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# Study of Geomythology and Cultural Anthropology in Mountain Folklore *Sabampolulu* and Mountains *Nepa-Nepa*

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji cerita rakyat Gunung Sabampolulu dan Gunung Nepa-nepa di Pulau Kabaena, Sulawesi Tenggara, dengan pendekatan geomitologi dan antropologi budaya untuk memahami hubungan antara fenomena geologis dan konstruksi budaya masyarakat setempat. Dengan metode kualitatif-deskriptif melalui wawancara, observasi lapangan, dan analisis naratif, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa mitos kedua gunung tersebut merekam ingatan kolektif tentang peristiwa geologis seperti letusan, erosi, dan banjir, sekaligus berfungsi sebagai sarana pendidikan ekologis, pembentuk identitas, serta media pelestarian nilai budaya. Kesimpulannya, cerita rakyat ini menjadi arsip ekologis hidup yang menghubungkan mitos, sejarah, dan lingkungan dalam satu kesatuan makna budaya.

**Kata Kunci:** geomitologi, antropologi budaya, mitologi lokal, tradisi lisan

## Abstract

This study examines the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa on Kabaena Island, Southeast Sulawesi, using a geomythological and cultural anthropological approach to understand the relationship between geological phenomena and the cultural construction of the local community. Through a qualitative-descriptive method involving interviews, field observations, and narrative analysis, the research finds that the myths of the two mountains record collective memories of geological events such as eruptions, erosion, and floods, while also functioning as tools for ecological education, identity formation, and the preservation of cultural values. In conclusion, this folklore serves as a living ecological archive that interconnects myth, history, and the environment within a unified framework of cultural meaning.

**Keywords:** geomythology, cultural anthropology, local mythology, oral tradition

# Study of Geomythology and Cultural Anthropology in Mountain Folklore *Sabampolulu* and Mountains *Nepa-Nepa*

## Introduction

Emphasizing that folklore functions as a form of cultural expression and contains religious, social, moral, and cultural values upheld by the supporting community by (Abdin, Ode, & Marafad 2018). Folklore is a form of cultural expression that is full of values, contains local cosmology, and functions as a collective archive of society. In various regions in Indonesia, myths and legends are not only present as entertainment stories, but also record important events, both social and ecological. One compelling example is the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa on Kabaena Island, Southeast Sulawesi, as compiled by (Rasyid 1998). This narrative records the origins of the landscape, conflicts among mythological figures, and symbolic explanations of local geological phenomena, thereby serving as an important source for understanding the relationship between collective memory, myth, and the environmental conditions of the Kabaena community. This story explains the origins of landscapes, river flows, and represents symbolic conflicts between mythological figures who are believed to be related to socio-political dynamics in the past. The narrative also keeps local ecological records of geological phenomena, such as splitting mountains, mountaintop erosion, and annual floods. Thus, this story has the potential to be studied in an interdisciplinary perspective between geomythology and cultural anthropology.

The study of geomythology views myth as a reflection of real geological phenomena, as put forward by (Vitaliano 2007) deep *Legends of the Earth* and enriched through research that links ancient narratives with natural disasters. In the context of Kabaena, the phenomenon of the split peak of Sabampolulu and the flat peak of Nepa-nepa can be interpreted as the collective memory of the community of tectonic activity or massive erosion which is then wrapped in the symbolism of the story. Meanwhile, the cultural anthropology approach emphasizes the social function of folklore as a means of transmitting values, reinforcing identity, and an instrument of ecological education (Hendro 2020). Research from Jurdi & Amiruddin (2025) emphasized that oral tradition is an important medium in shaping local identity, and this is in line with the function of Sabampolulu and Nepa-nepa stories for the Kabaena people. In other words, myths not only serve to explain natural phenomena, but also to strengthen the social order and cosmology of local communities.

