

An Analysis of The Meaning of The Unique Naming System Tradition by The Sabu Tribe in Sabu Raijua Regency

Nikanor Aga Ludji ^{a,1*}
 Soleman Dapa Taka ^{b,2}
 Zantty O. Padahana ^{c,3}

^a Student of English Education Study Program, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang, Indonesia
^{b,c} Lecturers of English Education Study Program, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang, Indonesia

¹ nikanoragaludji21@gmail.com

² sdapataka@gmail.com

³ zantty@staff.undana.ac.id

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Naming System, Ngara Hawu, Ngara Bani, Ngara Pewaje.	This research is about the Forms, Meaning, and the Purpose of Self-Naming Tradition in Sabunese. This research aims to find out the forms, meaning, and purpose of Self-Naming Tradition in Sabunese. The writer has formulated three research questions in this study as follows: (1) What are the forms of Self-Naming Tradition in Sabunese? (2) What are the Meaning and Purpose of the Self-Naming Tradition in Sabunese? This research was qualitative descriptive research. The research started from 05-10 December 2024. The respondents of this research were fifteen students in Sabu Raijua Regency. The writer conducted an in-depth interview and Documentation. The writer analysed and described the result of the students' Interview sheet of fifteen students in Sabu Raijua Regency, and also documented the Process of gathering the data during the interview. The result shows that the naming system of the Sabunese community has a distinctiveness that is influenced by the socio-cultural conditions adopted, so that a person can have three types of names, namely by (Ngara Hawu), (Ngara Bani) and (Ngara Pewaje).
<p>How to cite: Ludji, N. A., Dapa Taka, S., Padahana, Z. (2026). An Analysis of The Meaning of The Unique Naming System Tradition by The Sabu Tribe in Sabu Raijua Regency. <i>SPARKLE Journal of Language, Education and Culture</i>, 8 (1) 6-13.</p>	

INTRODUCTION

Culture cannot be separated from human life. Herkovits (2012) explains that culture is part of the human-created environment. Moreover, according to Ki Hajar Dewantara, culture is the result of human creativity, taste, and behavior. It means that culture is inseparable from the very important roles of human beings and from human relationships with the natural and social environment (Priyanto, 2004). According to Djajasudarma (2017:32), over time, humans who give names to their children are not arbitrary or careless in doing so. Name is the prayer and hope of parents for their children. Parents, when giving names, will look for words with good meaning. Name selection is one of the cultural phenomena because the name is used as a marker of identity, place, objects, and even ideas or concepts, for example, names such as Gede in Balinese, Nurhayati in Javanese, and Cut Tari in Acehese, and Ahiko, in Japanese, can be guessed to mean that they belong to ethnic name owners or they belong to a certain area. There are many ethnic groups in Indonesia, and one of them is the Sabu Raijua. In fact, in the daily lives of the Sabunese, the younger generations of the Sabu tribe at this time do not understand the meaning and purpose of this unique naming system within the tradition. So the researcher intends to examine the meaning of the unique naming system in the tradition of Sabu Raijua, to provide knowledge and increase cultural awareness among the community and the younger generations of the Sabu tribe at this time. Based on the background above, the researcher is interested in conducting research entitled "An Analysis of The Meaning of The Unique Naming System Tradition by The Sabu Tribe in Sabu Raijua Regency".

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative research method; the study population comprised students from Sabu Raijua Regency. The instrument used in this research was observation. The data in this study were taken from the names of Undana's students, especially students from the Sabu tribe who are studying in the English Education study program, and focused on names containing "symbol, referent and reference", which were collected in some steps below:

1. The researcher found the names of students in the English Education Study program in the administration office of the English Study program. The students were randomly selected from any semester to meet the researcher's goal of collecting data on students from Sabu.
2. The researcher selected 15 students from Sabu and interviewed them to determine the meanings of their names.
3. The researcher collected and analyzed the data to determine its meaning and purpose, based on the naming system theory of Odgan and Richard (1989).

