



The Conceptualization of the Lontar Tree as a Mother to Rotenese Found in Soda

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Abstract— This study aimed to describe the types of conceptual metaphors contained in soda and understand the meaning of conceptual metaphors that reflect the cultural values of the Rote community and their functions. This research is qualitative research with an ethnographic approach. The data is obtained directly from informants in Rote by using a purposive sample with a snowball sampling technique. Interviews and observations based on Spradley Method were employed in this research. As a result, Rotenese people associate the *Lontar* Tree with the image of a mother (PLANTS ARE HUMAN). It belongs to Ontological metaphors because it assigns human nature (a mother) to an object (a tree). Their belief and myth have triggered them to think metaphorically of the *Lontar* Tree as their mother. The farmer's daily activity of tapping and getting the sap (*nira*) is associated with the breast milk a mother gives to her children twice a day (morning and afternoon). Historically, the song is related to the myth of the first *Lontar* Trees that come and grow from the sea. The song contains a moral message to share and care for the needy, widows, and orphans. The lyric reminds the farmers to be merciful towards those in need.

Keywords—Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor, Ethnography, Oral Poetry, Rote Society.

I. INTRODUCTION

East Nusa Tenggara, a province of the Republic of Indonesia, has 16 tribes spread over 566 islands. The Rote tribe is one of the tribes that have a philosophy of life *mao tua do lefe bafi*, which means that life can be sourced enough from slicing palm wine and raising pigs. The language spoken by the Rote people belongs to the Austronesian language family, from Malayo-Polynesian-Southwest, which is divided into several dialects [1]. In addition, the uniqueness of the Rote tribe is found in their traditional clothes, namely the *Ti'i Langga* hat and the traditional musical instrument "*Sasando*." Ownership of traditional musical instruments reflects a culture of people fond of the arts, including singing and song. A cultural study cannot be separated from language. Language can describe the culture built in an area. A study of the Rote language concluded that the existence of the Rote language based on the proportion of speakers of the total population was threatened or a value of 4, which indicates that most of the population can speak Rote, but only a few can tell stories and preach in the Rote language,

[2]. Thus, a linguistic study of the culture of the Rote tribe is needed with the aim of revitalization.

Spoken and written language uses many metaphors to actualize one's way of thinking in communicating a message. Metaphor is essential in communication and thinking [3]. Oral song in the Rote community is a literary treasure that has aesthetic beauty but requires meaning to be conveyed by the speaker. The oral song can also reflect the cultural values and socio-economic life of the Rote community. In its use, the oral song contains a lot of advice, thoughts, and feelings of the singer. The cognitive and Cultural Linguistics approaches show the use of metaphors in vocalized songs. A study of Cultural Linguistics on the speech of *Fe Hadak Belis* in the Rote speech group conducted by Ingunau (2020) found that the speech of *Fe Hadak Belis* was in the form of lines [4]. It has three functions: religion as a tribute to the Creator, education by giving moral messages, and social control to maintain the habits of people's lives. The meanings contained in it are religious meaning, sociological meaning, and aesthetic meaning. Furthermore, the metaphors contained in the oral song of *Kelong* (song) Agriculture in the Goa community, South Sulawesi have cultural values as their identity that functions both aesthetically and historically [5].

The development of language studies using the Cognitive Linguistics approach has grown in recent decades. According to Rizka Hayati, language symptoms in Cognitive Linguistics are triggered by a motivator; therefore, the basis for understanding a new concept comes from a person's knowledge due to his life experience [6]. In addition, the cognitive-linguistics proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in (Hashemian, Salemi, and Jafarpour 2020) emphasize that a person's thought process can be contained in metaphors so that it is not only contained in words [7]. In addition, they state that conceptual metaphors have experienced an extension of meaning from rhetorical devices in literary works to the general phenomenon of language use.

This study aims to describe the types of conceptual metaphors contained in Oral songs on the island of Rote and the meaning of conceptual metaphors that reflect the cultural values of the Rote community and their functions. The conceptual research of metaphors in vocalized songs on the island of Rote is essential to maintain the wealth of local wisdom and revitalize the language for future generations.

Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive Linguistics developed in the 1970s when Cognitive theory began to develop in the field of

Psychology [8]. Cognitive Linguistics is part of the sub-discipline of Linguistics that studies and relates Cognitive theory in Gestalt Psychology with individual/group processes using language.

Yoshimura explained the difference between generative grammar and Cognitive Linguistics, where the study of generative grammar focuses on language competence (language ability), whose conclusions are made without looking at examples in context (deductive). In contrast, Cognitive Linguistics focuses on language performance (language appearance), where conclusions are drawn logically. Inductive – see the use of language in context [9]. He then describes the significant contribution of Cognitive Linguistics to research on the meaning of language. Cognitive linguistics believes that no language structure is made without regard to meaning, so language research must arrive at the motivation for its use (meaning).

Cultural Linguistics

In its development, Cognitive Linguistics gave birth to other sub-disciplines, including Cultural Linguistics. Cultural Linguistics is a new perspective that examines the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualization [10]. Meaning that language can be studied more deeply when it is associated with the cultural background of the speakers.

Palmer (1996) discovered this theory initially, which fundamentally departs from the merger of Linguistic and Ethnographic theories [11]. Cultural linguistics examines the way or strategy of language users (speakers) to communicate and transmit their language to understand each other through images (imagery). One of the images included in it is a metaphor.

Metaphor

Metaphor in Greek is defined as "shifting" or "moving," so it can be said that metaphor is the transfer of an image to another image in a figurative manner so that language can be understood [12]. In other words, metaphor is a direct comparison between an object and a concept without using words like, like, for example, Simile.

The diversity of regional languages in Indonesia, of course, enriches the use of objects that are used as analogies to understand concepts in the language. Therefore, metaphors in Indonesian culture have received much attention from researchers such as Lasut [13], who studied the use of animal words as a typical Manado metaphor; Roswita et al. (2013), who examined Batak and Javanese metaphors used in traditional/wedding ceremonies[14]; or Arvianti (2010) studied metaphors in the speech of the ceremony when guiding traditional Javanese weddings[15]. Any research on this metaphor describes the cultural richness of the speakers (guys) of the language concerning cultural symbols.

Conceptual Metaphor

The investigation of metaphorical language only focused on the understanding of metaphor; it is studied as a figurative language that relies on analogy in a linguistic system. Moreover, a criticism gave birth to the Conceptual Metaphor theory by Lakof and Johnson (1987), which does not stop at the figurative language system of metaphor. However, in the process of conceptualization – reasoning gave birth to metaphorical language [16]. They believe that

humans basically think metaphorically and express language also metaphorically due to the limited vocabulary in the language itself.

Conceptual metaphor recognizes the existence of a target domain and source domain, where the source domain is an object that represents the concept (target) to be understood [17]. The description of Conceptual Metaphor can be summarized as follows:

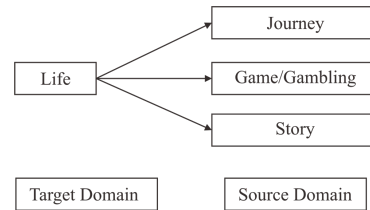


Figure 1: Targets and Sources in Conceptual Metaphors

When someone describes an abstract concept of life, then cognitively, he will associate life with various source domains such as travel, games, or stories. Life is a journey providing a mental picture of how the concept of a journey full of twists and turns or a journey that describes a process where there is an end.

Conceptual Metaphor Classification

Lakoff and Johnson categorize conceptual metaphors into four types, namely Ontological Metaphors (ontological), Structural Metaphors (structural), Orientational Metaphors (orientational), and Image Metaphors (image metaphors) [18].

Ontological Metaphor

Ontological metaphors are metaphors that conceptually contain abstract entities (both physical and non-physical) into an object that is the target. For example, assigning human nature to an abstract object or concept (personification), such as my computer shutting down. Dead is the nature of living things used to give concepts to objects.

Structural Metaphor

A structural Metaphor is a metaphor that uses the structure of an object to describe the target language. For example, time is analogous to something that moves in a sentence, and time passes quickly. The concept of passing quickly is structurally associated with time.

