

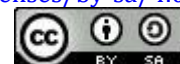
Metaphor Analysis of Cirebon Traditional Songs in the Sintren Ritual

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| Article Info : | ABSTRACT |
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| Accepted: January 16 th , 2026 | Background: Sintren is a traditional ritual performance originating from the northern coastal region of Java, particularly in the Cirebon area, combining elements of dance, music, and spiritual belief. The traditional songs performed during the sintren ritual contain linguistic expressions that often carry metaphorical meanings reflecting the sociocultural, historical, and spiritual values of the Cirebon community. Objective: This study aims to identify and analyze the conceptual metaphors found in three traditional Cirebon songs performed during the sintren ritual, namely Terap Banda, Turun Sintren, and Jala Tangi, using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Method: This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. The data consist of song lyrics from the three selected sintren songs, which were collected through documentation techniques. The lyrics were analyzed through close reading and interpreted using Conceptual Metaphor Theory to identify source domains, target domains, and metaphorical mappings embedded in the songs. Findings and Implications: The analysis reveals that each song contains distinct metaphorical constructions rooted in the sociocultural context of the Cirebon community. These findings demonstrate that traditional songs function not only as ritual accompaniment but also as cultural narratives encoding historical memory, identity, and resistance. Conclusion: The study confirms that conceptual metaphors play a crucial role in constructing meaning in traditional Cirebon sintren songs. Metaphor serves as a cognitive and cultural mechanism through which communities express historical experiences, spiritual beliefs, and collective identity. Furthermore, the study highlights the relevance of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in analyzing indigenous oral traditions and contributes to the preservation and understanding of Cirebon's cultural heritage. |
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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian nation is synonymous with its diverse customs and cultures, spread throughout its regions. Factors influencing these customs and cultures include historical factors, demographic factors, religious factors, political factors, and so on. These variables are then integrated with the many regions in Indonesia, so it is undeniable that Indonesia has a multitude of customs and cultures within it, each with its own unique characteristics that

demonstrate the identity of a particular region. The more differences in factors influencing customs and cultures, the more diverse the customs and cultures within a given region. For example, the Javanese people in the western part of Java and the Javanese people in the eastern part of Java have distinct customs and cultures, even though geographically they are both on the same island, Java.

One of the cultural products of the Indonesian people is rituals or ceremonies, which have various functions and purposes. In practice, these rituals are passed down from generation to generation, serving to accompany sacred events, religious holidays, and even as entertainment for local communities. Therefore, rituals have become integral to Indonesian life. The intrinsic elements contained in rituals are usually inseparable from specific songs, mantras, music, or poetry. All of these elements significantly utilize regional languages.

The Javanese are an ethnic group with numerous rituals in their agendas. The sintren ritual, a form of entertainment featuring various elements, includes dance, singers (*sinden*), puppeteers, and musical accompaniment in their magic shows. The sintren ritual is enjoyed by the Javanese, especially the people of Cirebon and its surrounding areas. Some regions that also have sintren performances include Indramayu, Majalengka, Tegal, Pemalang, and Banyumas. There is no significant difference between the various regions that have sintren performances. The name sintren originates from the root word "*Si*" meaning "the third person pronoun" or "she" and "*trena*" or "*tri*" meaning "a term for a princess." Several stages in a sintren performance include: *dupan*, a prayer procession before the sintren ritual, *balangan*, where the audience throws items at the sintren dancers, and *temohon*, a closing session where the sintren dancers approach the audience to receive money as a token of gratitude for the sintren performance.

Sintren performances are known for their magical magic. Sintren performances require specific criteria to qualify as a Sintren dancer. Only virgins are allowed to perform, and the dancers must fast for a certain period of time before performing. Initially, Sintren was only permitted on full moon nights due to the belief that spirits would enter the dancers' bodies during the full moon. Over time, the ritual was no longer tied to a full moon, adapting to the purpose of Sintren, which is to entertain the public. Certain mantras are also recited by shamans or puppeteers during Sintren performances to perform the magic tricks found in Sintren rituals.

