

# Family narratives in *Tor-tor* performances as a medium for building collective memory and ethnic identity of Mandailing, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This research explores how family narrative in *tor-tor* performances as a medium for building collective memory, shaping identity and communicating Mandailing cultural values. The research employs a narrative analysis approach, examining narrative structure and theme alongside direct observation of *tor-tor* performances. The observations focus on how the Mandailing community conveys narratives through performances. Additionally, narrative interviews with 6 informants were conducted. The results showed that family narratives and performance forms support each other in building collective memory, identity and the transmission of Mandailing cultural values. Family narratives have sequential structures and themes depicting the journey of family life. Meanwhile, the *tor-tor* form of performance supports the presence of diverse family narratives and collaborations involving the active role of families, singers, dancers and audiences. The underscores the significance of sharing family stories through performing arts as a medium to build collective memory, reinforcing identity and perpetuating Mandailing cultural values.

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## Abstrak

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## Kata Kunci:

ingatan kolektif;  
Mandailing; narasi  
keluarga; seni  
pertunjukan; *Tor-tor*

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## Narasi keluarga di pertunjukan *Tor-tor* sebagai media membangun ingatan kolektif dan identitas etnis Mandailing, Indonesia

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan narasi keluarga dalam pertunjukan *tor-tor* sebagai media membangun memori kolektif, identitas dan mengkomunikasikan nilai-nilai budaya Mandailing. Metode penelitiannya melalui pemeriksaan narasi yang meliputi struktur dan tema narasi; pengamatan langsung pertunjukan *tor-tor*, fokus pengamatan pada bagaimana komunitas Mandailing mengkomunikasikan narasi melalui pertunjukan; dan dilengkapi dengan wawancara naratif dengan 6 informan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa narasi keluarga dan bentuk kinerja saling mendukung dalam membangun memori kolektif, identitas, dan mengkomunikasikan nilai-nilai budaya Mandailing. Narasi keluarga memiliki struktur dan tema berurutan tentang perjalanan kehidupan keluarga. Sementara itu, bentuk pertunjukan *tor-tor* mendukung hadirnya beragam narasi dan kolaborasi keluarga yang melibatkan peran aktif keluarga, penyanyi, penari dan penonton. Implikasi dari penelitian memperkuat fungsi berbagi cerita keluarga melalui seni pertunjukan sebagai media untuk membangun memori kolektif, identitas dan mengkomunikasikan nilai-nilai budaya Mandailing.

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## 1 Introduction

Collective memory (Wertsch, 2008; Roediger & Abel, 2015) is a social construct (Halbwachs, 1980, 1992) formed through a series of events collectively remembered by the group. Different social groups embody distinct versions of the past through cultural activities and expressions. Much of the collective memory is passed down to the younger generation through performative practices, especially through socialized bodies (Fuchs, 2017). One of them is cultural activities that are carried out repeatedly and continuously through performing arts. Performing arts play a crucial role in celebration (Pudjastawa, 2022), where families actively participate by dancing together and listening to their life experiences retold through family narratives. Narratives have the power to represent the past (Wertsch, 2008). Narrative makes it possible to unite a series of events into a meaningful whole, and collective memory emerges when group members share the same narrative tools (Wertsch & Jäggi, 2022). As storytellers, writers, and co-authors, humans creatively interpret and evaluate life and literary texts. There is a wealth of knowledge about the power of narratives in building individual identity and group solidarity (Lejano & Nero, 2020). Human communication is inherently narrative-based, emphasizing that individuals actively participate in creating messages, both as agents (writers) and as audiences (Fisher, 1987). Meanwhile, the narrative in the context of the family is not a stand-alone text, but a co-production of narrative events. What is said, how is it said, who speaks to whom, who responds, and how interesting is it for analysis (Gordon, 2015)? The family context is understood as a situation where family members interact with each other as part of their lives (Fisher, 1987). Bauman mentions the 'radical interdependence' of narrative events and events told in the context of performance (Bauman, 1986).