A number of relevant research shows the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in studying archipelago folklore. Ratdomopurbo & Verry (2023) researching Sundanese mythology and finding a close relationship between story symbolism and geological landscape. (Eidinow 2016) arguing that myths can function as a container/archive of ecological wisdom capturing and channeling practical and theoretical knowledge about the environment. In Southeast Sulawesi, ethnographic research (Hervansyah et al. 2025; Wahyuni, 2019) it shows that the revitalization of art and oral traditions based on digital media can maintain authenticity while increasing cultural appeal. The research presented also underlines that folklore not only

contains aesthetic value, but also represents the social and ecological system of society. (Tamimi, 2021) shows that the customs and traditions of the Baduy people, as depicted in the novel *Love in the Land of Baddie*, serves as an ecological mechanism that preserves the environment through prohibitions and customary rules. This is in line with the findings (Faranisa & Hasru, 2023) deep *Literary Ecology Analysis in the Novel Return to Rinjani*, which emphasizes that natural elements in literary works do not only function as a backdrop, but also an integral part that shows the relationship between humans and the environment and the responsibility to maintain its sustainability. Nature is one of the sources of inspiration that is often used as a theme in the creation of a literary work. The many literary works that relate to nature really show that literature and nature have a very strong and inseparable linkage. One of the literary studies about nature is literary ecology, which is a study of the patterns of relationships between humans, animals, and plants to their environment. The findings from the journal reinforce the urgency of this research to examine the stories of Sabampolulu and Nepa-nepa as part of a rich cultural heritage.

The urgency of this research lies not only in the need to document, interpret, and preserve oral traditions increasingly threatened by modernization and the declining regeneration of local storytellers, but also in its effort to fill the research gap left by previous studies. Earlier works, such as studies on Sundanese mythology (Ratdomopurbo), Baduy traditions (Tamimi 2021), and literary ecology in Rinjani (Faranisa & Hasru 2023), have largely focused on conservation ethics, ecological values, and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. However, these studies have not deeply explored the connection between catastrophic geological memory—such as volcanic eruptions, major erosion, or river formation—and the cultural construction and local knowledge systems of communities.

This study offers a unique contribution by bridging geomythological and anthropological dimensions simultaneously. Through an examination of the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa, it highlights how the Kabaena people record and interpret major geological events through mythological narratives that not only explain the origins of the landscape but also serve as ecological and social guides in responding to contemporary environmental dynamics, such as river management and annual flood mitigation. Thus, this research expands the scope of geomythological studies in Indonesia by presenting a new perspective that connects past geological memory with present ecological practices, while strengthening the understanding of how myths function as a bridge between natural history and the cultural policies of local communities.

Based on this context, the objectives of this study are to: (1) identify geomythological elements in the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa; (2) analyze the perceptions of the Kabaena community toward geological phenomena reflected in mythological narratives; (3) examine the symbolic meanings and socio-cultural functions of the stories; and (4) explain the relationship between narrative structure and the local geological and geographical conditions.

The selection of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa as case studies is based on their outstanding cultural, historical, and geological significance compared to other sites on

Kabaena Island. These two mountains not only serve as the centers of mythological narratives passed down through generations but also play an important role in shaping the cultural identity of the local community. From a geological perspective, their unique geomorphological characteristics—such as topographic forms, rock types, and accompanying natural phenomena—make them ideal representations for understanding how local people interpret and respond to environmental dynamics through myth construction. Thus, this study is expected to enrich the body of research on geomythology and Indonesian folklore while providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between geological landscapes and the cultural imagination of the Kabaena people.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design, as the primary focus of the research lies in interpreting symbolic meanings, narrative structures, and local community perceptions of geological phenomena embedded in mythologically charged folklore. A qualitative methodology is considered appropriate because the study seeks to understand cultural meanings, cosmological perspectives, and ecological knowledge that are constructed and transmitted through oral tradition, rather than to measure variables statistically (Chand, 2025).

### 1. Data Sources and Informants

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data.

