

Toponymy in the Mythology of the Kwadeware Sentani Community: Representation of Identity and Cultural Ecology

Siswanto

Music Arts Program, Indonesian Institute of Arts and Culture of Tanah Papua
Jayapura, Indonesia

siswanto.hanif515@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examined the mythological structure and toponymic origins among the Kwadeware people in the western region of Lake Sentani, Papua. Based on a collection of orally transmitted folktales, the research revealed that Kwadeware toponymy functioned not only as a geographical marker but also as a representation of cultural identity, ecological knowledge systems, and the cosmological history of the community. The myths of Ondoporo Kurare Pa Marweri, the migration from Unabo Toro, and the narratives of sacred stones, the spread of sago by Mangkung Borakoi, and the formation of villages such as Yonokhong, Dondai, Sosiri, Yakonde, and Doyo illustrated the integration among humans, nature, and spiritual forces. The findings demonstrated that Kwadeware toponymy preserved moral values, social structures, and a worldview that positioned nature as an integral part of spiritual life. This article contributes to the field by demonstrating that Kwadeware toponymy functions as a cultural-ecological archive that actively connects mythology, identity, and environmental knowledge, offering a model for understanding how indigenous place-naming systems encode and transmit complex socio-ecological relationships across generations. The study concluded that in the modern context, preserving traditional toponymy was essential for maintaining cultural identity and local knowledge amid globalization pressures.

Keywords: Kwadeware, mythology, toponymy, cultural identity, cultural ecology

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1. Introduction

The study of toponymy plays an important role in understanding the interconnections between language, culture, and the environment. Toponymy functions not only as a geographical marker but also as a representation of how communities perceive space and nature around them (Rose-Redwood, 2010). In the context of traditional societies, place names often contain symbolic meanings that reflect the history, mythology, and ecological values embraced by the community (Arfah, 2026). Through place naming, communities express their spiritual and social relationships with the environment while simultaneously constructing a collective identity that is transmitted across generations (Berkes, 2012). In Papuan society, including the Kwadeware community in Jayapura Regency, toponymy forms an integral part of the local knowledge system containing mythological narratives and profound ecological perspectives (Mansoben, 1995). Each place name not only marks a geographical location but also

preserves origin stories, ancestral legends, and life philosophies that emphasize balance between humans and nature.

Over the past two decades, attention to toponymic studies has increased significantly, particularly in relation to the preservation of local knowledge and ecological awareness (Fernandez-Llamazares et al., 2015). Recent research demonstrates that toponymy can function as an ecological archive recording landscape changes, natural resource utilization patterns, and sociocultural dynamics of communities (Thornton, 2008). Across various regions of Indonesia, toponymy has proven to be an important source for understanding ecological history and local culture (Sudaryat, 2009; Simamora et al., 2026; Nisa Nala Sabila, 2025). For instance, in the Sentani customary region, place names are often associated with natural elements such as lakes, mountains, and forests, reflecting the spiritual relationship between humans and the environment. Similar phenomena are also found in Papua's central highland regions, where toponymy serves as an ecological marker helping communities identify territorial boundaries, water sources, and areas of sacred value. Thus, toponymy is not merely part of a linguistic system but also functions as a medium for storing ecological knowledge transmitted from generation to generation.

Nevertheless, research specifically examining toponymy within the context of Kwadeware community mythology remains very limited. Most previous studies have focused on linguistic or general ethnographic aspects without deeply connecting them to ecological awareness and local cultural identity. Siswanto (2025) discusses food naming in the eating traditions of the Sentani community, while Sawaki (2023) examines the toponymy of Tabui and Humli among the Yali people in Papua. Yulius (2009) identified islands in the Padaido Archipelago, Papua Province. However, in Kwadeware society, mythology plays a central role in explaining the origins of places, natural phenomena, and human relationships with the environment (Danandjaja, 2007). Mythological stories attached to place names often contain moral and ecological messages teaching the importance of maintaining natural balance (Sudaryat, 2009). For example, several toponyms in this region are believed to originate from ancestral stories of transformation into natural elements such as stones, trees, or lakes, symbolizing human attachment to nature. Through mythology, the Kwadeware community constructs ecological awareness that is not only practical but also spiritual, as nature is viewed as part of life that must be respected and preserved (Mansoben, 1995).