Orientational Metaphor

This metaphor is called orientational because of the use of resources related to the concept of space (spatial) in human activity. For example, center-periphery, up-down. The sentence lower your voice is an example of the concept of less is down. In other words, lowering the sound means lowering the volume.

Image Metaphor

This metaphor maps one image to another – not to a concept. For example, a bird with rainbow-colored feathers. The feather of a bird is an image associated with another image, namely a rainbow.

II. METHOD

The author uses a qualitative approach to study oral songs on the island of Rote. Qualitative approach. Researchers will

process verbal data to interpret the themes found. The ethnographic research design with a qualitative approach is believed to be the right research design in this study to examine more deeply events, activities, processes, or individuals based on extensive data collection [19].

The data used in this study is primary data, obtained directly from informants on the island of Rote as the singer of his oral song. The data source sample is a purposive sample with a snowball sampling technique [20]. In field research, the opportunity for increasing the number of informants is very open when data collection is carried out. So that researchers get data from informants directly, and from the design of this ethnographic method, researchers can better understand the relationship between language and culture more comprehensively. There were seven informants involved in this study. They are farmers who live in three sub-districts in Rote Ndao: West Rote, Southwest Rote, and Northwest Rote.

The instrument is the researcher himself [20]; this is because, in qualitative approach research, the researcher will collect data directly, analyze and draw conclusions. Researchers will sharpen their ability to conduct interviews and observations so that the data obtained is valid.

Researchers carried out two data collection techniques, namely:

1. Researcher's observations of a process, people, and human behavior can also be on other natural objects, then the observed events are matched with observation data [20]. Observations were made to determine the suitable informants according to research needs. The type of observation used is passive participation, where the researcher is in the place of the person being observed but does not participate in the activity [20]

2. Interviews. Interviews conducted in ethnographic research can be in the form of Casual conversation, curriculum vitae, key informant interviews (participants), and semi-structured interviews; according to Esterber (2002), aim to find problems more openly where the interviewee can express their ideas and opinions and are accessible in their implementation [20]. In addition to semi-structured interviews, researchers also used structured interviews. The tools used during the interview were notebooks, cameras, and recording devices (HP).

Data analysis techniques in this study were carried out using techniques taken from Spradley (Sugiyono 2018)., such as:

1. Interview data analysis method

After collecting data, the researcher conducted an interview analysis at this stage. This interview analysis enables researchers to find problems that will be asked in subsequent interviews concerning the formulation of the problem in the research being studied. Domain analysis finds the semantic relationship of oral song obtained from descriptive questions. Next, a taxonomic analysis was carried out. The taxonomic analysis is an in-depth analysis of each domain based on the answers obtained from structural questions. The last stage is to find a cultural theme related to the cognitive principles that build culture.

2. Observation data analysis method

The first stage is to make a domain analysis that refers to patterns of behavior and knowledge learned or created. The second stage is taxonomic analysis to detail further the types of oral song in the semantic relationship analyzed by the

domain. In the third stage, the researcher made an analysis component to find the meanings the singers recited to categorize their culture. Next, find a cultural theme to show the meaning of the oral song in the community on the island of Rote. The final step is to take a cultural inventory. This stage is done to make data management to make it easier to write.

The diagram of the stages of conceptual metaphor research with an ethnographic approach to Lontar Song *Soda* on Rote Island can be seen below:

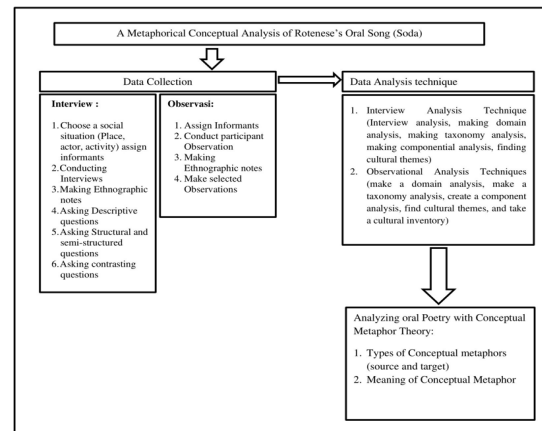


Figure 2. A Metaphorical Conceptual Analysis of Rotenese's Oral Song (Soda) diagram