- a) Primary data were obtained from folklore narratives collected directly from informants on Kabaena Island. Informants were selected purposively based on their cultural authority and knowledge of local traditions. They included customary leaders, community figures, and recognized storytellers who remain actively involved in preserving and transmitting the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa. In total, this study involved six key informants, consisting of elderly men and women aged between 50 and 80 years, all of whom have long-standing involvement in customary practices and oral storytelling traditions.
- b) Secondary data were collected from various written sources, including folklore compilations, ethnographic studies, scientific journal articles, historical records, and archival materials related to Kabaena culture. In addition, geological maps and regional geological survey reports of Kabaena Island were used to support geomythological interpretation.

The use of the terms *population* and *sampling* is avoided in this study, as they are not fully aligned with qualitative methodology (Carter, 2014). Instead, informant selection was based on purposive and relevance-based strategies, prioritizing depth of knowledge and cultural credibility over representativeness.

### 2. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using multiple techniques to ensure the depth and credibility of the research findings, including:

- 1) In-depth interviews, conducted using semi-structured guidelines to elicit detailed oral narratives, symbolic interpretations, and informants' perceptions of natural phenomena related to the mountains and surrounding landscape.
- 2) Oral recitation and storytelling sessions, documented to capture narrative structure, linguistic style, and performative aspects of the folklore.
- 3) Field observations, carried out at Mount Sabampolulu, Mount Nepa-nepa, river courses, and surrounding landscapes to record physical geographical characteristics relevant to the narratives.
- 4) Documentation, including audio recordings, photographs, videos, maps, and field notes used to support narrative and spatial analysis.
- 5) Literature and archival studies, used to situate the folklore within broader geomythological and cultural anthropological scholarship.

### 3. Data Triangulation

To enhance data validity and reliability, this study applied triangulation through:

- 1) Source triangulation, by comparing narratives obtained from different informants;
- 2) Method triangulation, by integrating interviews, oral recitations, observations, and documentary analysis;
- 3) Theoretical triangulation, by interpreting findings using geomythological theory, cultural anthropology, and traditional ecological knowledge perspectives.

This triangulation process ensured that interpretations were not dependent on a single narrative or analytical framework.

### 4. Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted through narrative and interpretive analysis in several systematic stages:

- 1) Narrative coding, in which oral texts were transcribed and thematically coded to identify recurring motifs, characters, plot structures, and references to geological phenomena (e.g., mountain splitting, erosion, floods, and explosions).
- 2) Symbolic and interpretive analysis, using a cultural hermeneutic framework to interpret myths as symbolic narratives, historical memory, and ecological knowledge. This stage focused on uncovering socio-cultural functions, cosmological meanings, and ethical messages embedded in the stories.
- 3) Geomythological correlation, by comparing narrative elements with observable geological and geographical features, supported by field observations and geospatial data.
- 4) Data synthesis, integrating narrative, symbolic, and geological analyses to construct a holistic understanding of the relationship between myth, landscape, and cultural meaning.

In the stage of symbolic and interpretive analysis, this study applies the hermeneutic cycle as developed in the tradition of cultural hermeneutics (Noble & Heale,

2019). This process is carried out through repeated stages between understanding the parts of the text (words, symbols, motifs, and narratives) and the overall cultural context of the Kabaena community.

The hermeneutic cycle in this study includes; (1) Pre-understanding — the researcher enters the text with prior knowledge of Kabaena's cultural and geological context, (2) Part analysis — each symbol, character, and event in the story is analyzed to uncover its local meaning and social function, (3) Whole understanding — the results of the part analysis are connected to the narrative structure and worldview of the Kabaena people, (4) Reflection and re-interpretation — the researcher returns to the text with renewed understanding, deepening the symbolic meaning and the relationship between myth, history, and the environment.

This iterative process allows the researcher not only to interpret the explicit meanings within the text but also to reveal the implicit meanings and cosmological values that shape the worldview of the local community. Thus, hermeneutic analysis does not stop at describing symbols but serves as a bridge between mythological narratives and the ecological realities experienced by the Kabaena community.

