both its textual attributes and the context of the folklore itself (Dorson, 1972). It is imperative to acknowledge that folklore researchers cannot reduce folklore to its textual dimension alone, as this represents only one aspect of a multifaceted phenomenon. At a seminar organized by the American Folklore Society on *Folklore and Communication*, prominent folklorists such as Ben-Amos, Roger Abrahams, Dell Hymes, Richard Bauman, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Bruce A. Rosenberg, Robert Georges, Barre Toelken, and Alan Dundes underscored the importance of understanding folklore within its socio-cultural context (Ben-Amos & Goldstein, 1975). Scholars have historically concentrated on a specific item (text) of folklore, often neglecting the context that engenders it (Georges, 1980). As a result, researchers have frequently overlooked local contexts and cultural conventions, instead relying on ethical interpretations. This paradigm shift in folklore studies from an item-oriented focus to a contextual approach represents a novel proposition that diverges from the prevailing perspectives. This involves redirecting attention from the text alone to the context surrounding folklore texts, thereby instigating text/context debate among experts.

Contemporary scholars in the field of folklore have raised concerns regarding the tendency of researchers to prioritize the collection of individual folklore items without adequately considering the contexts that contribute to their creation. Modern folklorists perceive folklore as a dynamic entity that evolves in response to societal needs and demands. Consequently, it is imperative for researchers to also focus on the contexts surrounding the text, including performers, audiences, objectives, organizers, situations, performance framing, and local conventions. Researchers must address fundamental questions concerning the identity and societal position of the performer, the geographical context of the performance, the composition of the audience, and its influence on folklore texts. The texture of the performance and whether the text maintains identical content and form are crucial considerations. These enquiries are essential for a comprehensive understanding of folklore performance. Researchers often overlook these aspects, treating folklore as a static cultural repository when it is dynamic within society.

The discourse surrounding the text/context dichotomy in folklore research has led to novel interpretations of the perception of objects by researchers. The previously dominant "text"-centered paradigm has been criticized by scholars who advocate recognizing folklore transmission as a performative act. This paper seeks to compare textual and artistic communication paradigms within folklore research, specifically examining Romantic-nationalist and performative paradigms. The Romantic-nationalist paradigm exemplifies an item-oriented research model for historical,

epistemological, and practical considerations. Historically, this has laid the groundwork for the epistemology of folklore research and continues to shape researchers' perceptions of folklore.

Examining Romantic-nationalist and performative frameworks in folklore studies represents a substantial scholarly pursuit. The Romantic-nationalist framework prioritizes the collection, preservation, and reversion of traditional folk customs and narratives as symbols of national identity and cultural heritage. Historical research indicates that folklore studies experienced a notable increase in the 19th century, as scholars sought to uncover and interpret folktales, songs, and traditions that encapsulate a nation's essence (Hämäläinen & Karhu, 2023; Stark, 2016; Watson, 1996). This approach promotes a nostalgic portrayal of culture, aiming to reinforce national identity through shared memories, values, and customs, as explored in studies examining the connection between folklore and nationalism in Basque and Latvian narratives (Kencis, 2020; Watson, 1996). In contrast, the performative framework challenges this static perspective, viewing folklore as dynamic, context-dependent, and intertwined with everyday social interactions. This perspective shifts the focus from folklore as mere objects of study to the processes and practices that generate folk culture (Anggraini et al., 2022; Haring, 2018). Anthropological studies have explored how children engage in "peer cultures" through folklore, highlighting the social roles of folk narratives and practices in shaping identity and belonging (Niskač & Vendramin, 2022). This framework also examines the role of folklore in contemporary globalized societies, where traditional stories may adapt to new cultural contexts (Haring, 2018; Ironside & Massie, 2020).

The interaction between the paradigms of Romantic nationalism, which aim to consolidate identities through tradition, and performative approaches that embrace change presents a fertile area for further exploration in folklore studies. Recent research highlights how the integration and adoption of folkloric practices from diverse cultures can significantly alter folk narratives (Haring, 2018). Moreover, the performative approach posits that folklore is not merely a static cultural reflection but a dynamic entity that evolves through performances, thereby complicating the concept of 'authentic' folklore (Bronner, 2018; Tokpayeva et al., 2024).

This divergence in perspective stems from the foundational assumptions inherent to the two paradigms. Unfortunately, comparative research focusing on the shared elements of these paradigms remains unexplored. Existing studies, such as those examining the role of folklore in nationalist movements, have documented its function as a vehicle of identity amid globalization (Herzfeld, 2003). Furthermore, research indicates that educational frameworks frequently neglect the dynamic interaction between local folklore and contemporary narratives, underscoring the necessity for curriculum reforms that integrate both the historical and performative dimensions of folklore (Anggraini et al., 2022; Nanda et al., 2021). Consequently, investigating the interplay between Romantic-nationalist and performative paradigms enhances our comprehension of folklore as a cultural phenomenon and advocates an integrative approach that values both the preservation of heritage and the dynamic practice of culture in contemporary society. Epistemologically, there are clear differences in assumptions, objectives, focus, and methods when compared to the performative paradigm. Practically, this comparison is relevant to the Indonesian context, where many assumptions and thought patterns are still used. A comparison of these paradigms in folklore studies is important because it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of their differing perspectives. This comparison broadens the theoretical framework and aids researchers in selecting a paradigm that aligns with their study object and research objectives.

