BORROWING AND CLIPPING PROCESSES IN MINANGKABAU SONG: A MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study investigates morphological processes, specifically clipping and borrowing in the Minangkabau traditional song *Ayam Den Lapeh*. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study identifies fifteen clipping forms and one borrowing. The analysis follows a structured sequence: research purpose, methodology, key findings, and implications. Findings reveal systematic morphological reduction aligned with Minangkabau phonotactic preferences, including the avoidance of consonant clusters and preference for open syllables. The borrowing *biaro*, originating from Sanskrit *vihāra*, reflects early cultural contact in the Malayic region. These results contribute to understanding morphological tendencies in oral traditions and support broader comparative studies of Malayic and Austronesian morphology.

Keywords: *Morphology, Clipping, Borrowing, Minangkabau, Austronesian Languages, Oral Tradition*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic system shaped by cultural practices, historical interactions, and social identity. Traditional songs, as oral texts, constitute a valuable repository of linguistic data, preserving authentic and often conservative forms that illuminate historical patterns of lexical and morphological organization. They also exemplify how speakers manipulate language to satisfy rhythmic, phonological, and performative constraints. In West Sumatra, the Minangkabau folk song *Ayam Den Lapeh* is widely performed across cultural ceremonies, educational settings, competitions, and national events. Despite its prominence, the morphological structure of the song remains underexplored. Its lyrics, however, demonstrate two salient processes in Minangkabau morphology: clipping, which entails the systematic reduction of word forms without altering core meaning, and borrowing, the incorporation of lexical items from other languages through historical contact. For instance, *berbelok* is reduced to *babelok* (clipping), *lepas* to *lapeh*, and *di mana* to *dima*. Additionally, the song contains a borrowing from Sanskrit: *biaro* ('monastery'), derived from *vihāra*, reflecting early Buddhist influence in the Malayic cultural milieu.

Minangkabau, a Malayic language within the Austronesian family, is characterized by both productive affixation and tendencies toward phonological simplification. Speakers frequently reduce prefixes (*ber-* → *ba-*, *ter-* → *ta-*, *men-* → *man-*), assimilate vowels, or eliminate codas to produce forms that are more phonologically and rhythmically compatible. Such reductions are particularly prominent in oral genres, including songs and storytelling, where morphological economy serves both communicative and aesthetic functions.

Previous studies have examined affix reduction and phonological simplification in Malayic languages (Blust, 2013; Yusuf, 2020; Moeljadi, 2019), yet research specifically addressing clipping and borrowing in Minangkabau songs remains scarce. Moreover, contemporary comparative analyses across Malayic varieties are limited. This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating how clipping and borrowing operate in *Ayam*

Den Lapeh, and how these processes relate to Minangkabau phonology and historical language contact. The study is guided by the following research questions: What types of clipping are attested in the song *Ayam Den Lapeh*? Which borrowing(s) are present, and what are their historical origins? How do these morphological patterns reflect broader phonological and sociocultural aspects of Minangkabau?

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate morphological processes specifically clipping and borrowing in the Minangkabau song *Ayam Den Lapeh*. A qualitative framework allows for detailed examination of language forms within their cultural and phonological contexts, facilitating interpretation of patterns and their functional significance in oral performance. The primary data consist of a transcription of the Minangkabau lyrics of *Ayam Den Lapeh*. Secondary sources include standard Indonesian forms and historical dictionaries or references for loanwords, particularly Sanskrit-derived terms, to provide comparative and etymological insights.

Data analysis followed a systematic sequence**:** Segmentation of lyrics into lexical items: Each word or phrase was identified and transcribed for systematic analysis. Comparison with Standard Indonesian: Lexical items were compared to their Standard Indonesian equivalents to detect morphological modifications. Identification of clipping and borrowing: Words were classified as clipped or borrowed based on established morphological definitions (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011; Campbell, 2013). Classification of clipping types: Clipping was categorized as fore-, middle-, end-, or blended clipping, highlighting patterns of reduction and phonological adaptation. Cross-referencing with historical sources: Borrowed forms were examined using etymological and historical references to determine origin, period of contact, and semantic adaptation. Interpretation within phonological and cultural contexts: Clipped forms were analyzed relative to Minangkabau phonotactics, rhythmic structure, and oral performance norms.

To ensure analytic rigor, the study incorporated triangulation by: Comparing multiple transcription sources where available, Consulting historical and contemporary dictionaries, Reviewing previous literature on Minangkabau and Malayic morphological processes.