The songs sung in the sintren ritual performance are traditional songs in the Cirebon language. In the sintren performance, there are several traditional songs sung to accompany a series of rituals in it. These traditional songs are

traditional songs entitled *Terap Banda*, *Turun Sintren*, and *Jala Tangi*. These traditional songs are believed to have a magical role in the course of the sintren ritual which certainly has a broader meaning than its literal meaning. Therefore, researchers are interested in studying how a deeper meaning is conceptualized with a metaphor in the lyrics of the songs sung to accompany the sintren ritual performance. So this study focuses on traditional Cirebon songs sung by

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which holds that metaphor is fundamentally a cognitive mechanism through which abstract conceptual domains are structured in terms of more concrete, experiential source domains (Kövecses, 2020). Since its formulation by Lakoff and Johnson, CMT has grown into one of the most extensively applied frameworks in cognitive linguistics, with a rapidly expanding body of research across disciplines and cultural contexts (Zhao et al., 2023).

The application of CMT to song lyrics and folk music traditions has attracted growing scholarly attention. As Peng & Khatin-Zadeh, (2023) demonstrate in a comprehensive bibliometric review, metaphor processing research has expanded substantially over the past five decades, with increasing attention to culturally embedded and non-Western contexts. Zhang, (2024) demonstrated how conceptual metaphors structure meaning in Chinese Hua'er folksongs, revealing how cognitive mappings from concrete natural source domains construct abstract sociocultural meanings within a non-Western oral tradition. Similarly, Lazar & Bram, (2021) applied CMT to song lyrics, showing that metaphorical mappings in musical texts serve as vehicles for complex emotional and ideological content.

So the purpose of this study is to explore how the metaphors exist in traditional Cirebon songs sung in the sintren ritual. Several relevant studies related to this research have been conducted previously, including research with songs as the object of study, including research conducted by (SH Heriwati, 2010), in her research entitled "Metaphors in Javanese Cakepan Songs" the researcher examined how metaphors were formed in Javanese *cakepan songs* entitled *Sekar Ageng Candra Asmara*, *Kembang Mlathi*, *Sekar Ageng Bangsaparta*, *Sekar Macapat Megatruh*, *Sekar Macapat Mijil*, and *Lir-Iilir*. The researcher revealed how metaphors were formed from the lyrics of the *cakepan songs*. From the results of the analysis conducted by the researcher, it was found that there were four metaphors in the collection of Javanese *cakepan songs*, namely; Anthropomorphic metaphor; Synthetic metaphor; Animal metaphor; and Metaphor from concrete to abstract conditions and vice versa.

Still using traditional songs as the object of study whose metaphors are analyzed, conducted a study on metaphors in traditional songs with the title "Cognitive Semantic Analysis in the Aceh Regional Song Bungong Jeumpa". The researcher aims to reveal what metaphors exist in the Bungong Jeumpa regional song from Aceh. In his research, in the song *Bungong Jeumpa* there are eight sentences that have metaphorical meaning in them, these sentences are; (1) *Bungong Jeumpa Bungong Jeumpa Meugah in Aceh* ; (2) *Bungong teuleubeh-teuleubeh beautiful lagoina* ; (3) *Puteh kuneng, meujampu ruby* ; (4) *Bungong the beautiful lagoina act* ; (5) *Lam ray buleun, lam ray buleun angen peu ayon* ; (6) *Duroh meususon, meususon the mala mala* ; (7) *Mangat that mubee, meunyo tatem com* ; and (8) *Leupah that haram si bungong jeumpa*.