## **B. Method**

This study adopts a qualitative methodology employing a literature review approach to collect, evaluate, and synthesize existing literature on the Romantic-Nationalist and Performative paradigms within folklore studies. This method was chosen because of the research objective of understanding the context and evolution of knowledge derived from previous findings, which can serve as a foundation for subsequent research (Hadi & Afandi, 2021; Mahanum, 2021).

The research process was executed in the following stages: (1) topic determination, (2) literature search, (3) critical evaluation and analysis, (4) organization and synthesis of information, and (5) drawing conclusions (Ridwan et al., 2021). Throughout this process, researchers compare information from various sources to identify similarities, differences, and emerging patterns from the literature review. The literature search concentrated on the primary sources of publications by leading researchers in folklore studies.

## C. Results and Discussion

This section initially outlines the framework within the Romantic-nationalism paradigm that utilizes performatives. Subsequently, a comparative analysis was conducted between the two paradigms, focusing on their fundamental assumptions, advantages, and disadvantages in elucidating folklore within society. The discussion of these assumptions is confined to two aspects. The following section examines the contemporary relevance and challenges of these paradigms present in modern folklore studies, particularly concerning the understanding of cultural transformation.

### 1. The Romantic-Nationalist Paradigm

In the 18th century, Romanticism emerged in Europe, characterized by nationalistic sentiments. Philosophers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich von Schelling, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Friedrich von Schlegel were instrumental in shaping Romanticism, which subsequently influenced oral cultural studies. This paradigm arose in response to rationalism and industrialism, emphasizing emotions, imagination, nature, and local culture (Hroch, 2007). Romantics' concept of the "folk" suggested that civilization distanced humans from nature, necessitating spiritual purification (Sims & Stephens, 2011). As civilization progressed, artists and scientists experienced alienation, perceiving their work as futile. They posited that art and poetry originated from a spontaneous response to nature rather than mere intellectual manipulation (Oring, 1986). Romantics felt disconnected from noble values because of the encroachment of modernity. Romantic scholars collected *volkslieders* (folk songs) to reconstruct national literature and preserve literary works, viewing these songs as conduits for authentic ancestral values. The imperative to explore and preserve cultural heritage has emerged from its potential loss to modernity. Romantic thought has significantly influenced nationalism and the conceptualization of the state (Harvilahti, 1997). Emerging states endeavored to reclaim past glory by investing in the recreation of histories, particularly their "golden age", to substantiate national identities. The collection of past cultures and ancestral lores led to early folkloric efforts in 19th-century Europe. Nationalism has played a pivotal role in documenting the traditions of traditional societies. Notably, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm's work on documenting German folklore is significant. Their contributions include those of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 1812; *Deutsche Sagen*, 1816; and *Deutsche Mythologie*, 1835 (Oring, 1986). The Grimm brothers aimed to reconstruct ancient teutonic mythology. Nations such as Germany, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and the United States sought cultural autonomy by collecting oral traditions. Finnish folklore studies commenced with Elias Lönnrot's 1835 work *Kalevala* (Dorson, 1969). Scholars assert that the narratives, songs, and customs of peasant communities reflect the essence of their ancestors (Oring, 1986).

During the twentieth century, Romantic-nationalism emerged across Asia, Africa, and South America. The collection and utilization of folklore in cultural and national movements have been pivotal in the cultural development of numerous countries (Harvilahti, 1997). The act of collecting folklore is essential for establishing cultural identity, life, and artistic expression. Romantic ideologies significantly influence the tendency to gather cultural artefacts from the past. In instances where a nation's historical, linguistic, and cultural identities are ambiguous or contested, there is a concerted effort to establish a national culture by recovering or reinventing ancestral heritage, which includes the creation of national myths and symbols. This phenomenon highlights



the role of Romantic-nationalism in catalyzing state formation, particularly among those seeking independence in nineteenth-century Europe and countries striving for national unity. Developments in Europe, notably the contributions of the Grimm brothers, have resonated among English researchers. In 1846, William John Thoms introduced the term "folklore" to supplant "popular antiquities" or "popular literature," terms that were prevalent in England. As articulated by William Thoms (Finnegan, 1979),

“Your pages have so often given evidence of the interest which you take in what we in England designated as Popular Antiquities, or Popular Literature (though by-the-bye it is more a Lore than a Literature, and would be most aptly described by a good Saxon compound, Folklore, - the lore of the people) – that I am not without hopes of enlisting your aid in garnering the few ears which are remaining, scattered over that field from which our forefathers might have gathered a goodly crop” (Finnegan, 1979).