This research is based on the assumption that family stories narrated through tor-tor performance art have an important role in building memory and ethnic identity. As a form of narrative performance, these stories show families actively creating meaning and value. To the extent that family stories can perform their function in family life, family stories can be seen as the primary medium for preserving family culture and strengthening ethnic identity (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2022). The family is the core of the microsystem because it is the first environment that individuals interact with. Family is our first culture. The family informs its members of norms and customs. Not only through everyday life but also through underlining family stories in a way that is always clear to its members (Stone, 2017).

*Tor-tor* is a traditional Mandailing performing art that combines music, dance, and literature. It is performed by clan chiefs, relatives in the *dalihan na tolu* structure, and the younger generation of Mandailing community. The dance movements are very simple and repetitive, and no special skills are required to participate. Both hands are extended forward at shoulder level, with the fingertips moving up and down to the rhythm of the music. These movements are repeated throughout the performance. The accompanying musical ensemble consists of two gongs, two drums, and one flute. The same melodic pattern is played repeatedly (ostinato).

Despite its simplicity, tor-tor has survived against the rise of modern performances. The survival of *tor-tor* is closely tied to the accompanying verse of tor-tor called *onang-onang*, which has an important meaning and a deep connection with the Mandailing community. Ethnic community poems and songs serve as a means to convey cultural values (Jama & Menggo, 2024). *Onang-onang* not only narrates family stories, fostering collective memory but also becomes a medium for communicating cultural values to families and wider groups.

Family stories, in addition to shaping identity, influence and reflect family culture by communicating who the family is, their norms, values, and goals (Koenig Kellas, 2005). Through *onang-onang*, the Mandailing people build family stories that involve interaction between the family,

the storyteller, and the audience. *Onang-onang* follows a sequential structure, with the theme relates to the life journey of each family member. The Mandailing people collectively agree upon the structure and themes of these narratives and have become a cultural activity that has been passed down through generations. This research explains the family narrative in *tor-tor* performances as a medium to build collective memory and transmit Mandailing cultural values. Two important questions that guide the study are: (1) what are the structure and themes of family narratives in *onang-onang*? (2) what cultural values are communicated through the *onang-onang*? This research is supported by narrative performance theory that emphasizes communication as a form of family storytelling—how participants transform family experiences into narratives themselves and others, whether as family members, performance artists, or scholars (Langellier & Peterson, 2018).

Previous research have explored the function of storytelling and how families choose which stories to share with the community. Huisman, in *Telling a Family Culture: Storytelling, Family, Identity, and Cultural Membership*, examines the role of public performance in family identity privacy through family storytelling (Huisman, 2014). Huisman's research concludes that families mostly focus on positive narratives, portraying themselves as pro-social and happy families while also using negative stories as a way to overcome the problems faced by the family. This research has several similarities with Huisman's work, particularly regarding method, approach, and the importance of determining themes in family stories. Similarly, Laurel J. Kiser et al. emphasized the importance of storytelling in family life. Through sharing stories, families combine separate experiences into one meaningful whole (Kiser et al., 2010). Discussing sharing stories in overcoming trauma that research by Laurel J. Kiser et al. is important to affirm the benefits of sharing stories in families for mental health. Neither Dena Huisman nor Laurel J. Kiser et al have explicitly discussed how the concept of a story is organized involving community members so that it has a strong influence on building memories.

This research aims to explore the family narrative in *tor-tor* performances as a medium for constructing collective memory and identity and communicating Mandailing cultural values. This research is driven by the need to understand the relationship between performing arts and collective memory and identity construction. Through the analysis of performance form, narrative structures, and themes, this research reveals how these elements support each other in constructing collective memory and identity and communicating cultural values. Examining the role of family and community in the storytelling process provides a new perspective on family narrative research. The role of the family in narrative performances is not solely to show aesthetic skills but rather to show cultural roles and responsibilities, as it is said to be a cultural worker (Denzin, 2009).