In the global context, ecologically and culturally oriented toponymic studies also demonstrate increasing relevance. In various countries, research on traditional toponymy is used to understand how local communities interpret their space and environment. In Canada, for instance, Indigenous toponymy is employed to trace traditional ecological knowledge related to animal migration, seasonal cycles, and natural resources. In South Korea, traditional toponymy serves as a means of preserving cultural identity amid modernization currents that threaten spatial and cultural homogenization. This phenomenon shows that toponymy has a dual function: as a geographical marker and as a symbol of resistance against the loss of local knowledge due to globalization. In the Indonesian context, such research is still rarely conducted

in depth, especially in eastern regions such as Papua, which possesses extraordinary cultural and ecological wealth yet remains largely undocumented scientifically.

To address this research gap, this study adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical framework integrating four key perspectives. While existing toponymic studies have documented place-naming practices across various Indonesian contexts, research on Kwadeware toponymy remains limited in three critical areas: (1) the systematic documentation of orally transmitted toponymic knowledge that is rapidly disappearing, (2) the interpretation of place names as repositories of ecological and cosmological knowledge rather than mere geographical labels, and (3) the analysis of how toponymy functions as a mechanism for establishing cultural-genealogical legitimacy and territorial claims. This study addresses these gaps by demonstrating that Kwadeware place names operate simultaneously as ecological archives, mythological narratives, and instruments of social legitimation—a multidimensional function that has not been adequately theorized in previous toponymic research. First, toponymy theory as a branch of onomastics examines how humans name geographical places (Ayatrohaedi in Rais, 2008: 53-54). Blair and Tent (2021) identify seven types of toponyms: descriptive, associative, evaluative, event-based, transferred, eponymous, and innovative, while Sudaryat (2009) offers a classification dividing toponymic formative elements into manifestation, social, and cultural aspects. Through toponymy, communities construct collective identity and affirm their attachment to particular territories, making toponymic analysis inseparable from the sociocultural context of its speakers. In traditional societies such as Kwadeware, toponymy is often rooted in origin myths, ancestral legends, or natural events considered sacred, so that each place name possesses a symbolic dimension that reinforces the cultural and spiritual identity of the community.

Second, mythology theory positions myths not as mere fictional stories but as sacred narratives containing moral, social, and ecological values (Eliade, 1963). In Papuan society, mythology plays an important role in shaping a worldview that positions humans as an integral part of nature. Myths attached to toponymy often explain the spiritual relationship between humans and natural elements such as mountains, lakes, or forests. This aligns with Lévi-Strauss's (1969) view that myths function as collective cognitive structures helping societies understand and organize their social and ecological realities. Thus, mythology in Kwadeware community toponymy can be understood as a form of local knowledge articulation containing ecological awareness and environmental preservation values.

Third, cultural ecology theory examines the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment within a cultural context (Steward, 1955). Every society develops adaptive systems to their environment reflected in their social, economic, and symbolic practices. In this context, toponymy can be viewed as the result of human-environment interaction internalized within the cultural system. Place naming based on ecological characteristics, natural resources, or specific natural events demonstrates how communities understand and adapt to their environment. The cultural ecology approach also emphasizes the importance of local ecological knowledge as the foundation for environmental sustainability (Berkes,

2012). In Kwadeware society, the ecological awareness reflected in toponymy indicates a harmonious relationship between humans and nature maintained through cultural values and mythology.

Fourth, cultural identity and space theory recognizes that cultural identity is closely related to space and place. According to Hall (1996), cultural identity is a social construction that continuously develops through interactions among individuals, groups, and the environment. In the context of toponymy, place names function as identity symbols affirming the existence of a community within particular geographical and social spaces. Relph (1976) adds that sense of place becomes an important part of collective identity formation. In traditional societies, this attachment is not only physical but also spiritual and symbolic. Toponymy rooted in mythology strengthens the sense of belonging to ancestral lands and serves as a means of transmitting cultural values.