## 5. Research Procedure

The research was conducted through the following stages: (1) a preparatory stage involving literature review and research instrument design; (2) data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation; (3) data analysis encompassing data reduction, coding, interpretation, and triangulation; and (4) drawing conclusions that explain the interrelationship between mythological narratives, geological conditions, and the socio-cultural constructions of the Kabaena community.

## Result

The findings of this study reveal a complex interplay between geomythological interpretation, cultural symbolism, and ecological knowledge embedded in the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa on Kabaena Island. Through the integration of literature review, in-depth interviews, field observation, and documentation, analyzed using content analysis, cultural hermeneutics, and geological-geographical mapping, three analytical dimensions emerge: myth as symbolic narrative, myth as historical memory, and myth as ecological knowledge.

### Myth as Symbolic Narrative

In this dimension, the folklore functions as a symbolic representation of natural and social phenomena. The depiction of Mount Sabampolulu's split peak and Mount Nepa-nepa's flat summit symbolizes cosmic conflict and the balance between opposing natural forces. The cannon fire motif, which causes the mountains to split or flatten, serves as a metaphor for destructive yet transformative natural power—interpreted as eruptions, tectonic shifts, or massive erosion. Similarly, the La Kambula River, described as the “child” of the mountain, symbolizes the continuity of life and the cyclical nature of destruction and renewal. These



symbolic narratives encode moral and cosmological lessons about harmony, respect for nature, and the consequences of imbalance.

### **Myth as Historical Memory**

Viewed as historical memory, the myths preserve collective recollections of real geological and socio-political events. The story of the divided mountain and the ensuing floods may reflect ancient experiences of volcanic activity, earthquakes, or large-scale landslides that shaped the Kabaena landscape. At the same time, the conflict between Sanghiang Poleang and Sanghiang Nepa-nepa mirrors historical territorial rivalries among neighboring regions such as Kabaena, Poleang, and Wuna. Through oral transmission, these events were transformed into mythic narratives that encode the community's memory of both natural disasters and political struggles, allowing them to be remembered and reinterpreted across generations.

### **Myth as Ecological Knowledge**

As ecological knowledge, the folklore serves as a repository of environmental understanding and adaptive wisdom. The recurring themes of floods, mountain erosion, and river formation reflect the community's empirical awareness of geomorphological processes. The narrative teaches ecological prudence—warning of the dangers of environmental imbalance and emphasizing the need for coexistence with natural forces. The personification of rivers and mountains as living beings reinforces an ethic of respect and stewardship toward the environment, functioning as an indigenous form of ecological education that guides community behavior and disaster preparedness.

### **Integration with Geographical Reality**

The correspondence between the mythic descriptions and the physical geography of Kabaena Island strengthens the geomythological interpretation. The split formation of Mount Sabampolulu, the flattened contour of Mount Nepa-nepa, and the flood-prone La Kambula River align with observable geological features and hydrological patterns. This alignment demonstrates that the myths are not arbitrary stories but culturally mediated interpretations of real environmental phenomena, transformed into enduring cultural narratives that shape local identity and worldview.

### **Socio-Cultural Functions**

Beyond their explanatory role, these myths perform vital socio-cultural functions. They act as tools for ecological education, reminding communities of natural risks; as instruments of social reconciliation, promoting harmony after conflict; as markers of territorial identity, linking people to their ancestral landscapes; and as expressions of collective identity, encapsulated in the self-image of the Kabaena people as “children of the divided mountain.” Through these functions, the myths continue to sustain cultural continuity and ecological awareness in the face of modernization.