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Participants

This study involved six participants. In qualitative research, participants provide valuable information to improve understanding of the selected phenomenon (Sargeant, 2012). Participants were given narrative interviews (Langellier, 1989). The researcher invited participants to describe in detail certain stories and events that are important in life (Josselson, 2010). The data collected through narrative interviews focused on a very limited number of participants (Zacharias, 2016). The study explored the relationship between family narratives, collective memory, and self-identity awareness through interviews with six participants. These participants were members of a group directly involved in the *tor-tor* performance and held specific roles within Mandailing culture. Three of the six participants had life experiences narrated through *onang-onang*, while the other three had never organized a *tor-tor* performance. Although the latter group had not shared their life experiences within the community, they had frequently observed *tor-tor*. Engaging participants with different

experiences to see the influence of family narratives on different groups. Retelling the group stories in traditional events, among others, aims to inherit the values of togetherness, sacrifice, empathy, and sympathy among the community. The author asks participants to briefly retell their life stories according to the narrative structure in *onang-onang*. The way the story is told gives a sign of identity to the source and how they recognize themselves and others through the narrative. This technique is included as an emic approach to narrative and cultural identity (Koven, 2015, p. 391).

## 2.2 Procedure

Narrative research begins with conceptual questions gleaned from existing knowledge and plans to explore questions through the narratives of individuals whose experiences may provide valuable insights (Josselson, 2010). After formulating the research questions, the next step involves direct observation of the tor-tor performance. Observation allows the researcher to document activities, behaviors and physical aspects without relying on the willingness or ability of the community to answer questions (Taylor-Powell, 2003). Four observations were conducted in two villages over six months. There are three key reasons for conducting direct observation: (1) to examine the process of communicating family stories involving families hosting tor-tor, singers, dancers, and audiences; (2) to explore the relationship between performance forms and collective memory; and (3) to observe group reactions to family narratives conveyed through *onang-onang*.

In one performance, there are at least 44 family narratives. The number of family narratives is determined by the dancing groups and the structure of the performance. The more families participate in the dance, the longer the performance lasts, and the more family narratives are shared. Since narrative is the focus of research, it is necessary to record all narratives in performance. For the purposes of this article, only one narrative with the most complete story structure is included that is considered representative of the family narrative in general in *tor-tor* performances.

The next step was an interview with six participants. These interviews were conducted during and after the performance. Each participant, having different experiences in the performance, was interviewed separately to encourage independent responses. The data obtained through observation and interviews were then compared. The data analysis focused on family narratives delivered in *tor-tor* performance. Researchers recorded all the narratives delivered from the beginning to the end of the performance. Using narrative structure (Labov, 1973), the researcher analyzed the structure of each family narrative. The narrative structure consists of an opening, abstract, orientation, evaluation outcomes, and a closing or coda. One narrative, which had the most complete structure and was deemed representative of the family narrative in the *tor-tor* performance, was included in the report.

## 2.3 Data Analysis

Text analysis in narrative research basically aims to inductively understand the of participants' meanings and their organization at a more conceptual level (Josselson, 2010, p. 872). Data analysis includes four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data analysis focused on family narratives conveyed in tor-tor performances. The data analysis model was based on Riessman (2005), which includes thematic analysis, structural analysis, interaction analysis, and performance analysis. In analyzing the theme, the researcher recorded all the narratives conveyed from the beginning to the end of the performance, then concluded the general theme of the family narrative. For structural analysis guided by narrative structure (Labov, 1973). The narrative structure consists of abstract orientation, complex actions, evaluations, outcomes or resolutions, and codas. Because the family narrative in *onang-onang* does not always have the complete story structure as Labov's view, the less complete narrative is reduced, only one narrative with the most complete structure and considered to represent the family narrative in the tor-tor is included in the report.



This study emphasizes the role of family narratives and performing arts in constructing the collective memory and ethnic identity of the Mandailing people. While family narrative is the focus of the analysis, it is not seen in isolation but in conjunction with performing arts. Narrative researchers also consider the performative aspects of the narrative. In addition to the content of the narrative, the study also examines how the narrator constructs the story and its social location (Josselson, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the interaction of the people involved in the performance and performative analysis. Interaction analysis focuses on how the process of delivering family narratives becomes performance art that many people witness. Performative analysis includes the form of performance and its relationship to collective memory and family narratives.