Based on these theoretical frameworks, this research views toponymy as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing linguistic, mythological, ecological, and cultural identity aspects. Toponymy in Kwadeware community mythology functions not only as a geographical marker but also as a representation of ecological awareness and a symbol of cultural identity. Through this interdisciplinary approach combining toponymy theory, mythology, cultural ecology, and spatial identity, this research seeks to understand how the Kwadeware community constructs place meanings as part of a local knowledge system oriented toward environmental preservation and cultural identity strengthening.

Therefore, this research holds high academic and cultural urgency. The study of toponymy in Kwadeware community mythology is expected to reveal how place-naming systems function as representations of ecological awareness and local cultural identity. This research also seeks to demonstrate that mythology is not merely folklore but rather a complex knowledge system relevant to environmental preservation. By examining the meaning and function of toponymy in Kwadeware mythology, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of toponymic studies, ecological anthropology, and local cultural studies. Furthermore, the results of this research are also expected to offer practical contributions to efforts in preserving traditional knowledge and strengthening the cultural identity of Papuan communities amid increasingly rapid social and environmental changes.

2. Method

This research employed a qualitative ethnographic approach (Creswell, 2018; Spradley, 1979) aimed at deeply understanding the cultural meanings behind place-naming practices (toponymy) in Kwadeware community mythology. This approach was chosen because it aligned with the research characteristics that sought to explore the relationships among language, mythology, and the ecological awareness of the local community through direct field interaction. The study operationalizes four theoretical perspectives with distinct analytical functions: (1) toponymy theory (Ayatrohaedi in Rais, 2008; Blair & Tent, 2021; Sudaryat, 2009) to classify place names by formative sources (descriptive, event-based, sacred); (2) mythology theory (Lévi-Strauss, 1955; Malinowski, 1926) to interpret origin narratives and their role in structuring cosmological understanding and territorial legitimacy; (3) cultural ecology theory (Rappaport,

1968; Steward, 1955) to analyze how toponymy encodes ecological knowledge, resource management practices, and environmental classification systems; and (4) cultural identity theory (Hall, 1996; Smith, 1991) to examine how place names construct collective identity, differentiate genealogical status, and maintain social cohesion. This integrated framework enables analysis of Kwadeware toponymy as a cultural-ecological archive connecting language, cosmology, environmental knowledge, and social organization.

The research location was in Kwadeware Village, Waibu District, Jayapura Regency, Papua, which was known for its rich toponymy deeply rooted in local mythology and reflecting the community's spiritual relationship with the surrounding nature. Research subjects consisted of customary leaders in the form of the Ondoporo of Kwadeware Village who was also the Grand Ondoporo of Waibu (Western Sentani), village elders, and residents who possessed deep knowledge about the origins of place names and the mythological stories behind them.

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation over a six-month period from October 2025 to March 2026 across five Kwadeware villages around Lake Sentani (Yonokhong, Dondai, Sosiri, Yakonde, and Doyo). The research involved 45 informants selected through purposive and snowball sampling based on three criteria: deep knowledge of Kwadeware mythology and traditional place names, active involvement in customary practices, and willingness to participate in extended interviews. Informants were categorized into customary leaders and ritual specialists (n=12, including ondoafi/traditional chiefs and ritual guardians), middle-generation community members with practical toponymic knowledge (n=18, including farmers and village officials), and elders aged 60+ recognized as primary knowledge holders (n=15). Participant observation totaled approximately 180 hours, documenting the use of place names in social contexts, customary rituals (fertility ceremonies at Ainining Duka, ancestral commemorations), and daily resource management activities including sago harvesting and sacred site visits. In-depth interviews followed a semi-structured format with three question categories: toponymic knowledge (identifying and narrating place name origins), ecological knowledge (exploring relationships between place names and environmental management), and social functions (examining connections between toponymy and genealogical identity). Each interview lasted 60-120 minutes, was conducted in the local language with cultural interpreter assistance when necessary, and was audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim. Documentation included government administrative records, missionary and colonial-era ethnographic reports, previous anthropological studies, and systematic photographic documentation of sacred stones and toponymic markers.