Furthermore, Sangian & VA Nasution, (2024) in his research entitled "Metaphors in Slank's Song Lyrics with the Theme of Social Criticism: A Cognitive Linguistic Study". In contrast to the previously mentioned research which used traditional songs as the object of study, the researcher used conventional songs by the famous Indonesian band which is very familiarly called Slank. In this study, the researcher focused on song lyrics that have metaphorical elements entitled social criticism which are relevant to the context of the Indonesian state. The songs used as data are Slank's songs entitled *Apatis Blues, Atjeh, Anarki di RI, Birokrasi Complex, Bobrokisasi-Bobrokisme, Indikator Intelektual, Hey Bung, Anti Nuklir*, and so on. The results of the analysis of the three songs show the presence of structural metaphors and orientational metaphors. Significantly, structural metaphors are more dominant than orientational metaphors.

In the Indonesian context specifically, studies applying CMT to song lyrics and spoken discourse have confirmed the robustness of this framework for analyzing indigenous language use. Suryadi & Uctuvia, (2023) examined conceptual metaphors in popular Javanese songs, identifying how everyday lexicons function as source domains for structural and ontological metaphors. Musyayyab et al., (2022) further extended CMT analysis to Indonesian spoken discourse, demonstrating the pervasiveness of conceptual metaphors in both formal and informal Indonesian communicative contexts.

These studies collectively underscore that songs and oral traditions function not merely as artistic expressions but as cognitive and cultural repositories. Ajayi, (2023) argued that metaphors embedded in culturally specific musical traditions serve as vehicles for encoding community identity and collective resistance. Similarly, Rakhmawati et al., (2024) showed that traditional Javanese ceremonial language encodes historical memory and cultural inheritance, emphasizing the inextricable link between language and cultural continuity in Javanese-speaking communities. In a parallel vein,

Krisnawati et al., (2024) documented that agricultural ritual ceremonies in West Java employ the RICE IS A MOTHER conceptual metaphor to structure communal spiritual values, demonstrating how ritual language in Sundanese and Javanese-speaking communities consistently instantiates culturally specific metaphorical frameworks. Furthermore, Juwariyah et al., (2023) showed that traditional Indonesian performing arts such as *langen tayub* function not only as artistic expressions but as living repositories of cultural knowledge and collective identity, transmitted across generations through ritual performance.

F Miyamasu, (2020) This research conducted by Flamina Fiyamasu is a study that aims to explore the conceptualization of early-level medical students in Japan about the future profession of doctors. The data used are metaphorical expressions obtained from the distributed questionnaire, the questionnaire contains "*A physician is like... because...*" 'A doctor is like... because...'. The sentence is intended to obtain a metaphorical statement where the source domain is mapped to the target domain (doctor) and the reasons for explaining it so that the metaphor can make sense to the participating students. From the series of analyses mentioned above, 16 metaphorical concepts were identified as being expressed by freshman medical students at Tsakuba University in Japan.

These 16 metaphorical concepts were identified, classifiable into the following relational categories: physicians as familial figures (mother, parent, family member, partner); as social and spiritual guides (teacher/mentor, friend, pastor, neighbor); as providers of warmth, comfort, and relief; as figures possessing magical or special abilities; as heroic or heavenly figures; as indispensable professionals with unique knowledge; as diligent scholars; and as skilled problem-solvers. These categories reflect how medical students conceptualize their future professional identity through experiential metaphor (F Miyamasu, 2020).

In a study conducted by Anthony Brown et al., (2018) which aims to reveal how conceptualizations are built on teachers with the Black race. The authors try to show how four metaphors are formed in a historical context and have persisted over time. This research is included in library research, where the source is literature that contains the history of how *Black Teachers* are treated from time to time. The results of the following data give rise to four metaphors; (1) *Black teacher as a commodity* 'Black teacher as a commodity'; (2) *Black teacher as a silver bullet* 'Black teacher as a silver bullet'; (3) *Black teacher as a role model* 'Black teacher as a role model'; and (4) *Black teacher as a kin relation* 'Black teacher as a kin relationship'.