After collecting data, the data were analyzed to achieve their intended purpose. Data analysis is the process of examining the data that has been collected. The data were analyzed by identifying the meanings and purposes of students' names using the theory of Odgan and Richard (1989) and describing the meaning and the purpose of the names of students using the theory of Odgan and Richard (1989).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The naming system of the Sabu people has its own characteristics, which are influenced by the social and cultural conditions adopted, so that a person can have three types of names, namely the name of Sabu (Ngara Hawu), the sacred name (Ngara Bani) and the nickname (Ngara Pewaje). Based on the interview conducted by the writer, there are names of Sabu students in the English Department who can be categorized as Ngara Bani, Ngara Hawu and Ngara Pewaje.

Below is the data on students in the English Education Study Program at Undana who have Sabunesse special names.

Table 1. The Forms of Self-Naming Tradition in Sabunesse

No	Name of Students	Forms of Ngara Hawu	Forms of Ngara Bani	Forms of Ngara Pewaje
1.	Melisa Rame	<i>Lau</i>	-	<i>Ina Taga</i>
2.	Elfrida R. Musa Robo	<i>Matte</i>	-	<i>Naka Matte</i>
3.	Novita Dahi Kale	<i>Nia</i>	-	<i>Natimo</i>
4.	Olita Adriani Bunga	<i>Obo</i>	-	<i>Ina Ru</i>
5.	Sely Alfina Tade Mone	<i>Selfy</i>	-	<i>Napulu</i>
6.	Yunita Robo Tadu	<i>Ita</i>	-	<i>Nake</i>
7.	Gladys Djo Naga	<i>Gadi</i>	-	<i>Nawo keledi</i>
8.	Nataniel Djami	<i>Nara</i>	-	<i>Majago</i>
9.	Martinus Tuka	<i>Migu</i>	-	<i>Mahari Migu</i>
10.	Gusto Winardi Kare	<i>Nattu</i>	-	<i>Malodo Nattu</i>
11.	Rosa Rosinta Djami	<i>Rita</i>	-	<i>Narita</i>
12.	Daud Wadu	<i>Daraleo</i>	-	<i>Madara</i>
13.	Indra Saputra Manu	<i>Mangngi</i>	-	<i>Ma' Mangngi</i>
14.	Oktovianus Hau Dima	<i>Otto</i>	-	<i>Maroda Otto</i>
15	Lerens Raba	<i>Doheleo</i>	-	<i>Madoheleo</i>

Ngara Hawu

Ngara Hawu is the basic name given at birth. The naming is done through a series of ceremonies called Pewie Ngara. The ceremony is held the day after the child is born and is carried out specifically by the father. If the child is born male, then a name must be given following the father's lineage (patrifocal); otherwise, if the child is a female, then the name is replaced.

Below is the data of *Ngara Hawu* with the meaning of them:

Table 2. Form, Meaning and Purpose of Ngara Hawu

No	Name	Ngara Hawu	Meaning	Purpose
1.	Melisha Rame	<i>Lau</i>	The meaning of <i>Lau</i> in Sabu Tribe means "Ocean"	The purpose of having this name is to recognize and distinguishing individual in society
2	Elfrida R. Musa Robo	<i>Matte</i>	Matte means "The long-awaited child"	The purpose of having this name is a reminder of the time when she was brought up to this world, is a tough process.
3	Novita Dahi Kale	<i>Nia</i>	Nia means a place in Sabu Named "Menia"	The purpose of having this name is a recognize to a place name "Menia" which is located in Sabu Island.
4	Olita Adriani Bunga	<i>Obo</i>	Obo means "October."	The purpose of having this name is just a necessary for being a Sabunese.
5	Selfy Alfina Tade Mone	<i>Selfy</i>	Selfy in Sabu tradition has no meaning, but selfy is taken from the bible which symbolized "Charisma"	The purpose of having this name is an identity as a Sabu tribe, and commonly used in every day life.
6	Yunita Robo Tadu	<i>Ita</i>	Ita means "We live in peace and happiness"	The purpose of having this name is the parents hope for their children to have and live a good life.
7	Gladys Djo Naga	<i>Gadi</i>	-Gadi means "Ivory"	The purpose of having this name is a symbol of precious thing called 'Ivory'
8	Nataniel Djami	<i>Nara</i>	Nara means "Victory"	The Purpose of having this name is continuing his grandfather figure after his grandfather is gone.
9	Martinus Tuka	<i>Migu</i>	Migu Means "Sunday"	The purpose of having this name is being a grace for other people.
10	Gusto Winardi Kare	<i>Nattu</i>	Nattu means "Midday".	The purpose of having this name is become his mother happiness for her life time.
11	Rosa Rosinta Djami	<i>Rita</i>	Rita means "Suffer". "suffer" means that her mother going through hard condition when bear him.	The purpose of having this name is a reminder for her mother affection when bringing her to this world.
12	Daud Wadu	<i>Daraleo</i>	Dara Leo means "Born in the kitchen"	The purpose of having this name is a reminder for being bear in the kitchen.
13	Indra Saputra Manu	<i>Mangngi</i>	Mangngi means "Lucky". "lucky" means that their child is a long waited and the only one child they have.	The purpose of having this name is a symbol of "too long waited for having kid".
14	Oktovianus Hau Dimu	<i>Otto</i>	Otto means "A car". "Car" means that the child was born when they are on the way to the hospital.	The purpose of having this name is the hope in the future he will become a wealthy person and have a car.
15	Lerens Raba	<i>Doheleo</i>	Dohe Leo means "Visible" "visible" means is when her mother was in pregnant they already know it's a boy.	The purpose of having this name is a sign from god that their children who about to come this world is a boy.

Ngara Bani

Ngara Bani is a sacred name that protects its owner from various misfortunes. This name is believed to be one that should not be spoken carelessly because it has its own power. This is related to the customs of the Sabunese people that all objects have names and protectors, without exception, humans. Sabu people believe that everyone

has a protector who always looks after them, wherever they are, so *Ngara Bani* is believed to have a magical function to ward off all the bad luck that disturbs the name owner.

Below is the data of *Ngara Bani* with the meaning of them:

Table 3. Form, Meaning, and Purpose of *Ngara Bani*

No	Name	<i>Ngara Bani</i>	Meaning	Purpose
1	Melisha Rame	✓	She has her own sacred name but she cannot tell her sacred name.	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
2	Elfrida R. Musa Robo	✓	She has her own sacred name but she cannot tell her sacred name.	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
3	Novita Dahi Kale	✓	She has her own sacred name but she cannot tell her sacred name.	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
4	Olita Adriani Bunga	✓	She has her own sacred name but she cannot tell her sacred name.	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
5	Selfy Alfina Tade Mone	✓	She has her own sacred name but she cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
6	Yunita Robo Tadu	✓	She has her own sacred name but she cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
7	Gladys Djo Naga	✓	She has her own sacred name but she cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
8	Nataniel Djami	✓	he has her own sacred name but he cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
9	Martinus Tuka	✓	He has her own sacred name but he cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
10	Gusto Winardi Kare	✓	He has her own sacred name but he cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
11	Rosa Rosinta Djami	✓	She has her own sacred name but she cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
12	Daud Wadu	✓	He has her own sacred name but he cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
13	Indra Saputra Manu	✓	He has her own sacred name but he cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
14	Oktovianus Hau Dimu	✓	He has her own sacred name but he cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.
15	Lerens Raba	✓	He has her own sacred name but he cannot tell	The purpose of having this name is a protector from all of the dangerous out there.

Ngara Pewaje

Ngara Pewaje is a social nickname that every Sabunesse must have. In the view of the Sabu people, if someone is addressed by his/her *Ngara Pewaje*, that person is truly respected, liked, and cherished by the address. Conversely, the person who greets will feel that the person being greeted is considered family. This is despite the fact that the person being greeted and the person being addressed are not related. The main reason every Sabunesse has a *Ngara Pewaje* name is that, in Sabunesse culture, it is very impolite and unfamiliar to address someone by their *Ngara Hawu*.