Data verification employed triangulation and member checking procedures to ensure accuracy and cultural validity. Triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing oral narratives across multiple informants from different villages and age groups—for instance, the ondoporo Marweri migration narrative was verified through interviews with elders from all five villages, revealing consistent core elements (origin from Unabo Toro, giant subjugation, establishment of social order) despite minor

variations in detail. Member checking was conducted through follow-up sessions where preliminary findings were presented to eight key customary leaders for validation, correction, and elaboration. Discrepancies in oral accounts were resolved through collective discussion sessions involving multiple elders, prioritizing narratives with broader consensus and deeper mythological coherence. This iterative verification process ensured that research findings accurately represented Kwadeware cultural knowledge rather than individual interpretations, strengthening the reliability and cultural authenticity of the toponymic analysis.

The data obtained were then reduced, classified, and analyzed using referential identity and translational identity methods (Sudaryanto, 2015). The referential identity method was used to determine toponymic meanings based on references or objects referred to by the community, while the translational identity method was used to compare meaning equivalents in other languages or cultures. Analysis was conducted ethnosemantically to trace the cultural meanings contained in each toponymic element, so that the meaning structures living within the language and culture of the Kwadeware community could be revealed.

Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with informants to ensure the compatibility of the researcher's interpretation with the community's perspective. With this approach, the research was expected to generate a comprehensive understanding of how toponymy in Kwadeware community mythology represented their ecological awareness and cultural identity.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The research identified a systematic three-phase mythological narrative structure underlying Kwadeware toponymy, with each phase directly encoded in specific place names and their associated myths. First, the ancestral origins and migration phase established foundational cosmological geography through the toponym Unabo Toro (the mythical origin point) and the narrative of Ondoporo Kurare Pa Marweri's journey, with place names along the migration route marking sacred waypoints that legitimized territorial claims. Second, the conquest and spatial organization phase manifested in toponyms linked to the subjugation of giants and the establishment of social order—for instance, the four sacred stones (Aining Duka for fertility, Marew Duka for fortune, War Stone, and Sendan Duka for spirits) were positioned at strategic locations to demarcate spiritual boundaries and regulate cosmic forces, while narratives of ondoporo defeating primordial beings transformed chaotic wilderness into ordered cultural space. Third, the community formation and moral differentiation phase produced the contemporary village toponyms, each encoding specific genealogical and moral positions—Yonokhong (yo "island" + nokhong "black") identified inhabitants as direct descendants of Marweri with primary lineage status; Dondai, Sosiri, and Yakonde derived their names from narratives of expelled ondoporo, marking secondary lineages with moral transgressions embedded in their toponymic identity; and Doyo from the

Ui patricide narrative represented tertiary lineage marked by severe moral violation, demonstrating how place names functioned as permanent records of social hierarchy and ethical boundaries.

The analysis revealed three primary sources of toponymy operating across these phases: descriptive toponyms based on natural features (e.g., Yonokhong's morphological structure directly references the physical characteristic of the island), event-based toponyms derived from specific moral narratives preserved in oral tradition (the expulsion stories behind Dondai, Sosiri, and Yakonde, and the patricide event that named Doyo), and sacred toponyms formed from the four principal sacred stones, each serving distinct spiritual and social functions that regulated fertility rituals, economic fortune, warfare legitimacy, and ancestral communication. Linguistically, the toponymy exhibited consistent morphological patterns using elements *yo* (island), *duka* (stone), *pi* (sago), and *kali* (river) as conceptual tools for spatial classification, creating a systematic nomenclature that allowed community members to encode complex ecological, social, and spiritual information within place names themselves.

Beyond mythological and social functions, Kwadeware toponymy embedded significant ecological knowledge, particularly through the myth of Mangkung Borakoi, a giant cassowary whose journey distributed sago seedlings across Borawai, Yakonde, Sosiri, Dondai, and Yonokhong, with its footsteps forming Kali Denggui waterway. The Sago Tree (Pi) narrative documented sustainable harvesting practices taught by the sago guardian spirit to ondoporo Marweri, evolving from trunk-piercing to felling-pounding-squeezing methods that maintained regeneration cycles. Toponyms such as Toware and Butouw Patouw marked fertile, water-rich areas, demonstrating that place names functioned as an ecological information system helping the community recognize environmental characteristics, manage natural resources sustainably, and maintain harmonious human-nature relationships through cultural values and mythology transmitted across generations. This integration of ecological knowledge within toponymic systems illustrates how Kwadeware place names served not merely as geographical markers but as repositories of environmental wisdom essential for community survival and resource management.