In his scholarly endeavors, Thoms endeavored to convince English antiquarians that the cultural artefacts they were amassing were more reflective of societal lore than literary compositions or historical relics. He characterized folklore as encompassing the belief systems, customs, and narrative traditions of bygone societies. Thoms advocated those readers of *The Athenaeum* collect and submit legends, local traditions, and ballads prevalent in England during this era. This initiative is widely acknowledged as the inception of "folklore" as a distinct academic discipline, which emerged in the mid-19th century.

Each paradigm is founded on interwoven components that constitute its basis (Ahimsa-Putra, 2009). This paradigm conceptualizes folklore as a historical artefact that embodies the national spirit (*volksgeist*), serving to preserve collective identity in the face of modernity. The collection of folklore is seen as a means to recognize an authentic collective identity rooted in cultural collectives that reflect the *volksgeist*. Romantic-nationalist intellectuals have emphasized the emotional, imaginative, natural, and local aspects of identity. The objective of folklore research is to rediscover indigenous collective identities and preserve traditional cultural forms to foster national identity, often romanticized as cultural repositories. This research focuses on preserving national identity and utilizing folklore to reinforce national ideology. Notable examples include the exploration of national identities in Germany, the Czech Republic, and Hungary following the Renaissance and the French Revolution, the Baltic states' quest for identities during the Tsarist imperial crisis, and Flanders' pursuit of autonomy (Trencsényi & Kopeček, 2007). In Indonesia, the study of folklore contributes to the establishment of a national identity, tracing back to the Dutch East Indies period (1600-1942), primarily conducted by Dutch researchers (Andalas et al., 2024). Following independence, Balai Pustaka, with the support of the local government, undertook preservation initiatives (Moriyama & Budiman, 2010). Indonesian folklore research is a significant strategy for promoting national culture and extracting the values and cultural identity of past societies. Novianti (2022) indicates that, while folklore research in Indonesia supports literacy and character building, government efforts in folklore collection aim to reinforce national integrity, promote unity in diversity, and disseminate national values. This paradigm views folklore as a static cultural "artifact" that maintains ancestral forms and serves as a repository of cultural values.

Numerous concepts have been formulated to study folklore. The term "folk" refers to ordinary individuals or traditional societies regarded as custodians of cultural authenticity and unadulterated tradition. The notion of *volksgeist*, introduced by Johann Gottfried Herder, posits that each nation possesses a collective 'spirit' manifested in its folklore. The concept of "authenticity" is central, highlighting folk traditions as "pure" cultural heritage. From a Romantic-nationalist perspective, authentic traditions are believed to develop exclusively in rural communities that remain unaffected by modernity or external influences. National identity plays a pivotal role, with folklore employed to emphasize cultural distinctions among nations. Notable examples include Kalevala and Grimm's Fairy Tales, which construct national narratives through folklore. Researchers employ text-based data collection from traditional sources and interpretive analysis to discern the national

essence. Their objective is to gather cultural artefacts for the analysis, preservation, and cultivation of a collective national identity. This paradigm was shaped by the emergence of Romanticism and nationalism during the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly within the European context. It often homogenizes folklore to substantiate national narratives. Individuals are perceived as components of cultural collectivity, representing nations, and underscoring the paradigm's nationalistic orientation.

## 2. The Performative Paradigm

The concept of 'performance' is instrumental in enabling scholars to understand various phenomena. In the field of Folklore, Richard Bauman's influential work, "Verbal Art as Performance" (Bauman, 1975), introduced a Performance-centered approach. This approach contrasts with the text-centered perspective, which regards folkloric elements as "material", by conceptualizing Folklore as "communication" defined by its participants. The performative paradigm can be traced back to Abraham's early ideas. Abrahams (1968) advocated for a "rhetorical" approach to analyze traditional expressions, examining aesthetic performance, items, and audiences. Drawing on Kenneth Burke's philosophies, this perspective shifts Folklore interpretation from an item-oriented to an agency-oriented focus, emphasizing "strategies that attend to the context of the situation" (Abrahams, 1968). Rather than perceiving traditional heirs as mere successors, Abraham sought to understand the motivations behind artistic actions in specific contexts. Abrahams (1968) contended that the literary approach in folklore studies prioritizes form analysis and distribution, often overlooking social and performance contexts, whereas the anthropological approach emphasizes social contexts and cultural values, frequently neglecting aesthetic elements. He posited that a comprehensive understanding of folklore necessitates the integration of aesthetic considerations, social context, and performance analysis to gain insights into culture and society. This notion has been supported by numerous researchers and published in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Volume 84, Number 331, 1971, edited by Americo Paredes and Richard Bauman. Bauman (1971) underscored the importance of performance as an organizing principle that encompasses expressive actions, forms, and aesthetic responses within specific local and cultural contexts. This perspective shifts the focus from "artifacts" to "performances" within folklore.