In summary, the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa operates simultaneously as symbolic narrative, historical memory, and ecological knowledge. This multidimensional character underscores the richness of Kabaena's oral tradition as both a cultural heritage and a living ecological archive that bridges myth, history, and environment. The following table summarizes the study's main findings:

Table 1. Results of the Folklore Analysis of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa

Analytical Aspect	Geomythological Interpretation	Cultural Anthropological Interpretation
Mountain Morphology	Split peak of Mount Sabampolulu linked to eruptive or tectonic events	Symbolic narrative of cosmic conflict and historical memory shaping local identity
Mount Nepa-nepa Peak	Flattened summit due to erosion or landslides	Symbol of natural imbalance and collective memory of past geological events
La Kambula River	Annual flooding indicating active geomorphological processes	Ecological knowledge encoded through personification of the river as a sacred entity
Explosions / Loud Sounds	Representations of eruptions or landslides	Mythic memory of catastrophic events interpreted as supernatural intervention

## Discussion

The following is a presentation/discussion of findings from the analysis of geomythology and cultural anthropology on the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa on Kabaena Island:

### Geomythological Elements in the Story of Mount *Sabampolulu* and *Nepa-nepa*

Geomythology is a study that connects mythological narratives with real geological phenomena. In the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa, there are several geomythological clues that can be interpreted as an attempt by local people to explain the geological events they experienced:

a) The Divided Peak of Sabampolulu:

*"Finally, Sanghiang Poleang fired his cannon, and the bullet hit the middle of the head of Mount Sabampolulu until it split."*

*"Since then, Mount Sabampolulu has been known for its split peak, while Mount Nepa-nepa is known for its flat peak."*

The citations can be attributed to geological activities such as tectonic movements or volcanic eruptions that cause the splitting of mountain structures. The narrative of cannon shells splitting the head of Mount Sabampolulu serves as a metaphor for major natural events, such as explosive eruptions or massive avalanches, capable of dramatically changing the morphology of the mountain. In this myth, cannon fire not only depicts destructive power, but also marks the birth of a new geographical



shape that characterizes the Kabaena landscape. This representation reflects society's understanding of natural phenomena through symbolic language, where changes in the shape of mountains are considered to be the result of a cosmic power struggle or the intervention of supernatural beings.

b) Nepa-nepa Flat Peak:

"Then he fired his cannon, and indeed, the bullet struck the head of Mount Nepa-nepa until its peak became flat."

From a geomythological perspective, this narrative very likely reflects a natural phenomenon in the form of large-scale erosion or the collapse of a mountain peak caused by a catastrophic geological event, such as a strong earthquake or a volcanic eruption in the past. The collapse or flattening of the mountain peak is preserved in the community's collective memory and later translated into a mythological form as the result of Sanghiang's "cannon shot."

From the viewpoint of cultural anthropology, the use of the term "cannon" in the current version of the story indicates a process of lexical adaptation within the oral tradition of the Kabaena people. This adaptation reflects the community's effort to update their mythological vocabulary so that it remains relevant to changing times and new social experiences. In earlier times, the term used might have been "thunder" or "lightning," which symbolically represented the natural explosive sounds of volcanic eruptions or earthquakes. However, with the introduction of new cultural elements and the awareness of firearm technology through colonial and trade interactions, the term "cannon" began to replace the older metaphors.

This lexical change is not merely a substitution of words but also reflects a mechanism of cultural adaptation, in which the community adjusts old narratives to new social contexts and knowledge without altering the core meaning of the story. Thus, the myth remains alive and understandable across generations. This process demonstrates how language functions as a dynamic medium that maintains continuity between traditional heritage and contemporary reality, while simultaneously strengthening the vitality of folklore as an ever-evolving system of knowledge.

c) Annual river flows and floods (La Kambula River):

*"Since then, Mount Sabampolulu has been known for its split peak, while Mount Nepa-nepa is known for its flat peak. In Kabaena, there are many rivers, which are believed to be the incarnation of the scattered Sabampolulu children. Among all those rivers, the most feared is the La Kambula River, because every year this river always causes major floods that damage crops, livestock, and even take lives."*