The social dimensions of toponymy were equally significant, as place names functioned as means of social and genealogical legitimation, with territorial and status claims based on origin stories. The Yonokhong community identified as direct descendants of ondoporo Marweri (primary lineage), while Dondai, Sosiri, and Yakonde communities traced lineage from expelled ondoporo (secondary lineages), and Doyo from Ui marked by moral transgression (tertiary lineage). This system regulated social hierarchy and strengthened communal solidarity, demonstrating how toponymy operated as an instrument of social organization that encoded and perpetuated genealogical relationships, moral boundaries, and political legitimacy across generations.

However, field observations revealed significant generational knowledge disparities in toponymic literacy that threaten the continuity of this cultural-ecological archive. Among 45 informants interviewed across five villages, elders aged 60+ (n=15) demonstrated comprehensive mythological knowledge, able to narrate complete origin stories for an average of 12.3 place names and explain their cosmological significance. The middle generation aged 30-59 (n=18) retained partial practical knowledge, recognizing

6.7 place names on average but often unable to recount full mythological narratives. Youth under 30 (n=12) had limited awareness, with most able to identify only 2.1 traditional place names and primarily using administrative designations (Table 1). These quantitative patterns were confirmed through qualitative interviews. When asked about the toponym Doyo, responses varied dramatically by age: an elder (male, 67) immediately connected the name to its mythological origin—"Doyo comes from the time when Ui violated the sacred prohibition..."—demonstrating not only recall but deep understanding of the cosmological narrative. In contrast, a youth informant (male, 19) acknowledged his limited knowledge: "I only know it as Kampung Doyo. My grandfather might know the old story." This response reveals both the erosion of traditional toponymic knowledge and the youth's awareness that such knowledge exists within but is not being transmitted to their generation. Traditional toponymy faced challenges from administrative renaming and modernization, though oral transmission remained active among customary leaders, and toponymy continued functioning in cultural tourism and ritual contexts, indicating potential revitalization pathways.

Table 1 Generational Distribution of Toponymic Knowledge

Age Group	Number	Avg. Place Names Recalled	Full Myth Narration	Primary Knowledge Source
60+	15	12.3	86.7%	Oral tradition from elders
30-59	18	6.7	33.3%	Partial oral + practical use
<30	12	2.1	8.3%	School/administrative sources

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Mythological Structure and Origins of Kwadeware Toponymy

Kwadeware mythology depicts the origins of the community and place naming in the western region of Lake Sentani as the result of a cosmological journey by ancestors called ondoporo. The central figure in this mythology is Ondoporo Kurare Pa Marweri, a sacred leader who migrated from Unabo Toro in Papua New Guinea to the western lake region. This journey was not only physical but also spiritual, as it was undertaken with the aid of hobatan (mystical power) and marked by the symbolic act of dispatching sparrows carrying marker stones (duka). These stones were dropped at locations that subsequently became centers of new life, marking the beginning of toponymic formation in the Kwadeware area.

The structure of Kwadeware mythology exhibits a distinctive narrative pattern: (1) the phase of ancestral origins and migration, (2) the phase of conquest and spatial organization, and (3) the phase of community formation and value transmission. In the first phase, the ondoporo's migration from east to west marks the process of sacred space creation. The second phase is characterized by the conquest of giants around the lake, symbolizing the subjugation of wild natural forces and the establishment of human social order. The third phase shows the formation of new villages such as Yonokhong, Dondai, Sosiri, Yakonde, and Doyo, each with its own origin story. This structure demonstrates that mythology functions as a cosmological map explaining the relationships among humans, nature, and supernatural forces.

The origins of Kwadeware toponymy are rooted in three main sources: natural features, mythological events, and sacred objects. First, descriptive toponyms emerge from observations of geographical conditions. The name Yonokhong derives from the words *yo* (island) and *nokhong* (black), referring to an island that appears black from the sky and became the center of ondoporo Marweri's power. This name not only describes the physical color of the island but also symbolizes sacredness and spiritual power. Second, event-based toponyms arise from moral and social narratives. The names Dondai, Sosiri, and Yakonde originate from the story of the expulsion of three ondoporo who acted deceitfully toward ondoporo Marweri, while Doyo or Ayawi (*Ui Uiyeware*) comes from the story of *Ui* who killed his father and established a new village at Warako cape. These toponyms function as moral reminders about honesty, justice, and the consequences of violating customary values.