The performative perspective within folklore studies gained prominence in the 20th century. This paradigm is supported by three fundamental principles that underpin the analogy of 'performance' (Bauman, 1992b, 1992a). First, the term is aesthetically neutral, signifying actual (artistic) communicative behavior. Second, it symbolizes a particular situation that is metaphorically interpreted as representative of the society in which the performance takes place. Third, it constitutes an aesthetic mode of communication (verbal art) that is fictionalized through dramaturgical metaphors involving the setting, stage, and audience. Folklore is characterized by its fluidity and adaptability, manifesting in diverse forms with each performance (Finnegan, 1992). Scholars have documented folklore performances as individualized creative processes that are integral to everyday life and practice (Kapchan, 1995). This framework emphasizes the importance of conceptualizing folklore as a "performance", highlighting the uniqueness of the communicative event, which diverges from conventional practices. Thus, a communicative event is an artistic performance. In Javanese culture, traditional performances such as *ketoprak*, *ludruk*, *wayang kulit*, *wayang wong*, and *campur sari* (a traditional performing art that integrates drama, dance, music, and literature, with dialogue and *tembang* (singing) as its principal components) attract audiences to partake in the spectacle. The performance becomes a shared experience with the audience and performer collaboratively creating a unique event. Movement need not be immediately recognizable. This distinction may be evident in certain instances, such as when an event is identified as a performance event. Examples include *ketoprak*, *ludruk*, or *wayang topeng malangan*. The event was delineated by its setting, structure, and participants. Costumes, musical instruments, and the presence of other performers differentiate between these performances. This stage functions

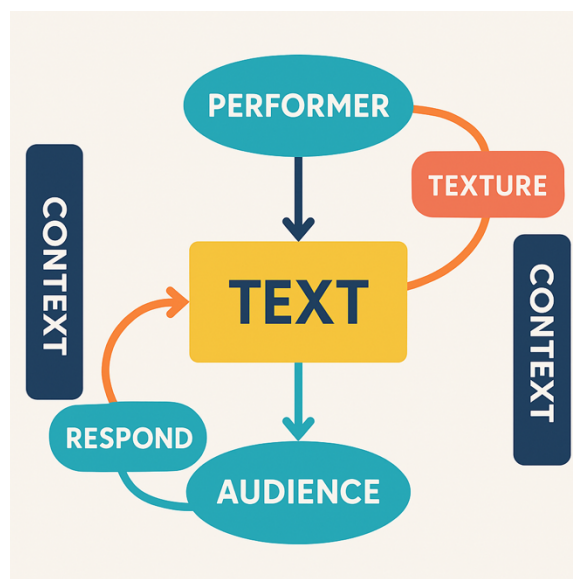
as a venue and is frequently integrated into ritual practices. Distinguishing characteristics include specific settings, structures, and situations. The sequence of performances is marked by standard activities recognized by the community based on cultural conventions. The roles of the ritual leader, the objects utilized, and the supporting community become discernible.

In an alternative context, the term "performance" does not necessarily pertain to the previously mentioned conditions. Performance can occur in a natural environment, and such challenges are common in everyday life. For example, a young family embarking on domestic life may face disagreement. A husband might await his wife, who arrives late with groceries, including luxury items. The husband remarked, "We are a young family with limited financial resources. Overspending must be avoided. Remember that we are in the early stages of establishing a household. Our household requires daily essentials such as milk, clothing, and sustenance." This discourse recurs in daily interaction. However, this exchange is not merely casual dialogue, but a carefully orchestrated performance of proverbs. The couple engages in distinctive communication, utilizing proverbs as artistic expressions. These proverbs persist unconsciously in daily life. According to Simatupang (2013), three criteria identify a performance: (1) the intent to be seen or heard by others; (2) an element of unfamiliarity as a spectacle attraction; and (3) an event that combines the presenter's intention to perform with the audience's expectation of experiencing something unusual. Consequently, performance constitutes an expressive activity that requires participants, experiences, and invitations to respond (Sims & Stephens, 2011). Performance requires a frame to be recognized by each participant (Simatupang, 2013). This underscores that in a performance, the awareness of both the performer and audience concerning the frame that binds their existence is pivotal in shaping the performance. According to Bauman (1975), performance constitutes a mode of speaking. This perspective aligns with the aforementioned example, which characterizes performance as an artistic form of communication. A performance requires a frame that renders it a form of performance based on participant awareness. In this context, folklore encompasses the social, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions that influence text emergence.

The term "performance" encompasses two distinct interpretations: the artistic act of conveying folklore and the artistic event within that context. This context comprises the performance situation, performers, text, audience, and setting (Bauman, 1975). This paradigm considers these elements collectively. Folklore text includes proverbs as well as the textures and contexts surrounding them. There are numerous potential outcomes and underlying factors for these interactions. Scholars recognize that struggle is a dynamic process that is unlikely to be replicated identically in different contexts.