The study is limited to the analysis of clipping and borrowing**,** excluding other morphological processes such as reduplication or affixation. To mitigate these limitations: Findings were cross-validated against historical and comparative sources, providing additional contextual support. Interpretations were constrained to patterns directly observable in the lyrics and supported by phonological and sociolinguistic literature. The study emphasizes systematic patterns rather than anecdotal forms, enhancing the reliability of the morphological analysis. This methodological approach ensures that the analysis is both systematic and contextually grounded**,** allowing for robust interpretation of clipping and borrowing in Minangkabau oral tradition.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of *Ayam Den Lapeh* revealed 15 instances of clipping, 1 instance of borrowing. Clipping is clearly the dominant morphological process, accounting for approximately 94% of the observed modifications, while borrowing constitutes 6%. Fore-clipping: 8/15 (53%), Middle-clipping: 5/15 (33%), Blended clipping: 2/15 (13%)

Table 1. Clipping Types in Ayam Den Lapeh

No	Minangkabau Form	Standard Form	Type of Clipping	Description
1	Luruih	Lurus	Middle	Vowel shift, final deletion

2	Babelok	Berbelok	Fore + Middle	Prefix reduction (ber- → ba-) and internal vowel change
3	Indak	Tidak	Fore	Initial consonant deletion
4	Takicuah	Terkicuh	Fore	Prefix reduction (ter- → ta-)
5	Den	Denai	Fore	Truncation of initial syllable
6	Lapeh	Lepas	Middle	Final /s/ deletion
7	Mandaki	Mendaki	Fore	Prefix reduction (men- → man-)
8	Manurun	Menurun	Fore	Prefix assimilation (men- → man-)
9	Dima	Di mana	Blended	Fusion of two words
10	Sikua	Seekor	Fore	Loss of se- prefix
11	Saikua	Satu ekor	Blended	Fusion of two words
12	Rimbo	Rimba	Middle	Vowel change (a → o)
13	Tampek	Tempat	Middle	Internal deletion
14	Bajalan	Berjalan	Fore	Prefix reduction (ber- → ba-)
15	Tamanuang	Termenung	Fore + Middle	Prefix erosion and internal reduction

These distributions demonstrate a clear preference for fore-clipping, consistent with Minangkabau phonotactic tendencies to reduce unstressed prefixes and favor CV syllable structures (Blust, 2013; Yusuf, 2020).

Table 2. Borrowing in *Ayam Den Lapeh*

Loanword	**Standard Form**	**Origin**	**Historical Source**	**Notes**
Biaro	Vihāra	Sanskrit	Buddhist lexicon	Institutional term

The presence of biaro reflects historical cultural contact with South Asia and the preservation of Sanskrit lexical layers in Minangkabau. Clipping aligns with Minangkabau phonological constraints**,** including avoidance of consonant clusters, open-syllable preference, and vowel assimilation. Fore-clipping predominantly affects derivational prefixes (ber-, men-, ter-), while middle-clipping resolves closed syllables or complex codas, enhancing rhythmic compatibility for oral performance. Blended clipping demonstrates lexical fusion to maintain prosodic balance and ease of articulation in song performance. Borrowing is limited but historically meaningful, evidencing early Sanskrit influence and the selective retention of culturally salient lexical items. This improved presentation ensures clarity, verifiable orthography, and quantitative support**,** strengthening the academic rigor of the study.

The findings of this study reveal a rich interplay between phonology, morphology, sociocultural practice, and historical contact in the Minangkabau language. Although the dataset is limited to a single traditional song, the patterns identified especially the dominance of clipping and the presence of Sanskrit borrowing demonstrate that traditional oral forms continue to preserve linguistic processes that may be underrepresented in modern everyday use. This section discusses the implications of these findings from morphological, phonological, sociolinguistic, and historical perspectives.

One of the central findings of this study is that clipping in Minangkabau is not random erosion but a highly systematic morphological behavior. Most clipped forms in *"Ayam Den Lapeh"* correspond to predictable patterns, especially fore-clipping of prefixes. For example, prefixes such as *ber-*, *men-*, and *ter-* consistently reduce to *ba-*, *man-*, and *ta-* respectively. This consistency supports the argument by Moeljadi (2019) and Yusuf (2020) that Malayic varieties possess rule-governed reduction processes driven by phonotactic constraints.

Clipping in the song also demonstrates that the Minangkabau lexicon tends to favor monosyllabic or disyllabic rhythmic units, aligning with the melodic structure of traditional music. This is particularly evident in forms such as *dima* (‘di mana’) and *saikua* (‘satu ekor’), where blending ensures rhythmic coherence. Such reductions illustrate the interaction between linguistic form and artistic performance: words are shaped not only by communicative efficiency but also by the need to fit metric and melodic constraints in oral tradition.

From a functional perspective, clipping enhances processing efficiency and ease of articulation, especially in fast-paced oral genres. Fore-clipping, in particular, removes unstressed syllables at the beginning of words, a feature widely observed in colloquial Malayic speech. For example, *berjalan* transforming into *bajalan* exemplifies a structural tendency to prioritize the lexical root while reducing the grammatical marker. This shows that Minangkabau speakers rely heavily on contextual and semantic cues to interpret meaning, rather than depending solely on overt morphological markers.