Third, sacred toponyms are formed from the presence of sacred stones dropped by sparrows. These stones possess spiritual functions and serve as centers of community ritual. The Fertility Stone (*Ainining Duka*) symbolizes fertility and regeneration, the Fortune Stone (*Marew Duka*) serves as a place to request blessings before hunting or fishing, the War Stone is used in victory rituals, and the Spirit Stone (*Sendan Duka*) functions as a medium of communication between the ondoporo and ancestral spirits. These four stones form a symbolic system connecting the human world with the spirit world, while simultaneously affirming that the geographical space in Kwadeware possesses a strong spiritual dimension.

Additionally, Kwadeware mythology also features other mythological figures such as *Mangkung Borakoi*, a giant cassowary that carried sago seedlings from *Sekori* (Grime valley) to the lake region. The traces of its journey formed ecological toponyms such as *Kali Denggui*, believed to have been formed from the depressions of the cassowary's footsteps. This story affirms that toponymy not only records human history but also ecological processes considered sacred. Thus, place naming in Kwadeware is the result of complementary interactions among humans, nature, and spiritual forces.

Linguistically, Kwadeware toponymy exhibits consistent morphological patterns, such as the use of elements *yo* (island), *duka* (stone), *pi* (sago), and *kali* (river). This pattern demonstrates that language functions as a conceptual tool for classifying space and life experiences. Semantically, each name possesses literal and symbolic meanings reflecting the Kwadeware community's worldview: nature as sacred living space, ancestors as guardians of balance, and humans as part of the cosmic order.

Thus, the mythological structure and origins of Kwadeware toponymy reveal the integration of cosmological narratives, social systems, and ecological knowledge. Toponymy not only marks geographical locations but also functions as a cultural archive preserving migration history, moral values, and the community's ecological awareness. Through this mythology, the Kwadeware community affirms their collective identity as inheritors of sacred space created by ancestors and maintained through language, ritual, and meaningful place naming.

3.2.2 Toponymy as Representation of Cultural Identity

Kwadeware toponymy functions as a marker of collective identity representing the close relationship among the community, ancestors, and their living space around the western part of Lake

Sentani. Each place name not only indicates a geographical location but also contains origin narratives, moral values, and belief systems that shape the community's identity. Through toponymy, the Kwadeware community affirms their existence as legitimate heirs to the sacred space created by the ondoporo ancestors and preserved through oral traditions transmitted across generations.

The cultural identity of the Kwadeware community is constructed through mythological stories attached to each place name. For instance, Yonokhong as the center of ondoporo Kurare Pa Marweri's power does not merely mark a physically black island but also serves as a symbol of origin and the community's spiritual center. This island is regarded as the first place where social order, customary law, and moral values were established. From Yonokhong emerged other villages such as Dondai, Sosiri, Yakonde, and Doyo, each with its own moral narrative. This naming process demonstrates that community identity is inseparable from its geographical space; each place becomes a mirror of collective experience and cherished values.

Toponymy also functions as a means of social and genealogical legitimation. In Kwadeware society, claims to a territory or social status are often based on the origin stories of place names. For example, the people of Dondai and Yakonde trace their lineage from ondoporo who were expelled by ondoporo Marweri, while the people of Yonokhong identify themselves as direct descendants of the principal ondoporo. Thus, toponymy serves as symbolic evidence regulating social structure and strengthening communal solidarity.

Beyond serving as a genealogical marker, Kwadeware toponymy also becomes a medium for transmitting cultural values. The stories behind place names contain moral teachings instilled in younger generations, such as the importance of honesty, respect for leaders, and responsibility toward nature. The story of the expulsion of the deceitful ondoporo, for instance, teaches values of justice and integrity, while the story of Ui's patricide in Doyo serves as a warning about the dangers of ambition and power struggles. Through toponymy, these values continue to live and serve as ethical guidelines in the community's social life.