Despite the breadth of existing metaphor studies in both traditional and contemporary songs, no prior research has specifically examined the metaphorical structures embedded in traditional Cirebon songs within the context of the sintren ritual. This gap is significant both academically—as it extends the application of CMT to an under-documented oral tradition in Indonesia—and culturally, given that the sintren songs serve as living repositories of Cirebon’s social history, colonial resistance, and spiritual cosmology. Analyzing these songs through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory therefore offers a unique opportunity to illuminate how cognitive metaphorical structures function within a marginalized indigenous performance tradition.

This study focuses on how metaphors are conceptualized in traditional songs sung during the Cirebon Sintren ritual, a topic that has not been studied previously. Therefore, previous research can be used as a reference for this study. Based on the foregoing, this study addresses the following research objectives: (1) to identify the types of conceptual metaphors present in the traditional Cirebon songs *Terap Banda*, *Turun Sintren*, and *Jala Tangi*; and (2) to analyze how source domains are mapped onto target domains to construct metaphorical meanings within the sociocultural context of the sintren ritual.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study examines how metaphors are conceptualized in traditional Cirebon songs in the sintren performance ritual. This study was designed as a qualitative study that is relevant to the purpose of this study, namely to explore the metaphors conceptualized in a collection of traditional Cirebon songs sung during the sintren performance ritual. The data were collected through a documentation technique, in which the lyrics of the three selected sintren songs were transcribed and subjected to systematic close reading across multiple analytical cycles.

This approach is consistent with qualitative data analysis principles that involve iterative coding and the identification of patterns in textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). For the analysis of conceptual metaphors in folk song traditions, the documentation technique has similarly been applied in analogous studies where song lyrics are treated as primary textual data from which source domain and target domain mappings are extracted and categorized (Zhang, 2024).

The selection of the three songs—*Terap Banda*, *Turun Sintren*, and *Jala Tangi*—was purposive, as these three songs represent the primary ceremonial phases of the sintren performance: the binding and entrancement of the dancer (*terap banda*), the descent of the spirit (*turun sintren*), and the spirit’s

return (*jala tangi*). They are therefore the most ritually significant and linguistically rich components of the sintren tradition. To ensure analytical rigor, each lyrical text was subjected to multiple rounds of close reading and interpretive analysis. The emerging metaphorical mappings were cross-referenced with contextual ethnographic information and verified through consultation with cultural practitioners familiar with the sintren tradition.

First introduced in their 1980 book, *Metaphors we live by*, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) posits that metaphor is not merely a decorative linguistic device but a cognitive device that plays a fundamental role in how humans understand the world. This process of generating meaning through metaphor occurs when the unknown or unclear is described in terms of the known and clear. Cross-domain mapping occurs from one domain of experience, the source domain, to another, the target domain.

Through this cross-domain mapping, which typically moves from more concrete to more abstract conceptualizations, components—or entailments—of the source domain explain aspects of the target domain, leading to a better understanding of the target domain. In their book, This metaphorical thinking indirectly enters the mind and influences human speech at the textual level. In CMT theory, there is a mapping between the source domain and the target domain. After the data is analyzed, the results are presented in an informal format, where the analysis is presented in ordinary words without any standard structure or coherence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In accordance with the CMT framework, the following analyses are organized around explicit source domain → target domain mappings. For each song, concrete experiential domains (the source) are shown to structure the understanding of abstract sociocultural or spiritual realities (the target), thereby demonstrating how metaphor operates cognitively in this indigenous oral tradition. This research focuses on how metaphors are formed and function to conceptualize a particular entity found in traditional songs sung in Cirebonan sintren rituals.

Metaphors in Traditional Terap Banda Songs

Ana sintren terap banda

Teng Riki

Ana Sintren

Dunung jala dunung

Dunung jala dunung

Si dunung ing bahu kiwa

Prince Lara-Lara cries

The song "terap banda" is sung during the sintren procession when the girl is tied up and then put into an iron cage. In the first part: *ana sintren terap banda teng riki*, which means there is someone tied up, the sintren, here shows that the sinden builds communication aimed at the spirit of the sintren, as well as building a prologue to the story of the sintren ritual. A fragment of the lyrics "dunung jala dunung, dunung jala dunung" which means "anywhere, anywhere," can be found that this song accompanies the spirit of the sintren in all places and directions that will come and enter the girl's body.