In addition to the family narrative obtained through *tor-tor* performances delivered by *paronang-onang*, researchers also get an overview of family narratives through Mandailing society outside the context of the performance. To achieve this, separate interviews were conducted with participants with different performance involvement. Researchers recorded and identified the common themes discussed and the narrative structure of each participant. Family narratives in *tor-tor* performance generally revolve around life experiences that have been lived by each family, often carrying strong emotional significance. Observing the emotions of each participant in revealing their family narrative is also an important part of the analysis. The narrative delivered by each participant outside the context of the *tor-tor* is compared to the narration delivered by the *paronang-onang* in the *tor-tor*.

### 3 Findings

The findings of this study suggest that family narratives conveyed through *onang-onang* in *tor-tor* performances have an important role in constructing collective memories and communicating Mandailing cultural values. Culturally agreed themes and structures are critical factors in the success of *onang-onang* in communicating cultural values, supported by aspects various aspects of the performance. *Onang-onang* is supported by performance forms that shape diverse family narratives and allow all elements of the group to engage in building memories.

#### 3.1 Theme

To analyze the theme, we re-examined 44 (forty-four) family narratives from the documentation of one of the observations. Of these, thirty narratives focused on family stories, while eight narratives discussed groups, such as the journey of certain clans to occupy new territories. The remaining narratives consisted only of Mandailing sayings that do not have a specific theme. The widely discussed families are parents and children. After that, relatives in the kinship structure rank next. The discussed relative is the *anak boru* followed by *mora*. The story of the group ranks last in the family narrative. The story of the group is sung to the *tor-tor raja-raja* and *tor-tor naposo bulung*.

A variety of family members' experiences were shared with the group. In the wedding ceremony, not only the children who get married but all family members who are in the same house are told their life stories by *paronang-onang*. What *paronang-onang* expresses is a shared experience lived by parents and children, which is classified as a micro-system of family narratives (Fivush & Merrill, 2016.). In telling the story of family life experiences, cultural values, identity, and relationships in the kinship system, *dalihan na tolu* is very important.

Telling the story of family members is very important, with emphasis on clan or lineage. In Mandailing culture, clan is a very important identity. In general, people include their surname behind their names, and it becomes an official identity on identity cards. This can also be seen in the participants in this study, who clearly identified their surnames. When a person is told his story and mentions that he is surnamed Nasution, Hasibuan, Siregar, and so on, it will form a self-awareness of who, from where, and who are one's ancestors.

In *onang-onang*, stories about clans are discussed repeatedly, not only in family stories but also in group stories. Like some of the following narratives.

<i>Na marumur 2 bulanon</i>	when you were two months
<i>Muda tangis baya digin do endengan boru Nasution</i>	when you cried remember of the dance girls Nasution
or:	
<i>Homa anak ni raja</i>	You are the son
Turunan Harahap	of the king's descendant Harahap

### 3.2 Narrative Structure

Narrative is a method of recapitulating past experiences by aligning the sequence of verbal clauses with the actual sequence of events (Labov, 1973). The complete narrative structure consists of abstract, orientation, complex actions, evaluation, outcome or resolution, and coda (Labov, 1973). The structure of the family narrative told through *onang-onang* is a story that is arranged logically and sequentially. The beginning, middle, and end of the story have clarity. The structural characteristics of the story associated with sense-making include organization and integration. Organization is the extent to which the whole story told is arranged logically and sequentially (Koenig Kellas & Trees, 2005)

There are various narratives in one performance, but they consist of short stories. Their structure is not always as complete as Labov's model. After analyzing the data obtained through observational documentation, we found that the most complete narrative structure consists of an opening, abstract, orientation, evaluation, results, and a concluding coda. The narrative structure generally follows a sequential format, although narrative structures vary. It is rare to find a narrative structure that jumps. *Onang-onang* always begins with an opening. The opening has a slightly different narrative structure from Labov's narrative structure. The opening begins with the sentence *oi sonang baya onang*. *Oi sonang baya onang* is said over and over again. Sentence repetition has a positive influence on Mandailing ethnic memory because the form of continuous repetition in oral tradition originally aimed to strengthen memory before the introduction of written culture (Innis, 2008).