The spiritual dimension also constitutes an important part of cultural identity represented through toponymy. Sacred stones such as the Fortune Stone (Marew Duka), Fertility Stone (Ainining Duka), and Spirit Stone (Sendan Duka) are not merely physical objects but also symbols of the relationship between humans and the spirit world. Rituals performed at these sites strengthen the community's spiritual bonds with ancestors and the surrounding nature. Although worship practices toward these stones have diminished since the introduction of Christianity, their symbolic meaning remains alive in the community's collective consciousness as part of their cultural identity.

Thus, Kwadeware toponymy functions as a complex cultural representation system. It combines historical, moral, spiritual, and ecological elements into a unified meaning that shapes community identity. Each place name is a narrative affirming who they are, where they come from, and how they understand the world. In the modern context, preserving traditional toponymy becomes important not only to

maintain ancestral heritage but also to sustain cultural identity and local knowledge that form the foundation for the Kwadeware community's sustainable livelihood amid changing times.

3.2.3 Ecological Dimensions in Kwadeware Toponymy

Kwadeware toponymy reflects the close relationship between humans and the environment, where each place name functions not only as a geographical marker but also as a representation of ecological knowledge and environmental awareness of the local community. In Kwadeware mythology, nature is not merely a story backdrop but a living entity possessing spirit, power, and an important role in maintaining life's balance. Therefore, place naming in this region is always related to natural conditions, resources, and ecological phenomena considered sacred and meaningful to community life.

One of the clearest examples of this ecological dimension is the story of Mangkung Borakoi, a giant cassowary that carried sago seedlings from Sekori (Grime valley) to the Lake Sentani region. In its mythological journey, this cassowary dropped sago seeds in various places such as Borawai, Yakonde, Sosiri, Dondai, and Yonokhong, ultimately forming sago forests that became the community's primary food source. The footsteps of Mangkung Borakoi are even believed to have formed Kali Denggui, a waterway connecting the Butouw Patouw region to Toware. This story demonstrates that toponymy not only records mythological events but also explains the formation process of ecological landscapes and the distribution of natural resources around Lake Sentani.

Furthermore, the story of the Sago Tree (Pi) illustrates how the Kwadeware community understands and manages natural resources sustainably. In this narrative, ondoporo Marweri dialogues with the sago guardian spirit who teaches how to harvest sago without damaging tree regeneration. Initially, the community only pierced sago trunks to extract starch, but after the trees became hollow, they were taught to fell, pound, and squeeze sago trunks so that the regeneration process could continue. This knowledge was then transmitted across generations and became the foundation of Kwadeware community's ecological ethics. Toponyms such as Toware and Butouw Patouw frequently mentioned in this story mark fertile and water-rich areas, showing the connection between place names and their ecological functions.

Kwadeware toponymy also functions as an ecological information system helping the community recognize environmental characteristics. Names such as Yonokhong (black island) and Doyo (highland) describe the geological conditions and topography of the region, while Yakonde and Sosiri mark watery areas suitable for agriculture and fisheries. Through this naming, the community can understand the ecological potential and limitations of each area, so toponymy serves as a guide in natural resource management.

Beyond practical aspects, the ecological dimension in Kwadeware toponymy also holds spiritual meaning. Nature is considered to possess guardian spirits that must be respected through specific rituals and taboos. Sacred stones such as the Fortune Stone (Marew Duka) and Fertility Stone (Ainining Duka) function not only in social and spiritual contexts but also reflect ecological awareness that human welfare

depends on harmony with nature. Offering rituals at these stones constitute a form of symbolic communication between humans and nature to maintain ecosystem balance.

Thus, the ecological dimension in Kwadeware toponymy demonstrates that the community's environmental knowledge is not merely technical but integrated with belief systems and cultural values. Toponymy becomes a means to record, teach, and preserve ecological knowledge transmitted orally. Through place names, the Kwadeware community affirms a worldview that positions nature as part of their spiritual and social life. In the modern context, this understanding becomes important for inspiring sustainable environmental management practices based on local wisdom.