The sinden communicates to guide the spirit of the sintren to enter the girl's body. Then the lyrics " *Si Dunung ing bahu kiwa Pangeran lara lara nangis* ," meaning "put in" the left hand of the prince is sick and crying." The choice of lexicons "*shoulder kiwa* " "left hand" and " *prince* " "the prince" contains an implied meaning. The implied meaning of the left hand is the extreme left group, while the implicit meaning of the prince is a leader or community figure. Thus, the singer tells the story of the Sintren people's journey during the colonial era. This lyric perfectly reflects the philosophy of the people's situation when trapped within the shackles of Dutch colonialism. "*Si Dunung ing bahu kiwa*" means "located on the left" (the Dutch accused the people of rebellion/extreme left-wing groups). Then, "Prince Lara Lara Nangis" means a leader or community leader who is hurt and crying over the situation.

The spatial and political metaphors embedded in Terap Banda align with broader cross-linguistic evidence that contested political relationships are commonly conceptualized through orientational and body-based metaphors. This resonates with the findings of Ajayi, (2023), who showed that in culturally specific musical traditions, metaphors function as instruments of collective identity formation and serve as coded expressions of resistance against dominant political forces.

Metaphors in the Traditional Song Turun Sintren

Sintren descent

Sintrene widadari

Eta found the ning yun-ayunan flower

Eta found the ning yun-ayunan flower

Kembange the hereditary Mahendra Widadari

Galangal ginger flower

Yellow flower galangal

Eta lembuyang kembange kuning

Eta lempuyang kembange kuning

Ari Balik Gage Elos Mbesukiki Mene Maning

Kembang kates kates gandul
Small creel container for bangkong
Dienteni endah gather
As long as there is a lot of money in your pocket

This song is sung when the procession of sintren dancers appears and dances. *Turun turun sintren Sintrene widadari Eta nemu kembang ning yunayunan Eta nemu kembang ning yunayunan Kembang si Mahendra widadari* song fragment repeated 6 times and another song *Kembang jahe laos Lempuyang kembang kuning Eta lempuyang kembang kuning Ari balik gage elos mbesukiki mene maning* sung three times. While the song fragment *Kembang kates kates gandul Kumbu cilik Wadah bangkong Dienteni endah kumpul Asal banyak uang dikantong*, this lyric fragment rhymes because it rhymes and consists of 4 lines (lines 1 and 2 as sampiran, lines 3 and 4 as isi).

This lyric fragment is sung once when the sintren throws a coin. The first fragment of the lyrics of *Turun Sintrene Sintrene Widadari* which means 'Come the princess, the angel', shows the sinden building a story that the spirit of Sintren has entered the girl's body. The next fragment of *Eta nemu kembang ning yunayunan Kembang si Mahendra Widadari turun-temurunan Kembang jahe galangal Lempuyang kembang kuning*, which means 'get the flower that you want to take where Mahendra's angel flower comes Ginger galangal flower, yellow Zingiber flower, That yellow Zingiber flower'. The sinden constructs a form of respect aimed at the spirit of Sintren. While the fragment of the song *Kembang Kates Kates Gandul Kumbu Cilik Wadah Bangkong Dienteni Endah Gathering Asal banyak uang dikantong*, sung by the sinden to create communication aimed at the public (audience), the sinden forms and conveys to the audience to throw coins. So, the coins are thrown by the people who witness this Sintren ritual.