III. RESULT

Lontar Tree: the life of Rotenese

Lontar Tree (*Borassus flabellifer*) is a kind of Palm Tree that grows widely on Rote Island. The tree which grows well on the dry and rocky land has become the source of living for the people. Almost all parts of the tree have been used, from its leaves, stems, fruits, flowers, trunks, and roots. People have survived living in such dry topography by tapping its flowers to directly drink the sap or *tuak* (*legend or nira*) daily. *Tuak* in Rote is not an alcoholic drink (Palm Wine). This *tuak or nira* is also processed to become *gula air* (liquid sugar). This liquid sugar is the essential basic need for people besides *gula lempeng* (cane sugar or Javanese sugar).

Rotenese survives daily by drinking *tuak*. (FP)

Nira is our basic need. We cannot live without it. (LS)

Nira is life for Rotenese. We drink the sap

daily, while we can eat rice only twice a week. (JP)

In the rainy season, we plant rice, but

we survive by *gula air* for the rest of it. (IL)

Consequently, the activity of tapping the Lontar Tree flowers and getting their juicy drops has become the livelihood of the local people. They sell the products (cane sugar, liquid sugar, brown sugar, fermented sap (*laru or sopi*), cakes, and snacks) to make a living. One of the informants even stated that *Lontar* Tree is the identity of Rote Island.

Apart from being their livelihood, Rotenese has grown their activity into a cultural tradition by singing a kind of mantra asking for the *nira* from the deep sea. The song is not written but has been passed from generation to generation. Everyone who wants to get a bountiful result should sing the song.

Every people in Rote who tap the Lontar Tree flowers should sing. (HF)

The history of tapping *nira* is about the song. (JP)

I have to sing after tapping eight trees. (JP)

Singing the song is related to the belief of Rotenese, which will be presented later in this section. According to the informants, everyone that taps the *nira* should sing because it is about the history of the Lontar Tree.

Conceptual metaphor: PLANTS ARE HUMAN

The process of conceptualizing metaphorical use of language is called conceptual metaphor. Rotenese people associate the *Lontar* Tree with the image of a mother. It is included in Ontological metaphors because it assigns human nature (a mother) to an object (a tree).

The Lontar Tree is our mother. (EA)

The Lontar Tree is a mother that breastfeeds in the morning and afternoon. (JP)

Rotenese portrays the dripping juice from the Lontar Tree as a mother's breast milk. This conceptualization in the thought and belief shows metaphorical language. They even call the tree by saying "*Mama*" (mother).

Meaning and Myth: A Song to care for those in need

Rotenese people sing a song – probably a mantra – to ask for abundant drips of the tapping flowers. This song is repeated when they tap the flowers. They believe that the sap will produce more by singing this song than if they do not sing it. Below is the song from JP (West Rote):

Fai ia au uma abi au tuangga

Today I come tapping the tree's flowers

Au ae u bo'i neu ana ma

I want to feed the orphans

Boema usu mao neu ina falu

Helping the widows

Karna ina falu ndule namo boema ana ma safe inggu itu

Because the widows and orphans grow

Hule neu lain fo au tuangga na oe fo

Asked God, so the Lontar Tree give more juice dripping

Au bantu neu ana ma boema au o'e

So I can help the orphans, and I

Neu ata fo au tuangga safe sambat to

May God give the total produce of *tuak*

Au u boi neu ana ma boe ma au usu

I feed the orphans and the widows

Mao neu ina falu ana mara safe inggu

As well as the needy, so they grow

Boe ma ina falu ra ara ndule namo

The widows and the orphans

The song's lyric from the three sub-districts reveals the same meaning, although delivered in different local languages. It

contains the hope of getting bountiful produce because they want to feed the needy, orphans, and widows.