Here's a narrative structure report from one of the *tor-tor* (Novita, 2024)

*Chart 1. The structure of the family narrative in onang-onang*

Narrative structure	Narration	Meaning
<b>Introduction</b>	<i>Oi sonang baya onang</i>	The opening of the narrative, marking the beginning of a story, signals to the family that the <i>tor-tor</i> begins. <i>Oi sonang baya onang</i> can also be interpreted as an invitation from <i>paronang-onang</i> to the public or the audience, 'let's have fun enjoying the <i>tor-tor</i> '
<b>Abstract</b>	<i>Na bia dehe inang, na ra tajolo namuon Madung manortor di jolo hamuon</i> (why did my son come to us and <i>manortor</i> in front of us)	The abstract summarizes the core of the story through one or more clauses that are often located at the very beginning of the story. An abstract is 'what was it about' (Labov, 1973). Correspondingly,

Narrative structure	Narration	Meaning
<b>Orientation</b>	<p><i>Marosros di ate-ate on taringat sude na jolo Tikki menek na bolas baya marenjengi Na bolas do baya di dainang na gali Na so tolu baya mangido Tu jolo ama dohot ina on</i></p> <p>(A sad heart time of the past child who likes to spoil to mom must no ask in front of mom and Dad)</p>	<p>the chain of events in <i>onang-onang</i> begins with one or two clauses relating to the story to be told. Through one or two of these freedoms, the audience can recognize the essence of the story or rather whose story will be told and how the story continues.</p> <p>Orientation relates to <i>paronang-onang</i> attempts to explain a story about who was involved, where, how, and when the event occurred</p>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<p><i>Marumur madanak 6 taonon, dipasahat ma baya boru Dipataru ma baya tu bangku sikolaon inang Na manjalaki limuon Holongmu da inang da sidokonon hami Sude gara-gara ni cita-citai so lalu anak kon Martitel sarjanaon</i></p> <p>(after you have been around for 6 years schooled seeking knowledge, deposited, delivered to my son's school to seek knowledge your affections, o my son towards these parents of yours this all happened because of aspirations for my son bachelor's degree)</p>	<p>Evaluation is an important element of narrative, as a means used by the narrator to show the essence of the narrative, as the <i>raison d'être</i>, why it is told, and what the narrator means (Labov, 1973). In the context of <i>onang-onang</i>, evaluation should be seen in relation to Mandailing cultural values. The evaluation expressed by <i>paronang-onang</i> is <i>holong</i> or affection. Affection is not only from parents towards children, but <i>paronang-onang</i> expresses 'children's affection towards parents'. That is, there is mutual affection between parents and children.</p>
<b>Result and resolution</b>	<p><i>Sannari madung sarjanaon, Madung buse markedudukan Madung ra indon parmaenon mon idokon Boru panunduti ima gadis nasutioni Tarsingot ko sude na jolo Biar pe hepeng habis marhabisan Mamboto ma baya danak rajaon</i></p>	<p>The resolution signals the end of the narrative. Not only at the end of the story the results and resolutions can also be in the middle of the story, but in <i>onang-onang</i> results and resolutions are usually placed at the end of the story. The storyteller conveys the outcome and</p>