Bauman's perspective illustrates his rejection of the notion of folklore as a detached entity. Instead, he conceptualizes it as a multifaceted phenomenon that necessitates contextualization and ethnographic analysis. The dynamic nature of folklore, which is continuously reproduced, challenges the perception of passivity (Bauman, 1986). The existence and form of folklore are contingent on performers' actions; without performance, folklore becomes inanimate. Performance is deeply rooted in the performer's social and cultural milieu, which is intricately linked to their community role. Consequently, folklore text and context are inseparable elements that mutually influence each other.

Folklorists and researchers have focused on expressive actions within artistic communication, examining aspects such as timing, location, participant involvement, methods, and purposes. The term "folklore performance" denotes the comprehensive structure that forms the unity of the folklore text. The acknowledgement of folklore as an artistic communication event is based on multiple frames that collectively constitute the performance event. These elements include performers, audiences, texts, and settings. The following diagram illustrates folklore performance in its natural form.



**Figure 1. Artistic Communication of Folklore Performance**

Folklore performance is a multifaceted event. The aim of folkloric storytelling is intricately linked to that of folkloric performances. As illustrated in Figure 1, performers assume a pivotal role in the process of artistic communication, which encompasses both the creation and transmission of folklore texts. The transformation of folklore text into a coherent form is enabled by performers' artistic skills. Consequently, folklore text serves as a conduit between the performer and audience.

The Performative Paradigm conceptualizes folklore as a dynamic entity. Scholars within this framework assert that contemporary custodians of tradition must comprehend folklore by recognizing humans as active participants in its creation and perpetuation. Individuals select, adapt, and transmit traditions to subsequent generations that are influenced by contextual and audience factors. This highlights the role of humans as active contributors to folklore. Researchers aim to elucidate the dynamics of social interaction within folklore and its significance in performance, positing that the essence of folklore is inherently performative. Oral tradition supports this notion, emphasizing folklore as an artistic communication event. The performative paradigm concentrates on the who, how, when, and where of a folklore performance, perceiving it as a communicative event that generates text, texture, and context. Texture and context frequently shape folklore texts that are appreciated by audiences or collected by researchers. This paradigm regards folklore as a communicative event between the performer and audience, where movements and expressions influence the text. Social, economic, and cultural contexts impact both the text and audience. A text performed today and tomorrow will differ owing to factors such as the performer's intentions, audience characteristics, or other contextual influences. This model is fundamental to folklore researchers (see Figure 1).

The performative paradigm conceptualizes folklore as a dynamic event characterised by its social context, interaction between speakers and audiences, and artistic components. Performance is defined as an act of artistic communication within a specific social context, necessitating the analysis of verbal, nonverbal, and contextual elements. Context is of paramount importance; it is essential to recognize that folklore cannot be dissociated from its social, cultural, historical, and situational contexts. The social context encompasses the relationship between the performer and the audience; the cultural context includes values and norms; and the situational context pertains to location, time, and atmosphere. Researchers must establish a connection between performance and context to understand the social functions and cultural meanings of folklore. Interaction involves examining the audience's influence on the evolution of a performance. Artistic communication regards folkloric performances as both a means of information conveyance and



artistic form, emphasizing intonation, storytelling styles, and artistic elements. Researchers engage in participatory observations of folkloric performances and analyze social interactions, relationships, and performative aspects. The relationship between performers, texts, and audiences can be understood through texture and context analysis. Researchers must acknowledge the variation and improvisation in folklore practice, viewing individuals as dynamic participants who influence the evolution of folklore.

### **3. Comparison of the Basic Assumptions of The Romantic-Nationalist and Performative Paradigms**

This section compares the two paradigms in terms of their fundamental assumptions, advantages, and disadvantages in explaining folklore within society, and limitations. The presentation is constrained by two fundamental assumptions inherent to each paradigm.

#### **a. Basic Assumptions: Differences and Similarities**

This review of paradigms is predicated on two primary factors: the relationship between humans and tradition and between individuals and communities, as these represent the most critical distinctions in foundational assumptions and methodologies. It commences with a comparative analysis of the Romantic-nationalist paradigm's perspective on the human-tradition relationship, followed by an examination of the disparities within these perspectives. Subsequently, it delineates disparities within the Romantic-nationalist paradigm concerning the relationship between individuals and communities. The Romantic-Nationalist paradigm perceives folklore as a means to recognize collective identity. Herder's notion posits that every nation is a unified entity with a distinct national character shaped by its physical environment, historical development, and cultural traditions (Wilson, 2006). Folklore reflects a nation's cognitive, emotional, and ethical frameworks, acting as a link between past and future to regain its "national soul" (Wilson, 2006). Humans are part of a cultural collective that reflects the *volksgeist* (spirit of the nation) concept developed by Johann Gottfried Herder. Schmidt (1956) noted that Herder's *volksgeist* concept was essential for preserving national unity, viewing humans as custodians of traditions passed down by ancestors. Tradition is perceived as static and maintained in its original state. An example is the efforts of the Grimm brothers in early nineteenth-century Germany to revive Teutonic mythology, which was perceived as being lost due to Roman, Greek, and Christian influences (Oring, 1986). They collected folkloric traditions, focusing on Teutonic mythology, and considered it the authentic folklore of the original German tribe Teutons.