Asking the tree to produce *nira* to give drink to the needy, widows, and orphans. (FP)

The purpose of tapping is to support the life of the widows and orphans, not only my wife. Singing this song will cause the tree to produce more. If we do not sing, the dripping juice will be less. So, if someone is tapping for *nira*, he must not be stingy. (JP)

I sing to ask *nira* for the widows. (IL)

The song portrays the belief of the people in Rote: the Lontar Tree is from the sea and the secret to getting bountiful produce. IL, the informant from the Southwest Rote, sings:

Fino-fino langga

Asking the wind from the East

Nori-nori dulu

The wind blows, and the flowers grow

Susu mantole tau

So the flowers grow more

Tein ma ure oe

The flowers grow more and produce more

The Rotenese believe that the Lontar Tree is from the eastern sea that was blown by the wind and later grows on the land.

The Lontar Tree is from the East and grows from the coast (EA)

The Lontar Tree is from the sea (HF)

To get more sap, ask from the deep sea (*sain*) (JP)

This historical song is different from the song to entertain (LS)

Motivation and Emotion when Climbing the Lontar Tree

The goal of achieving something better in the future can ignite positive motivation in a person. Likewise, with the people of Rote, the habit of tapping sap while singing is seen as a motivation that enables them to work harder than usual. This is also believed to have an impact on the sap tree itself, where the yield of the sap tree which is tapped while singing (*Helo/soda*) had a significant difference in yield, while the other decreased. The results of the sap can be processed into ingredients that have high economic value, such as *gula air* (liquid sugar), *Gula lempeng* (cane sugar or Javanese sugar), *Gula semut* (granulated sugar), soy sauce, and sweeteners in various cake preparations as to improve their standard of living. *Tuak* and Rotenese have become inseparable. So there is a slogan pinned for the people of Rote, namely *Nusa Rote Gula Air*.

Enthusiasm for tapping because the sap, which is processed into sugar, can be sold to earn money to buy rice. (FP)

Thoughts about few or many results (HF)

The yield of Lontar Tree sap is economical to earn money and send children to school, feed the family, to meet their needs. (LS)

The song when clamping the Mayang of Lontar Tree to produce much sap called *helo* (JP)

Flattering the Palm Tree to produce water with a song (GL)

In order to produce a lot of *gula air* (Liquid sugar), the sap tapping farmers need to tap as much as possible. One tapper sap farmer can harvest 30-40 trees each season. The number of trees tapped also impacts the number of hours worked. Tiredness and exhaustion must have hit them when they tapped the sap. One way to overcome this situation is to sing. Singing while tapping the flowers on the tree can make them enthusiasts work tirelessly. In addition, spiritual songs can also be sung on the palm tree, not only the Lontar song (*helo/soda*) itself. In addition, fellow farmers tapping sap can compete *Pantun* (rhymes) on palm trees. They do this in response to each other. This can relieve their fatigue at work.

The process of tapping the sap is done by yourself, so you need to entertain yourself by singing (LS)
Besides singing, there is also *Pantun* (rhyme) on the Lontar Tree to entertain yourself (JP)

The custom of singing while tapping the flowers can bring out different levels of emotion from the singer himself. The habit of singing on the Lontar Tree is believed to make the tree produce much sap. The success of this work makes them happy. Abundant crops allow them able to make much money. Having much money enables the *nira* farmers to send their children to a higher level and fulfill their other lives properly.

Happy when the juice comes out, sad if not. Sad to remember the struggle to cultivate daily food and drink. (FP)

Feeling sure that you will get much juice for singing the history (HF)

Moreover, the song on the *tuak* tree also expresses the poet's sense of security. One of the informants said that they would sing when they were not haunted by fear. Fear can arise when tapping sap in the middle of the night or even in windy weather.

When we are happy and feel safe, we just sing. But if it was windy, we were usually silent and did not sing. (HF)

Memories of loved ones and their struggles who have passed away could arise when they sing or hear it. The struggle to tap the sap is not easy; the risk of falling from the tree is very wide open if they are not careful. However, it did not discourage them from tapping *Nira*; they did it twice daily. They spend 10-14 hours every day tapping the sap. Their harvests are not always abundant; some trees do not even produce the sap they expect. Consistency in tapping *tuak* is vital; if it is not tapped for just a few days, it can result in crop failure.