Below is the data of *Ngara Pewaje* with the meaning of them:

Table 4. Form, Meaning and Purpose of *Ngara Pewaje* in Sabu.

No	Name	<i>Ngara Pewaje</i>	Meaning	Purpose
1	Melisha Rame	<i>Ina Taga</i>	Ina means "a girl" Taga means "Too much love as wide as the ocean"	The purpose of having this name is to recognize and distinguishing individual in society
2	Elfrida R. Musa Robo	<i>Naka</i>	Naka means nothing because not every <i>Ngara Pewaje</i> has meaning	The purpose of having this name is a reminder of the time when she was brought up to this world, is a tough process.
3	Novita Dahi Kale	<i>Natimo</i>	Natimo means "A place". Natimo is a place located in Sabu	The purpose of having this name is a recognize to a place name "Menia" which is located in Sabu Island.
4	Olita Adriani Bunga	<i>Ina Ru</i>	Ina means "a girl" Ru means "Increasing"	The purpose of having this name is just a necessary for being a Sabunese.
5	Selfy Alfina Tade Mone	<i>Na pulu</i>	Na means "a girl" Pulu means "Travelling"	The purpose of having this name is an identity as a Sabu tribe, and commonly used in every day life.
6	Yunita Robo Tadu	<i>Na ke</i>	Na means "a girl" Ke means "life"	The purpose of having this name is the parents hope for their children to have and live a good life.
7	Gladys Djo Naga	<i>Nawo Keledi</i>	Nawo means "cute" Keledi means "fat body"	The purpose of having this name is a symbol of precious thing called "Ivory"
8	Nataniel Djami	<i>Ma jago</i>	Ma means "a man" Jago means "Champions"	The Purpose of having this name is continuing his grandfather figure after his grandfather is gone.
9	Martinus Tuka	<i>Mahari Minggu</i>	Mahari means "a day" Minggu means "Sunday"	The purpose of having this name is being a grace for other people.
10	Gusto Winardi Kare	<i>Ma lodo Nattu</i>	Ma means "a man" Lodo means "a day" Nattu means "Midday"	The purpose of having this name is become his mother happiness for her life time.
11	Rosa Rosinta Djami	<i>Narita</i>	Na means "a girl" Rita means "Suffer"	The purpose of having this name is a reminder for her mother affection when bringing her to this world.
12	Daud Wadu	<i>Madara Leo</i>	Ma means "a man" Dara means "in" Leo means "kitchen"	The purpose of having this name is a reminder for being bear in the kitchen.
13	Indra Saputra Manu	<i>Ma'mang ngi</i>	Ma' means "a man" Mangngi means "Benefits"	The purpose of having this name is a symbol of "too long waited for having kid".
14	Oktovianus Hau Dimu	<i>Maroda Oto</i>	Ma means "a man" roda means "a wheel" Oto means "a car"	The purpose of having this name is the hope in the future he will become a wealthy person and have a car
15	Lerens Raba	<i>Ma Doheleo</i>	Ma means "a man" Doheleo means "Visible"	The purpose of having this name is a sign from god that their children who about to come this world is a boy.

Discussion

The findings reveal that the naming tradition of the Sabu people consists of three interconnected naming systems: *Ngara Hawu*, *Ngara Bani*, and *Ngara Pewaje*. Each type of name serves a different function in the social and cultural life of the Sabunese community. These findings support the view that names are not merely linguistic labels but also cultural symbols that represent identity, belief, and social relationships.

According to Ogden and Richards' (1989) Semantic Triangle Theory, meaning is created through the relationship between the symbol, the referent, and the reference. In the Sabu naming tradition, the spoken name functions as the symbol, while the reference represents the cultural concepts or parental expectations attached to the name, and the referent refers to the individual who bears the name. Therefore, every Sabunese name carries meanings that go beyond simple identification.