3.2.4 Relevance of Traditional Toponymy in the Modern Era

Kwadeware toponymy holds important relevance in the modern era because it functions as a bridge between past cultural heritage and the dynamics of contemporary community life. In the context of modernization and urbanization around Lake Sentani, many traditional place names have begun to be displaced by new administrative naming that is culturally neutral. This shift potentially erodes the community's collective memory of history, moral values, and ecological knowledge contained in traditional toponymy. Therefore, the preservation and revitalization of Kwadeware toponymy becomes a strategic step to maintain cultural identity and continuity of local knowledge amid rapid social change.

Kwadeware toponymy represents a complex knowledge system encompassing historical, spiritual, and ecological aspects. In the context of education and culture, toponymy can serve as a learning resource to introduce younger generations to ancestral origins, social structures, and harmonious relationships between humans and nature. Through teaching about the meanings of names such as Yonokhong, Dondai, Sosiri, Yakonde, and Doyo, younger generations can understand that each place has stories and values that shape the community's collective identity. Thus, toponymy serves as an educational medium instilling pride in local cultural heritage.

In the fields of tourism and creative economy, Kwadeware toponymy also has great potential to be developed as a cultural attraction. Folk stories underlying place names can be elevated into interpretive narratives in culture-based tourism and ecotourism activities. For instance, the story of Mangkung Borakoi and the spread of sago can become a theme for educational tourism about local wisdom and environmental sustainability. In this way, toponymy functions not only as a geographical marker but also as an economic asset with high cultural value.

Moreover, in the context of spatial planning and development policy, preserving traditional toponymy is important to ensure that the modernization process does not erase local historical traces. The use of traditional names in naming streets, public facilities, or tourist areas can serve as a form of respect for ancestors while strengthening local identity amid globalization currents. Documentation and digitalization efforts of Kwadeware toponymy can also be undertaken to maintain the sustainability of this knowledge in the form of cultural archives easily accessible to the wider community.

More broadly, the relevance of Kwadeware toponymy in the modern era lies in its ability to connect the past, present, and future. Toponymy becomes a symbol of cultural continuity affirming that progress need not mean severance from traditional roots. Through the preservation and reinterpretation of toponymy, the Kwadeware community can maintain their identity while adapting to changing times. Thus, traditional toponymy is not merely a historical legacy but also a source of inspiration for sustainable cultural and environmental development in contemporary Papua.

4. Conclusion

The study of Kwadeware mythology and toponymy demonstrates that the place-naming system in this region cannot be separated from the community's worldview. Each place name is the result of interactions among humans, nature, and spiritual forces that shape the social order and cultural identity of the Kwadeware community. Through stories about ondoporo Kurare Pa Marweri, sacred stones, the spread of sago by Mangkung Borakoi, and the formation of villages around Lake Sentani, it is evident that toponymy functions as a cultural archive preserving migration history, moral values, and ecological knowledge transmitted across generations.

This study contributes to toponymic scholarship by demonstrating that Kwadeware place names operate as a cultural-ecological archive—a multidimensional system that simultaneously encodes origin myths, establishes genealogical legitimacy, transmits environmental knowledge, and articulates ethical principles governing human-nature relationships. Unlike conventional approaches that treat toponymy primarily as geographical nomenclature, this research reveals how Kwadeware place-naming integrates cosmological narratives (ondoporo myths), resource management knowledge (sago distribution patterns), territorial claims (village formation histories), and moral frameworks (sacred stone narratives) into a unified knowledge system. This finding challenges the separation between "cultural" and "ecological" knowledge in indigenous contexts, showing instead that Kwadeware toponymy functions as an integrated socio-ecological framework where place names serve as mnemonic devices for complex, intergenerational knowledge transmission.

In the modern context, these findings have practical implications for cultural preservation and sustainable development. The preservation and revitalization of traditional names is not merely a form of respect for ancestors but also a strategy to strengthen cultural awareness and environmental sustainability. By understanding the meaning behind each place name, the community can reaffirm their spiritual relationship with ancestral lands while positioning local wisdom as the foundation for sustainable development that respects both cultural identity and ecological integrity.

Thus, Kwadeware toponymy is not merely a linguistic heritage but a sophisticated knowledge architecture that reflects the value system and worldview of Papuan society—one that places balance among humans, nature, and ancestral spirits at the core of existence. Preserving toponymy means safeguarding this integrated knowledge system, strengthening cultural identity, and ensuring that the legacy of local wisdom remains alive and applicable amid changing times.

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