This paradigm diverges from the performative paradigm, wherein humans actively participate in the creation and preservation of folklore (Bauman, 1975). Within this framework, individuals are perceived as agents who select, adapt, and transmit traditions to subsequent generations, considering the context and audience of their era. This perspective underscores the dynamic interactions among individuals as the primary source of folklore (Goldstein, 1971). It asserts that humans are both creators and interpreters of folklore, engaging in a dynamic process of preservation, alteration, and adaptation in response to evolving societal demands and circumstances. The revitalization of traditions is achieved through performative actions and individual interpretations. Numerous scholars have demonstrated this. Andalas et al.'s (2024) research on Panji stories in Malang revealed that these narratives exhibit varying structures, depending on the performance context. This variation is attributed to factors such as audience demographics and performance settings, which influence the selection of diction, content, and storylines. Johnson's (1979) depiction of epic singers in Somalia and Yugoslavia (Lord, 1971) exemplifies a performer's dynamic role in reinterpreting inherited texts. These dynamic highlights the "oral" nature of folkloric texts, which materializes through performance. The absence of written texts allows for significant modifications across successive generations of tradition-bearers.

Upon close examination, significant parallels emerged between these theoretical frameworks concerning the active role of humans in culture. Both frameworks acknowledge the critical importance of human agency in preserving traditions. While Romantic-nationalist thinkers emphasize collective identity, they also recognize individuals as custodians of tradition, contributing to the preservation of their nation's culture through oral traditions. Similarly, the performative paradigm highlights the interaction between humans and traditions, with individuals playing a crucial role in creating and revitalizing traditions by adapting them to contemporary contexts. The Romantic-nationalist paradigm underscores the connection between humans and their collective cultural communities, viewing individuals as integral components of a nation or ethnic group (Hayes, 1927). Its emphasis on cultural unity reflects a teleological perspective aimed at establishing a homogeneous cultural entity rooted in the concept of *volksgeist*—the soul of a nation embodied in its people's culture, language, and traditions (Schmidt, 1956). Researchers have identified these cultural values as foundational to national identity and community unity. In contrast, the performative paradigm acknowledges the heterogeneity of individual experiences within a community, emphasizing how individuals engage with audiences and contexts to create novel interpretations within established traditions (Bauman, 1975). Traditions are perceived as collaborative endeavors among individuals and communities, reflecting folklore as a dynamic social phenomenon rather than static cultural heritage. Despite their divergent emphases—Romantic-Nationalism on collective and performative individualism—both paradigms concur that an individual's identity is linked to their cultural community. The Romantic-Nationalist paradigm posits that identity is shaped by affiliation with collective culture, while the performative perspective views it as engagement with community culture, reinvigorating, and perpetuating traditions.

#### **b. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Paradigm**

A comprehensive evaluation of the theoretical framework requires an examination of its strengths and limitations. The Romantic-nationalist paradigm offers several advantages: it preserves folklore that is at risk of being lost due to modernization, as exemplified by the Grimm brothers' collection of German folklore. Additionally, it can transform folklore into a catalyst for the formation of a collective identity, thereby fostering nationalism, as illustrated by Kalevala in Finland. This paradigm facilitates an in-depth historical analysis by emphasizing traditional continuity. However, it also has certain limitations. It often overlooks local variations by focusing on a single version deemed national, thereby creating an idealized portrayal of culture. Furthermore, it presupposes the past as an idealized golden age, neglecting historical complexities. This paradigm is frequently used for political purposes. Conversely, the performative paradigm has several advantages. It examines folklore as an everyday practice, thereby enhancing the understanding of how traditions are utilized and adapted. It recognizes individuals' creativity as dynamic participants who adapt folklore to specific contexts and audiences. Emphasis on text, context, and texture allows for comprehensive analysis. Nonetheless, this paradigm has limitations. It lacks a discussion of historicity and does not overemphasize the origins of folklore. Data accessibility is constrained by reliance on direct observation of performance, which is challenging to replicate. Its focus on specific performance events impedes generalization. The advantages and disadvantages are summarized in Table 1.

As illustrated in Table 1, the Romantic-Nationalist paradigm is deemed suitable for research centered on historical contexts and the development of collective identity. In contrast, the performative paradigm is more pertinent to understanding folklore as a dynamic practice in contemporary society.