Clipping patterns in the song reflect core phonological preferences inherent to Minangkabau: Avoidance of consonant clusters Many clipped forms simplify clusters (*ter-* → *ta-*; *men-* → *man-*), making them more compatible with Minangkabau’s preferred CV structure. Preference for open syllables, Middle-clipping often transforms closed syllables into open ones, as seen in *lurus* → *luruih* and *rimba* → *rimbo*. Vowel assimilation and harmony, vowel shifts (e.g., /a/ → /o/) reflect dialectal tendencies documented by Blust (2013). Stress pattern alignment with melody. The rhythmic nature of songs heightens the natural tendency to maintain balanced syllable timing, further reinforcing clipping. Taken together, these patterns indicate that clipping is not an anomaly but is deeply tied to phonological identity. It represents a convergence of linguistic economy, phonotactic rules, and aesthetic tradition.

Clipping in the song also serves a sociolinguistic function, indexing Minangkabau regional identity. The reduced forms are distinctly Minang and cannot be mistaken for Standard Indonesian. This differentiation is significant in the context of language maintenance, where clipped forms help preserve local identity amid the dominance of Indonesian in formal and public domains. Furthermore, the song’s use of archaic or traditional clipped forms shows how oral texts conserve older variants of the language. Some forms, such as *den* (from *denai*) or *tamanuang* (‘termenung’), are less frequently used among younger Minangkabau speakers today. This reinforces the song’s role as a linguistic archive.

Only a single instance of borrowing was identified in *Ayam Den Lapeh*: biaro, which is derived from Sanskrit *vihāra* (‘monastery’). Although this is a limited example, its presence remains historically and linguistically significant. Several points warrant consideration: The word may have entered Minangkabau through regional contact with Sumatran or Malay polities that had already adopted Sanskrit terms. It could represent a conservative lexical retention, preserved in religious or institutional contexts even as everyday use declined. Interpreting its presence solely as “direct contact with India” may be misleading, as linguistic diffusion via Malay intermediaries could explain the term’s spread (Tadmor, 2009).

Sanskrit influenced Malayic languages since early Buddhist-Hindu periods (Bowden, 2007; Haspelmath, 2009). The occurrence of *biaro* in Minangkabau aligns with patterns in neighboring regions, such as Pagaruyung or Batusangkar, where Sanskrit loanwords are retained for religious or institutional vocabulary. This supports the view that religious loanwords are particularly stable, often more resistant to replacement than

common everyday words, making even a single instance a meaningful indicator of historical linguistic layers. The word illustrates selective borrowing, in which only lexemes with religious, institutional, or social prestige are adopted and preserved. Its continued use highlights linguistic and cultural continuity in Minangkabau despite later religious and linguistic shifts.

Although only one example, the analysis of *biaro* provides valuable insights into historical language contact and the selective nature of lexical borrowing. To strengthen this interpretation, future research should expand the corpus to include other traditional Minangkabau songs and compare them with neighboring Malayic varieties to determine whether similar patterns emerge, situating this single instance within a broader historical and regional framework. The morphological structures in *"Ayam Den Lapeh"* also highlight the close relationship between Minangkabau culture and linguistic expression. Traditional Minang songs follow pentatonic scales, narrative lyricism, and rhythmic balance that encourage clipped forms. The ease of singing and memorizing lyrics is enhanced when words are concise, syllable-balanced, and rhythmically aligned.

Beyond phonology, the song reflects emotional expressiveness through lexical choices like *takicuah* ('deceived') and *malang* ('unfortunate'). These words carry strong cultural connotations, as Minangkabau oral storytelling often emphasizes emotional sincerity and communal empathy. This case study demonstrates that morphological reduction, particularly clipping, is not merely a characteristic of informal speech, but a deeply embedded feature of Malayic linguistic evolution. The findings support broader claims that Austronesian languages tend toward: simplification of affixes, phonological smoothing, flexible multi-word fusion, and reliance on context for grammatical inference. Thus, even a single traditional song offers valuable insights into structural processes that shape the entire language family.

CONCLUSION

Clipping is the dominant morphological process in *Ayam Den Lapeh*, exhibiting systematic patterns that reflect Minangkabau phonotactics and oral performance constraints. The Sanskrit-derived borrowing *biaro* highlights the persistence of historical cultural contact in the Malayic region. Beyond documenting linguistic structures, these findings carry several practical implications: Cultural preservation, Traditional Minangkabau songs act as repositories of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Documenting and analyzing clipped forms and borrowings contributes to safeguarding Minangkabau heritage, providing valuable material for cultural programs, community archives, and language revitalization initiatives. Pedagogical application: The morphological patterns observed in this study—particularly clipping and selective borrowing can be used as concrete examples for teaching Austronesian and Malayic morphology. They help learners understand phonotactic tendencies, word formation processes, and the interaction between language and oral tradition. Cross-linguistic research design: Insights from Minangkabau clipping and borrowing can inform comparative studies across Malayic and other Austronesian languages. The study provides a methodological model for typological, historical, and sociolinguistic research, guiding future data collection and analysis. Future research should extend to additional Minangkabau songs and dialects, incorporate historical sources, and employ detailed phonological modeling. Such work would strengthen both theoretical understanding and practical applications in education, cultural preservation, and cross-linguistic studies.

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