The above quote which shows *"the scattered Sabampolulu children"*, in geological reality can be associated with the process of forming a river network due to a mountain eruption or a large avalanche. Geological events like these usually create natural pathways for water flows, which then develop into permanent rivers. In the context of this myth, the rivers are not only understood as ordinary natural phenomena, but are also considered to be the embodiment of living beings born from the power of the mountain itself. Rivers, especially the La Kambula River, are represented as destructive forces that bring annual floods, destroying crops, livestock, and even

causing casualties. Thus, in the oral tradition of the Kabaena people, the river is sacrally positioned as a manifestation of the anger and energy of nature that must be respected, as well as feared.

d) Cannon ammunition and explosions:

*"Finally, Sanghiang Poleang fired his cannon, and the bullet hit the middle of the head of Mount Sabampolulu until it split. The bullet continued to travel and fell in the Bombana Wulu area, where Sanghiang Nepa-nepa lived."*

*"The blast of the bullet made Sanghiang Nepa-nepa uneasy and shook his territory until the king fainted."*

In the mythological narrative above, the explosion of bullets fired by the Sanghiang can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the loud bang sound that arises due to a large natural event, such as a volcanic eruption or a large avalanche. This bang was so powerful that it was described as being able to shake the surrounding area, even causing great fear until the king fainted. In the oral tradition of the people, this thunderous sound of nature is not only considered a physical phenomenon, but is also interpreted as a sign of supernatural power or anger from a sacred entity that rules nature, reinforcing the cosmological view that mountains and natural forces have their own souls and wills.

These narratives show that the Kabaena people have long kept ecological memories in the form of folklore, which explains the morphological changes in the nature around them.

### **Society's Understanding of Natural Phenomena**

Through interviews with local community leaders, it shows that people do not see nature as something neutral or separate from their lives, but as an integral part of a larger network of social-spiritual relations. Mountains, in this view, are not just physical objects that exist in the world, but are considered living beings with will, emotions, and even anger. Natural phenomena, such as mountains being split apart by cannon fire, are seen as manifestations of supernatural forces that can respond to human actions, suggesting that nature has its own "personality" that can be influenced by events and actions in the human world. Similarly, rivers are not just a waterway, but are considered an extension of the conflict between the gods or ancestors, reflecting the tension and impact of the interaction between the forces of nature and man.

Thus, this view describes a cosmological and holistic understanding of society, where nature, humans, and supernatural beings are bound in a single system of life that influences each other. In this system, natural events are not only explained by physical cause-and-effect, but are also viewed through a spiritual and social lens, where each natural event is part of a broader and more complex relationship between the human world and the supernatural world.

### **Symbolic Meaning and Socio-Cultural Function**

Within the framework of cultural anthropology, these stories function as:

a) Educational and commemorative means

The local community, especially in Kabaena, understands the potential for natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and earthquakes through this story, which tells the conflict between the Sanghiang. This story teaches the importance of being aware of the forces of nature and ways to survive in the midst of threats that come from mountains, rivers, and the changing land of natural disasters.

b) Mapping of territories and boundaries of power

The conflict between Sanghiang Poleang and Sanghiang Nepa-nepa can be interpreted as a symbol of the territorial struggle that once occurred between Kabaena, Poleang, and Wuna. These battles illustrate the political dynamics of the past, where the boundaries of power were often maintained through means that could not be resolved in ordinary ways, such as through the use of natural forces (cannons, earthquakes, or mountain eruptions) that reflect the great role of nature in the socio-political history of that society.

c) Local identity builder

This story also reinforces the identity of the Kabaena people, known as the "children of the divided mountain". This identity is inextricably intertwined with geological and mythological narratives that connect them to the forces of nature. These people coexist with the unexpected rivers and flood threats that come every year, making them deeply attached to the surrounding natural environment as an integral part of their lives.

d) A means of social reconciliation

Behind the narrative of conflict inherited through natural phenomena, this story contains an important message about balance and prudence in maintaining harmony between others. As a symbol, nature reminds people not to destroy each other, but rather to avoid destruction by maintaining peace and mutual respect, although in many situations, solutions do not come easily.