Ngara Hawu as Personal and Cultural Identity

The first finding shows that every participant possesses *Ngara Hawu*, which is the original name given shortly after birth through the *Pewie Ngara* ceremony. Table 2 demonstrates that these names originate from various cultural sources, including places, natural objects, birth circumstances, important events, and parents' hopes.

For example, *Lau* means "ocean," symbolizing the geographical environment of the Sabu people. Similarly, *Nia* refers to *Menia*, a place in Sabu, indicating that geographical locations often become references for naming. Other names such as *Mangngi* ("lucky") and *Ita* ("living peacefully") reflect parental hopes for their children's future.

These findings indicate that *Ngara Hawu* functions not only as a personal identifier but also as a representation of family history, cultural values, and collective memory. This finding is consistent with Djajasudarma (2017), who argues that names contain meanings and hopes rather than serving merely as labels. Likewise, Sibarani (1993) explains that Indonesian traditional naming practices preserve cultural identity and social values through language.

Ngara Bani as a Symbol of Spiritual Protection

The second finding concerns *Ngara Bani*, the sacred name possessed by every participant. Although none of the respondents disclosed their sacred names due to customary restrictions, all participants acknowledged having one. This finding illustrates that the meaning of *Ngara Bani* lies not in its lexical meaning but in its cultural and spiritual function. The sacred name symbolizes divine protection and is believed to protect the owner from misfortune. Consequently, it is not pronounced publicly because it is considered spiritually powerful.

From the perspective of Ogden and Richards (1989), the symbol itself is intentionally concealed, while the reference remains deeply understood within the community. This demonstrates that meaning is socially constructed rather than depending solely on the linguistic form. The finding also reflects the close relationship between language, belief, and culture as emphasized by linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 2001).

Ngara Pewaje as Social Identity

The third finding shows that *Ngara Pewaje* functions as a social nickname used in daily interaction. Unlike *Ngara Bani*, these names are openly used within the community. Most *Ngara Pewaje* names are derived from *Ngara Hawu* through the addition of gender markers such as *Ma* (male) and *Na* or *Ina* (female). For example, *Mangngi* becomes *Ma'mangngi*, while *Rita* becomes *Narita*. This naming pattern demonstrates systematic morphological adaptation that reflects both gender identity and social familiarity.

The interview data further reveal that calling someone by their *Ngara Pewaje* expresses respect, affection, and social closeness. Directly addressing someone by their *Ngara Hawu* is often considered impolite in Sabunese culture.

This finding supports the idea that language performs important social functions beyond communication. Names become markers of interpersonal relationships and cultural etiquette, illustrating how linguistic forms reinforce social harmony within the community.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Sabunese naming system is a multidimensional cultural practice. *Ngara Hawu* represents personal identity and parental expectations, *Ngara Bani* reflects spiritual beliefs and protection, while *Ngara Pewaje* functions as a marker of social interaction and respect. Viewed through Ogden and Richards' Semantic Triangle Theory, each naming system illustrates different relationships between symbol, reference, and referent. Although some names possess explicit lexical meanings, others derive their significance from cultural beliefs and social conventions. Therefore, meaning is constructed through shared cultural understanding rather than linguistic forms alone.

These findings also contribute to anthropolinguistic studies by showing that traditional naming systems preserve local wisdom and cultural identity in the Sabunese community. At a time when many indigenous naming traditions are gradually disappearing, documenting and understanding these practices is important for maintaining cultural heritage and strengthening local identity among younger generations.

CONCLUSION

Naming system of the Sabunesse community has a distinctiveness that is influenced by the socio-cultural conditions adopted, so that a person can have three types of names, namely (Ngara Hawu), (Ngara Bani) and (Ngara Pewaje).