Narrative structure	Narration	Meaning
Coda	<p>(now you have been scholar, has been positioned already come, son-in-law bako's family that's the girl Nasution remembering all the times of that time all the money ran out know thyself, o son of my king)</p> <p><i>Attong pasonang baya</i>  <i>Jolo rahamuan, madung kabul</i>  <i>Sude pangidoan mi tu tuhanon</i>  <i>Ma lalu hada na mar parmaemon</i>  <i>baya sian anak baya siakkaonile</i>  <i>onang baya onang</i>  <i>ile onang baya onang</i></p> <p>(now glad your heart has achieved your wish to have a wife all your requests to God it's been a girl-in-law from the first son  <i>ile onang baya onang</i>)</p>	<p>resolution and prepares the audience for the next story.</p> <p>The coda is an optional element of the narrative that contains clauses that close the storyline and return the audience to the present. The end of the narrative performance the achievement of the child's goal to settle down. Coda is emphasized by the phrase '<i>ile onang, baya onang</i>'. Similar to the opening sentence, <i>ile onang, baya onang</i>, has no meaning based on words and is a sentence that is also delivered repeatedly. This sentence is a sign that one story has been completed and continued with a different story when it has turned around.</p>

Through *onang-onang*, as quoted above, it can be seen that the narrative structure of *onang-onang* consists of a series of events experienced by the family, with family members such as parents and children as the main actors. The narratives depict parental roles in raising children and guiding them toward marriage. The time sequence of each event generally follows a chronological order, and although it allows a non-linear narrative structure is possible, it is very rarely found in *onang-onang*. Not all stories told through *onang-onang* have a complete narrative structure as above. Although not many, some narratives consist of simpler structures of opening, abstract, and coda, even without coda. Narratives in simpler forms are found in many *raja-raja tor-tor* and *naposo bulung tor-tor*. The narrative on this *tor-tor* usually contains Mandailing rhymes.

#### 4 Discussion

Participants in the study were divided into two groups to examine the influence of family narratives on memory-building and communicating Mandailing cultural values. The first group consisted of 3 people who had their life story experience sung in an *onang-onang*, while the other 3 people were participants whose life experience was never conveyed through *onang-onang*, but they acted as active listeners in the *tor-tor*.

The results showed no significant difference between the two groups in terms of family narratives built memories. Participants from both groups were able to re-narrate life's journey almost as well and with almost the same narrative structure as was found in *tor-tor* performance. Participants from both groups showed the importance of expressing family affection through *onang-onang*. The essence of the family narrative in *onang-onang* is the embodiment of family affection. Expressions of affection are not only through family narratives exemplified by each participant but also seen through non-verbal expressions. The participants' facial expressions, body language, and voice showed strong



affection for the family, both in their position as parents and as children when participants narrated the family's life story.

The difference in results was shown by changes in behavior from participants who had life experiences narrated directly in the performance. One participant in his parental status reported a change in his son's behavior after his life experience was sung in *onang-onang*. Boys dance in *tor-tor namora pule* (bridal *tor-tor*). Unlike other tors that are danced by 12 to 16 people, *tor-tor namora pule* is only danced by the bride and groom. The bride and groom become a source of attention from the family and group so she tries to focus on dance moves and family narratives.

#### 4.1 *Tor-tor* Performance and Support for Family Narrative

Performance is an artistic act and event involving performers, art forms, and settings (Bauman, 1977). *Tor-tor* performances combine elements of music, dance, and literary performances. The literary element in the *tor-tor* performance is in the form of accompaniment verses called *onang-onang*. To understand the meaning of *onang-onang* in Mandailing culture, it must be seen as an inseparable unity of the *tor-tor* performance. Meaning and artistry emerge through the performance itself. In oral performance, attention is drawn not only to the words but also to their delivery, including intonation, pace, rhythm, tone, dramatization, rhetorical devices, and performance techniques in general (Finnegan, 1992).

*Tor-tor* is a performance that gives each member of the group the opportunity to be actively involved both as dancers and in remembering and sharing family stories in the performance. The Performance brings the potential to reset the structure of social relationships in performance events. Social role structures, relationships, and interactions; oral literary texts and their meanings appear in performance (Bauman, 1986). Everyone can participate as a dancer according to their role in the group and the kinship structure of *dalihan na tolu*.