**Table 1. Summary of Comparison of the Two Paradigms**

No	Aspect	Romantic-Nationalism	Performance
1	Historical Relevance	Strong, digging into the past as a basis for identity.	Weak, more focused on the present.
2	Contemporary Adaptation	Weak, tends to ignore modern dynamics.	Strong, highlighting change and adaptation in practice.
3	Identity Construction	Strong, supporting collective and national narratives.	Limited, highlighting individuals and social interactions.
4	Local Complexity	Weak, often oversimplifies cultural variations.	Strong, recognizing the diversity of cultural expressions.
5	Political Influence	High, often used for ideological purposes.	Low, focusing more on academic and descriptive analysis.

#### 4. Relevance and Challenges of Both Paradigms Going Forward

While Romantic-nationalist and Performative paradigms have profoundly influenced the discipline of folklore studies, they also present certain challenges. The discrepancy between idealized depictions of folk culture and contemporary realities necessitates a critical analysis of how folklore is utilized, represented, and experienced. The significance and challenges of Romantic-nationalist and performative paradigms in folklore studies reveal a complex interplay of cultural, sociopolitical, and artistic dimensions.

##### a. Paradigm Relevance

Both Romantic-nationalism and performative paradigms are extensively utilized by researchers globally, demonstrating a substantial capacity to advance scientific enquiry, particularly within the field of folklore. Romantic nationalism has significantly influenced the understanding of collective national identities across diverse cultural domains. The performative paradigm has facilitated the acquisition of detailed insights into the practical application of folklore in everyday life. In the era of globalization, as administrative barriers diminish, the Romantic-nationalism paradigm remains relevant for cultural preservation. It documents cultural artefacts and ensures their sustainability for future generations, as evidenced by UNESCO programs that conserve intangible cultural heritage. These programs focus on safeguarding practices, representations, expressions, and knowledge that communities regard as part of their cultural heritage, thereby ensuring that these intangible aspects are recognized alongside more tangible artefacts (Boger et al., 2019). Another example is the investigation of knowledge and educational values embedded within folklore (Cahyati & Arifin, 2021; Sari, 2022; Wibowo & Abdullah, 2023). This study aims to uncover the historical local wisdom preserved in folklore artifacts.

This paradigm revitalizes endangered folklore, particularly in postcolonial societies, thereby strengthening national identity and social solidarity. It also promotes national culture on an international scale and contributes to tradition-based tourism programs (Chew, 2022). However, excessive reliance on this paradigm may marginalize minority groups, reinforce stereotypes, and exacerbate ethnic conflicts (Hornborg, 2023). It often overlooks the dynamic nature of tradition, particularly in multicultural societies. The performative paradigm aids researchers in understanding contemporary folklore as an active social process and elucidating its evolution in urban communities and the digital realm. It captures individual creativity and social adaptations by examining digital folklore, including memes, diaspora traditions, cultural festivals, and vlogs. However, overemphasis on this context can diminish the focus on the continuity of tradition with the past, potentially leading to a loss of cultural roots. The romantic nationalist paradigm is pertinent for safeguarding cultural heritage, promoting educational advancement, and fortifying national identity. Nonetheless, it must be adapted to accommodate diversity and modern dynamics to ensure a balanced and inclusive narrative. The performative paradigm is more suitable for studying folklore in contemporary multicultural and digital societies, but requires enrichment with historical perspectives for a comprehensive understanding.

## **b. Future Challenges**

The current and forthcoming periods present challenges for both paradigms. The Romantic-Nationalist paradigm emphasizes the preservation of the past as an idealized state, which impedes adaptation to the evolving cultural landscapes shaped by globalization, urbanization, and digitalization. Contemporary folklore has largely transitioned into digital formats, diverging from the paradigm's notion of "purity." The Romantic-Nationalist perspective on folklore significantly influences researchers' conceptualization of its ontological nature, viewing folklore as a product of agrarian communities, societies beyond urban boundaries, or those not yet embracing literacy. This positions folklore as a cultural artefact of rural communities, in contrast to the influences of modernization, technology, and urbanization. Folklore is perceived as a manifestation of remote, homogeneous, isolated, and undisturbed communities that are untouched by modernization. Empirical evidence indicates that the cultural fabric of rural communities can evolve and manifest in novel forms in urban environments. Urban areas often feature urban legends as part of city folklore, such as the Ghost on Babakan Street Siliwangi, the Spooky tree at Senior High School 2 Bandung, and the Si Manis at the Ancol Bridge. Street performances of traditional songs orally transmitted through generations are common. This oral tradition illustrates folklore's enduring nature, not confined to rural communities, but integrated into the urban fabric. This phenomenon underscores the fact that folklore is not exclusively rural. Technology has facilitated the dissemination of folklore, rendering it accessible in both rural and urban contexts.