There are several words in Indonesian; The purpose of having lots of money in one's pocket is to ensure that the local community watching the Sintren understands that throwing money is part of the Sintren ritual. The *Turun Sintren* song often includes the term "bunga" (flower), a flower synonymous with its fragrant and fragrant scent, used as a tribute when the angel spirits (Sintren) are dancing. There are also the words "jahe" (ginger), "galangal" (galangal), and "zingiber" (lempuyang), which are described as ancestral herbs to maintain and enhance a princess's appearance. Another form of respect for the spirit of Sintren is also present in the words "Kembang Sang Mahendra." Mahendra or Dewi Mahendra is a famous puppet character, the daughter of Prabu Kurandapati, a king from the land of Widarba. The choice

of flower lexicon is found in the song Turun Sintren, "jahe" (ginger), "galangal" (galangal), and "zingiber" (lempuyang).

These three plants are included in the type of herbal plants which are herbal ingredients beneficial for health and beauty. Ginger is a sticky rhizome plant used as a spice and medicinal ingredient. Galangal (laos) is known to the public as a mixture of cooking spices and medicinal ingredients. Meanwhile, zingiber (lempuyang) is a type of spice used as one of the main ingredients of herbal medicine or traditional medicinal drinks. This plant can grow in lowland to highland areas. The choice of lexicon ginger (ginger), galangal (laos), and zingiber (lempuyang) in the song Turun sintren reflects the characteristics of the Cirebon people who live in areas with lowland and highland geographical conditions. In addition, the choice of the words ginger, laos, and lempuyang, are everyday plants that they encounter. This is because the closest human relationship is with nature, because in fact the use of language in a society cannot be separated from its natural environment. This shows that language and the environment are two aspects that are sustainable and influence each other.

The use of plant and herbal lexicons in Turun Sintren as metaphorical vehicles for ancestral reverence reflects a broader phenomenon in which natural elements from local environments serve as source domains for culturally significant conceptual mappings. This pattern parallels findings from Suryadi & Uctuvia, (2023), who demonstrated that Javanese songs frequently employ lexicons drawn from everyday embodied experience as source domains for abstract cultural and emotional concepts. The centrality of plant-based lexicons in this song further reflects what Rakhmawati et al., (2024) describe as the tendency of Javanese ritual language to anchor collective memory and cultural identity in the natural and agricultural landscapes of daily life. Corroborating this interpretation, Andajani et al., (2023) demonstrated that precisely the same botanical lexicons ginger, galangal, and lempuyang—function as dominant source domains in eco-linguistic beauty metaphors within East Javanese women's discourse, confirming that these herbal plant conceptual mappings constitute a persistent and culturally embedded feature of Javanese cognitive and linguistic traditions.

Metaphors in the Traditional Song Jala Tangi

Jala tangi layung langit

The sky is a thousand guns dead

The sky is a thousand guns dead

Come on, let's go back

Mun balik ka umah sira

The net of the gandrung eling

In the lyrics of *jala tangi layung langit hayu eceu urung balik mun balik ka umah* which means 'rise wherever the sky is reddish let's go home return to your home', it is found that this song is an accompaniment to the spirit of the sintren wherever and in whatever direction it leaves the girl's body. The Sinden guides the spirit of the sintren back to its place of origin. Then in the lyrics of *jala gandrung eling* which means 'wherever soon wake up', the Sinden establishes communication with the girl so that she wakes up and recovers after the spirit of the Sintren leaves her body. The choice of lexicon *bedil mati* (dead weapon) and *badan lara* (sick body) contains metaphors. The implied meaning of *bedil mati* is when the colonizers take up arms and leave their colonies, while *badan lara* is implied to be a form of the people's struggle to free themselves from the trap of colonization.

The weapon and bodily suffering metaphors in Jala Tangi instantiate the structural metaphor STRUGGLE IS PHYSICAL COMBAT, through which abstract experiences of colonial oppression and liberation are conceptualized in terms of tangible corporeal and military source domains. This is consistent with Kövecses, (2020) theoretical account of how structural metaphors draw on experientially grounded correlations between physical events and abstract sociopolitical processes. The pattern also aligns with Zhang, (2024) analysis of Chinese Hua'er folksongs, in which struggle-based and nature-derived source domains are systematically mapped onto abstract cultural and historical concepts, suggesting that analogous cognitive mechanisms operate across geographically and linguistically distinct folk traditions.