*Dalihan na tolu* is the kinship system Mandailing people. Etymologically, *dalihan na tolu* means "three stones arranged in a parallel and balanced manner," referring to the traditional cooking structure. The three stones are symbols that represent the three elements of *dalihan na tolu* relatives consisting of *mora* (wife's family), *anak boru* (husband's family), and *kahanggi* (brothers taken from the paternal/patrilineal lineage). In the life of the Mandailing people, kinship *dalihan na tolu* as a cultural system binds them in on how to behave. Radcliffe-Brown said the way of behaving and behaving towards relatives was socially regulated and approved by her community (Radcliffe-Brown, 1941).

Kinship patterns are one of the important aspects of preserving dance traditions (Buckland, 2001). Dance makes a unique contribution to society and culture based on its form and expression and is at the same time tied to kinship (in addition to the religious, social, political, and economic organization (Royce, 1977). The implementation of kinship patterns in the life of the Mandailing community is seen through *tor-tor* as a dance that is bound to the prevailing norms in the kinship system (Novita et al., 2022). *Tor-tor* represents a kinship system, including the elements that make up the kinship structure, rules, and cultural values that apply within the kinship system. Inseparable in the *tor-tor* is the embodiment of affection between family and relatives. Affection, called *holong*, is the highest and most abstract cultural value that forms the functional basis of the relationship between the three kinship structures of *dalihan na tolu* (Nasution, 2007).

The elements that make up *tor-tor* dance performances, both music, dance, and literature, represent the values of family affection. Like slow, smooth, and slow dance movements represent the gentle and compassionate character of the Mandailing community (Novita et al., 2022). Likewise, with the literary element, family affection is reflected through *onang-onang*. *Onang-onang*

performance is the collectivity mindset of the Mandailing community, especially the strong affection in the family. People feel sadness, such as crying and even fainting, when the family's past is revealed into a powerful picture of affection. Even when telling stories about *onang-onang* outside the context of *tor-tor* performances, the interviewees still showed sadness.

Kinship norms are very important in *tor-tor*, but group members who are outside the kinship structure can also play a role in dancing. The *tor-tor raja-raja* and the *tor-tor of naposo bulung* are *tor-tor* danced by groups that are outside the kinship structure. Other group members may join the performance as audience members and listeners of the family narrative.

Meanwhile, in its role of building collective memory, the *tor-tor* performance provides important support through two supporting elements: the form of performance and group collaboration in building collective memory.

#### 4.1.1 Performance form

The form of demonstration that supports collective memory consists of the names of the *tor-tor* and the direction of the face.

##### a. The names of *tor-tor*.

The names *tor-tor* refer to *tors* that are drawn in groups based on the equality of roles in groups. The difference in the name *tor-tor* indicates the different groups that dance. The names of the *tor-tor* consist of *tor-tor raja-raja* (clan leader), *tor-tor suhut* (host of the event), *tor-tor mora* (wife's family), *tor-tor anak boru* (husband's family), *tor-tor kahanggi* (clan brother), *tor-tor naposo bulung*, and *tor-tor namora pule* (bride). Each group dances alternately, starting from a more respected group in Mandailing culture. *Tor-tor suhut*, *mora*, *anak boru*, and *kahanggi*, male and female dancers do not dance together, so there are *tor-tor suhut* for male and female families, as well as for *mora*, *anak boru*, and *kahanggi*. Members who dance in one performance are also limited. It usually consists of 12 to 16 individuals. If a group has many members, the same *tors* are danced more than once. It was also found that the group with the same members danced more than once.

The narrative conveyed in each *tor-tor* is adapted to the story of the people who dance. There is no common narrative between one group dancing and another. The diverse narrative is the embodiment of the authenticity of oral tradition. The authenticity of the narrative is not only concerned with making up new stories but also managing certain interactions with the audience; each story must be uniquely introduced into a unique situation because in oral culture, the audience must be brought to respond (Ong, 2002, p. 41).

##### b. Face direction in dancing

Narrative calculations are detailed in the following chart.