Folklore is articulated through literacy as an oral cultural artifact. Two distinct forms of oral media have been identified: primary oral and secondary oral media. The primary oral medium pertains to a natural context in which performance is solely oral or gestural and devoid of technological influence. In contrast, contemporary technology has shaped secondary oral media, encompassing radio, telephone, television, video recording, YouTube, and other electronic devices that rely on writing and printing. Instances of folklore disseminated via secondary literacy media include children's fairy tales broadcast on radio stations and traditional singers recording performances on YouTube. Secondary literacy serves as an intermediary in the modern transmission of oral literature. The perception of folklore as a representation of an ancient, traditional, and technologically unaltered society is currently insufficient for defining oral literature in the present day. Folklore is not a relic but a dynamic form of oral literature that resonates in the contemporary world. A concern regarding cultural homogenization is the focus on national narratives that often overlook the diversity of local or minority cultures, which are increasingly significant in multicultural societies. The Romantic-Nationalist paradigm emphasizes national narratives that neglect the heterogeneity of local or minority cultures, thereby gaining prominence in contemporary multicultural societies. This challenge emerges when local traditions are reduced to generic symbols to construct a national identity. Identity politics and globalization may also influence this discourse. The Romantic-Nationalist paradigm is frequently employed to reinforce exclusive national identities, which can be counterproductive in a global society. This challenge arises from reinforcing national identities, potentially inciting conflict, particularly in countries with colonial and multiethnic histories. Excessive emphasis on idealized past eras often disregards historical complexities, including power dynamics, social inequalities, and internal conflicts within cultures. Tradition is often perceived as static and idealized, neglecting its dynamic nature and susceptibility to change.

However, the convergence of these paradigms presents several challenges. The potential for politicization is evident, as folklore is occasionally appropriated to advance nationalist agendas, intertwining local sentiments with national unity. Herzfeld examined the contradictions that this amalgamation can create within folklore studies, as local customs may be co-opted to reinforce a singular national narrative, thereby marginalizing authentic cultural diversity (Herzfeld, 2003). This phenomenon has been exemplified in various historical contexts, such as during nationalist movements in China, where folklore was employed to foster national cohesion amid cultural plurality (Gao, 2023). Furthermore, the shift in museum studies, as noted by Savolainen and



Potinkara, highlights a broader "mnemonic turn." This perspective recognizes folklore traditions not merely as relics of the past but as living practices that engage with contemporary challenges through interpretation and exhibition practices (Savolainen & Potinkara, 2021). This transformation aligns with the performative paradigm, which promotes active participation in culture rather than passive preservation. However, it also raises challenges regarding authenticity and community representation, as institutions navigate their roles in mediating cultural narratives (Herzfeld, 2003; Savolainen & Potinkara, 2021).

Excessive emphasis on transient context-specific performance impedes systematic documentation and analysis. Understanding infrequent ritualistic or celebratory events presents challenges. This approach often neglects the historical dimensions of traditions, thereby obstructing the comprehension of cultural transformation. Digital technology modifies folklore performance, which necessitates the adoption of virtual methodologies. The dynamics of globalization suggest that adaptation or mutual influence results in complex hybridity that is difficult to define. Both paradigms encounter challenges in comprehending contemporary cultural phenomena. The Romantic-nationalist paradigm must transition from preserving past values to a dynamic understanding of modern culture. Both paradigms must recognize contemporary traditions in digital spaces, such as YouTube, social media, and email. The Performative paradigm must incorporate historical dimensions and structural changes in cultural phenomena. Addressing the challenges of a multicultural and transnational society in which cultural identities are no longer homogeneous is imperative. The commodification of folklore for tourism and political campaigns can influence the interpretation of traditions. Traditional paradigms must consider the economic and power dimensions of cultural transformation. Adapting to technology, multiculturalism, and globalization can ensure relevance in modern folklore studies.

Although Romantic-nationalist and Performative paradigms have significantly shaped the field of folklore studies, they also pose certain challenges. The tension between idealized portrayals of folk culture and contemporary realities necessitates a critical examination of how folklore is utilized, represented, and experienced. Ongoing interdisciplinary approaches, as advocated in various studies, are essential for fostering a nuanced understanding that acknowledges the complexities of cultural identity while addressing the dynamic interplay of memory, performance, and national narratives.

#### **D. Conclusion**

A comparative analysis of Romantic-Nationalism and Performative paradigms reveals a fundamental distinction in their respective emphases. Romantic-nationalism considers folklore a traditional artefact instrumental in constructing collective identity. Conversely, the performative paradigm views folklore as a dynamic social event characterized by constant flux. We posit that integrating these two approaches, with their respective advantages and disadvantages, is crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of folklore that encompasses both its static and dynamic dimensions. By integrating the historical perspective and continuity inherent in the Romantic-Nationalist paradigm with the exploration of folklore's social practices within the dynamics of contemporary society, as elucidated by the performative paradigm, a more comprehensive understanding can be achieved. This integration is facilitated by recognizing cultural hybridity as an integral component of contemporary transformation. Achieving a balanced focus between the expression of local identities and the influence of global trends is essential for comprehending cultural evolution within a broader contextual framework. This study is currently limited to comparing the two fundamental assumptions within the two paradigms. Future research could expand on this by examining additional foundational assumptions in both paradigms.

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