Thus, the sinden tells the condition of the people's struggle to rise from the shackles of colonizers and be free from all forms of colonization. Thus, the traditional songs during the Sintren ritual not only honor the spirit of Sintren but also serve as a narrative of the sinden (singer) to tell the story of the people's struggle to rise from the shackles of colonialism and become independent from all forms of colonialism. The language used in the traditional songs during the Sintren ritual is a frozen language, where the songs are specifically designed to accompany the Sintren ritual. Furthermore, the three songs contain two regional languages: Javanese and Sundanese. This is a manifestation of the Cirebon community as a whole, that Cirebon society originates from an acculturation of Javanese and Sundanese language and culture.

The traditional songs during Sintren and the ritual procession within them demonstrate the transformation of Sinren's function during subsequent rituals. This occurs due to several factors, including religious, political, and

economic aspects. Initially, Sintren was a magical and sacred ritual used as a means of prayer and seeking blessings in the tradition of sea almsgiving or nadran (prohibiting offerings to the sea). However, with the arrival of Islam brought by Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon, the sintren ritual confronted the acculturation of Islamic culture, and sintren became a medium contributing to the spread of Islam, thus incorporating prayers to God and the prophet. During the colonial period, the sintren ritual was used as a political tool, conveying the people's struggle and resistance against colonial rule. Over time, this ritual became commonplace at family events, such as circumcisions and weddings. Furthermore, the sintren ritual is also frequently performed in art performances as a means of preserving local traditions and wisdom.

Taken together, these findings affirm the broad applicability and explanatory power of CMT across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. As documented in the bibliometric analysis conducted by Zhao et al., (2023), research on conceptual metaphors has expanded significantly in non-Western scholarly traditions over recent decades, demonstrating that the cognitive mechanisms underlying metaphorical thought are both universal in their basic structure and culturally specific in their lexical instantiation. The present analysis of sintren songs contributes to this trajectory by demonstrating that CMT is a productive analytical lens for illuminating the cognitive architecture of indigenous oral traditions in Java.

This conclusion is further reinforced by evidence from adjacent fields: Budiawan et al., (2025) documented that Central Javanese folk myths contain a rich vocabulary of culturally bounded ritual and supernatural lexicons, affirming the depth of symbolic-linguistic heritage embedded in Javanese oral traditions. Casas-Mas et al., (2022) showed that oral musical traditions, when transmitted outside literate frameworks, encode embodied cognitive and metaphorical structures that persist across generations. Similarly, Gunara et al., (2022) found that indigenous communities in West Java—including Kampung Naga—actively employ authentic musical traditions to sustain cultural identity and communal values, underscoring how music and language function as inseparable vehicles of collective memory in Sundanese-Javanese cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it is known that traditional songs contain metaphorical meanings, where these metaphors are closely related to the social, cultural, and historical conditions of the region where the traditional song originated. Similarly, in traditional Cirebon songs sung during the Sintren ritual, the metaphors contained therein are closely related to the

social and cultural conditions of the Cirebon community. From a theoretical standpoint, this study confirms the applicability of Conceptual Metaphor Theory beyond its original Western literary context, demonstrating its relevance for analyzing indigenous oral traditions in non-Western societies.

The findings suggest that metaphor in traditional Cirebon songs functions not merely as a poetic device but as a cognitive and cultural mechanism through which communities encode historical experience, spiritual belief, and collective identity. Future research may extend this inquiry by applying CMT to other regional songs and rituals across the Indonesian archipelago, or by incorporating ethnographic interviews with cultural practitioners to further illuminate the emic interpretations of metaphorical structures.

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