**Chart 2. At least the total narrative in a *tor-tor***

The name of <i>tor-tor</i>	Number of narrations
<i>Raja-raja</i>	4
<i>Suhut</i> (man)	4
<i>Suhut</i> (woman)	4
<i>Mora</i> (man)	4
<i>Mora</i> (woman)	4
<i>Anak boru</i> (man)	4
<i>Anak boru</i> (woman)	4
<i>Kahanggi</i> (man)	4
<i>Kahanggi</i> (woman)	4

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<i>Naposo bulung</i>	4
<i>Namora pule</i>	4
<b>Total narrative</b>	<b>44</b>

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The pattern of the *tor-tor* floor is in the form of two parallel lines. Each dancer stands in a position arranged according to the norms of kinship *dalihan na tolu*. At first, each dancer faces toward the front of the stage; when the music begins and the *parang-orang* begins it is singing, the dancers begin to dance, moving to the rhythm of the music. Once a narrative structure is complete, the dancers turn to the left 90°, the music restarts, and the *paronang-onang* again conveys the family narrative. Turning the direction face is done 4x until finally, the dancer faces the starting position. There are a total of 4 facing directions for one performance. For each direction, the narrative is followed by a different narrative. Thus, based on the names of *tors* and the direction of the face in dancing, the minimum number of narratives in a *tor-tor* is 44 narratives.

#### 4.1.2 Group Collaboration

In a shared story, interactive movements that give meaning cannot be done alone (Koenig Kellas & Trees, 2005). Sharing family narratives in *tor-tor* involves collaboration between families, singers, dancers, and audiences. Remembering a story will be more effective if done together. People often collaborate on storytelling, and this shared storytelling serves as one of the ways relational partners and family members build and understand their relationships as well as their life experiences (Koenig Kellas & Trees, 2005).

The process of oral tradition is the transmission of messages by word of mouth over time until the disappearance of the message (Vansina, 1985). The chain of sending messages starts from the *suhut* or host who organizes the event. Shortly before the performance begins, *suhut* tells the *paronang-onang* an outline of family history. The main information informed to the *paronang-onang* includes the names of family members and their stories that are important to share with the group. The information conveyed by *suhut* was then recorded by *paronang-onang*. So, although *onang-onang* is an oral tradition because messages are conveyed by word of mouth, writing tools such as paper and pen are needed to record the names of family members who will be told *through onang-onang*. Stationery is needed because it is impossible for *paronang-onang* to remember all the names of family members and the experiences they have had that will be shared with the group. In addition, the time gap between *suhut* and *paronang-onang* with the delivery of family stories to the group that lasts up to more than 3 hours also allows *paronang-onang* to forget the information that has been conveyed. In connection with this oral narrative, an active performance is among other things limited by the capacitation of the memory of the storyteller (Maclean, 1988).

After *suhut* told the family past to the *paronang-onang*, then from the *paronang-onang* the message was distributed to the family and the Mandailing community in the form of songs. Every member of the Mandailing family and community, children, adults, and parents, can be listeners of family stories told through *onang-onang*. There is no prohibition against a particular group or people from listening to family stories. Likewise, no family story is considered sacred or confidential and should only be shared with a specific person, as Marie MacLean calls the choice and restriction audience (Maclean, 1988).

## 5 Conclusion

The family narrative told through the *tor-tor* performance builds the collective memory of the Mandailing people through themes about family life and structured stories that are told over and over again through the *tor-tor* performance. The form of performance also makes an important contribution to building collective memory by incorporating types of *tor-tor* involving families, clan

heads, and the younger generation. Each member of the community can act as a dancer and dance different types of *tor-tor* from each other. The more people involved in the performance, the more types of *tor-tor* are danced, and the more varied the stories that are shared. This research highlights the importance of storytelling culture in shaping community identity. However, it has limitations in exploring the personal narrative of each family member. Personal narrative is an important aspect of the performance, just like the family narrative. Future research needs to explore the concept of personal narrative performance and how communities collaborate to bring it to life on stage.

### Disclosure Statement

The author claims there is no conflict of interest.

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