The symbolism in this story, such as the unbreakable rattan knot, the sex-indistinguishable chick, or the ash rope that is impossible to make, is a metaphor that describes political and social problems that cannot be solved by ordinary logic. It shows how society creates allegorical narratives to portray complex and incomprehensible power conflicts through a purely rational point of view. As such, these symbols reflect the complexity of social relationships, power, and identity built through folklore.

### **The Relationship of Story Narrative with Geographical Conditions**

This story shows topo-mythology, which is a narrative rooted in real topographic forms that exist in the surrounding environment. In this context, these myths reflect the close relationship between people and their natural landscapes, while also giving symbolic meaning to the existing geographical elements.

- a) Mount Sabampolulu in Kabaena, which in the story is described as having a split peak, does have an asymmetrical topographic shape, with rock formations that appear to be

split due to geological events, such as eruptions or erosion. This makes the myth a cultural explanation for the unique physical shape of the mountain.

- b) Mount Nepa-nepa is believed to have a flat peak, and the surrounding area is indeed prone to landslides or erosion, which is a real geological phenomenon. This belief symbolizes the power of mountains that can be flattened or eroded by nature, reflecting geological conditions in which soil can be eroded by weather or volcanic activity.
- c) Rivers such as the La Kambula River, known to the local community as the river that causes annual flooding, actually exist as rivers that often overflow due to heavy rains or weather changes. This phenomenon is explained in the story as a manifestation of the destructive forces of nature, while at the same time giving a "face" or personality to the river which is considered a living creature that is inseparable from the rhythm of people's lives.
- d) The distribution of the direction of mountain children going west, north, and east can be related to the direction of river flows or the formation of valleys in the region. Each direction that the mountain children in this myth go reflects how the water flows are formed, as well as how the rivers shape the landscape and the lives of the people around them.

Thus, this story is not just entertainment or folklore, but also serves as an ecological archive that leaves an imprint in the form of legends. Through this narrative, people try to understand, absorb, and explain the natural phenomena that exist around them. This story is a means to preserve ecological knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation, as well as to strengthen the spiritual relationship between humans and nature.

## Conclusion

This study reveals that the folklore of Mount Sabampolulu and Mount Nepa-nepa functions not merely as mythological tales but also as a living ecological archive and a foundational element of the cultural identity of the Kabaena people. From a geomythological perspective, these narratives record collective memories of various geological phenomena such as volcanic eruptions, erosion, landslides, and recurring floods. Meanwhile, from a cultural anthropological perspective, folklore serves as a medium for education, identity formation, social regulation, and the transmission of knowledge across generations. The close relationship between mythological stories and observable geographical realities demonstrates that Kabaena's oral traditions integrate empirical ecological knowledge with symbolic cosmology. Through myth, the community interprets environmental changes and natural disasters not merely as physical events but as meaningful experiences imbued with moral and social values. Thus, myth functions as a cultural mechanism that helps the community maintain cosmological balance while fostering adaptive capacities in the face of environmental uncertainty. Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study also offers significant practical implications. First, the findings can serve as a foundation for cultural preservation policies by emphasizing that folklore constitutes an intangible cultural heritage that embodies ecological knowledge and environmental history. Efforts to protect and document these narratives are therefore not only

acts of cultural preservation but also strategies to safeguard local ecological wisdom essential for environmental sustainability. Second, this study holds important relevance for the development of education rooted in local wisdom. Integrating geomythological narratives into school curricula can strengthen contextual learning grounded in the local environment, enhance ecological literacy, and foster a sense of belonging and pride in cultural identity. This approach allows modern scientific knowledge and traditional wisdom to complement each other in explaining natural phenomena in a more holistic and meaningful way. Third, the study contributes to enhancing community-based environmental awareness and disaster preparedness. By recognizing myths as repositories of ecological memory, policymakers and practitioners can engage local communities through culturally resonant approaches in efforts toward environmental risk mitigation, climate adaptation, and nature conservation. In this way, folklore is not merely a narrative legacy of the past but a dynamic source of knowledge for building a sustainable future for the Kabaena people.

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