1. Ngara Hawu (Ngara Hawu is the base name given at birth. Ngara Hawu, or Sabu's name, is the name of a person who serves as the benchmark for giving Ngara Pewaje. The assertion is that if there is no Ngara Hawu, then Ngara Pewaje does not exist, because Ngara Pewaje cannot stand alone without being associated with a personal name.
2. Ngara Bani is a sacred name that protects its owner from various misfortunes. This name is believed to be one that should not be spoken carelessly, as it has its own power. The Sabu community believes that everyone has a protector who always looks for them, wherever they are, so Ngara Bani is believed to have a magical function to ward off all the bad luck that disturbs the name owner.
3. Ngara Pewaje
Ngara Pewaje is a name used in everyday life as an identifier or nickname. Honor, endearment, and association as an expression of the person with the name or as an appreciation of others for the person with the name.

REFERENCES

- Aminudin.(2003). Semantik Pengantar Studi Tentang Makna. Bandung: Sinar Baru Algens indo.
- Balteiro, Isabel. "Word-formation and the Translation of Marvel Comic Book Charactonyms." VIAL 7 (2013): 31-53.
- BirgerHjørland.(2007). Semantics and knowledge organization Review of Information Science and Technology. Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology
- Chaer, Abdul. (2002). Pengantar Semantik Bahasa Indonesia. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Djajasudarma, T. Fatimah. (2017). Semantik 1, Pengantar ke Arah Ilmu Makna. Bandung: PT Eresco.
- Duranti, Alessandro. (2001). Linguistic Anthropology. Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Elly. M. Setiadi, Ilmu Sosial Budaya Dasar (Jakarta: Kencana, 2012).
- Griffith, Patrick. (2006). An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd
- Griffiths, Patrick. (2006). An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics. British: Edinburgh University Press Ltd
- Hammersley, M. (2013). What is Qualitative Research? Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hough, P., Shahin, M., Andrew, M., dan Bruce, P. (2016). International Security Studies: Theory and Practice. 1st ed. New York: Routledge.
- https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabupaten_Sabu_Raijua
- Kridalaksana, Harimurti. (2008). Kamus Linguistik. Jakarta: GramediaPustakaUtama.
- Lyons, John. 1963. Structural Semantics: an analysis of part of the vocabulary of Plato. Oxford: Blackwell.
- McCarthy, Michael. (1991). Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morris, C. W. (1938). Foundations of the Theory of Signs. Chicago: Chicago U.P.
- Newmark, Peter. (1981). "The Translation of Proper Names and Institutional and Cultural Terms". Approaches to Translation, Oxford: Pergamon Press

- Ninan, Dilip.(2017). Semantics and the Objects of Assertion.Ms., Department of Philosophy, St. Andrews.
- Ogden, C. K., and I.A. Richards. (1989,1923). The Meaning of Meaning. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. (Originally published in London: Kegan Paul.)
- Pateda, Mansoer. (2010). SemantikLeksikal. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta
- Pollack, C.P. & D. Bright.(2003). Caffeine Consumption and Weekly Sleep Patterns in US Seventh-, Eighth-, and Ninth-Graders.Department of Neurology. Ohio.
- Priyanto, Wien Pudji. 2004. Model pembelajaran tari kreasi baru di padepokan seni bagong kussuddiardja, Yogyakarta. Program Pascasarjana.Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
- RiwuKaho, R. (2005). Orang Sabu dan budayanya. Yogyakarta: Jogja Global Media.
- Saussure, F. de (1988). Pengantar Linguistik Umum (Seri ILDEP). Yogyakarta: GadjahMada University Press
- Sibarani, Robert dan Henry Guntur Tarigan (penyunting). (1993). Makna Nama dalam Bahasa Nusantara: Sebuah Kajian Antropolinguistik. Bandung: Bumi Siliwangi.
- Ullman.(2012). Ullman Encyclopedia of Industrial Chemistry. New York: Wiley VCH VerlagGmbH&Co.KgaA
- Verhaar, J. W. M. (1981). Pengantar Linguistik. Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University Press.