Feel sorry and sad when singing this song because of the risk of falling when tapping the sap. (JP)

Feeling sad when tapping *nira* because I remember parents who have passed away (GL)

Feeling sad and happy because life depends on the results of the Lontar Tree sap (Wife of IL)

Changing Job Orientation

The informants can climb the tree and tap the flowers in two ways: first, they learn by looking at their parents' work and imitate; second, their father taught them directly by practicing it on the tree.

I learned by myself to climb the tree (FP)

I imitate my parents in singing (GL)

I see and practice what I see from my parents (IL)

My father accompanied me to climb the tree and taught me (LS)

This song was taught by my father and grandfather (IL)

However, the life of the Rote community has undergone several changes from year to year. This is because the level of education changes their mindset and orientation at work. Working as a sap-tapping farmer is not an easy job; this job has a high risk. These sap-tapping farmers climb palm trees 20-30 meters high without using safety equipment. They can have a work accident fall from the top of a palm tree and die. Therefore, the younger generation prefers to do other jobs, either in the area of Rote or out of the island, such as working in the fields, farming seaweed, trading, and even becoming immigrant workers in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The daily activities of tapping sap are no longer seen as promising for their livelihood, although the previous generation still maintains the tradition of tapping sap.

In the past, all Rotenese could tap sap and sing on the Palm Tree, but now there is a change because not everyone taps sap. (FP)

Changes in the current generation's different job orientations. The hope that was tapping the sap is still done to preserve life. (HF)

Many youths are wandering, so rarely does anyone tap *Nira* (JP)

In addition to changing job orientations, the habit of singing while tapping sap has also been eroded. The demands of pursuing education to a higher level require them to leave their area. Outside their area, the habit of tapping sap is no longer found. Thus, the habit and ability of tapping sap began to disappear, and stories and poems were usually sung when tapping sap.

Stories and poems will become extinct if the children who attend school do not heed them anymore. (HF)

Children who go to school do not live with their parents; they do not tap *Nira* (LS)

IV. DISCUSSIONS

The conceptual metaphor PLANTS ARE HUMAN reflects the thought of Rotenese when they assign human nature to the Lontar Tree. Their belief and myth have triggered them to think metaphorically of the Lontar Tree as their mother. The daily activity of tapping the flowers of the trees and getting the sap (*nira*) is associated with the breast milk a mother gives her children. It influences the way they perceive their laboring work during the harvest months when they have to tap more than thirty trees twice a day (morning and afternoon). Rotenese have depended their lives on the production of various kinds of sugar from the juice dripping. They have survived daily life without eating rice but by drinking *tuak* or *nira* (the juice). It pictures how a baby survived daily only by breastfeeding his or her mother.

The song (*soda or helo*) people sing when they tap the trees is similar in three areas of Rote Island: West Rote, Southwest Rote, and Northwest Rote. The farmers sing a song to ask for more *nira* from the deep sea so that they can share it with the needy, widows, and orphans. This song can be considered a mantra because they sing it repeatedly when they tap the flowers of each tree. Although they do not overtly say that, they believe there is a difference in the production if someone does not sing the song. The song calls the wind from the East to blow the Lontar tree flowers, so they bloom and drip in more juice (sap). In line with the previous study about the Kelong (song) of agriculture in Sulawesi, the song functions both aesthetically and historically. The song is historically related to the myth of the first Lontar Trees that come and grow from the sea.

The song contains a moral message to share and care for the needy, widows, and orphans. The lyric reminds the farmers to be merciful towards those in need. They must take care of not only their own family but also others. They ask for bountiful produce to feed the widows and orphans. In the past, the life of Rotenese depends on the sugar production of *nira*. It has become the basic need of the people during the dry season. Therefore, various products have been made from *nira* and have economic value to society. Despite such facts, the farmers have been reminded to think of others through the song they sing.

In *Fanduk* season (harvest time), usually three months from September to November, the farmers can tap more than thirty trees, which can be laborious. Singing the song usually motivates them to keep tapping the trees and produce more *nira*. Their motivation is not only about economics but also moral values.

Nowadays, the way the youth generation perceives the working of tapping the Lontar Tree is changing. The younger generation has been well educated and worked outside the Rote Island, so they have left the job. They make money by planting rice or doing other work, but they are not willing to continue doing what their father and grandfather previously did. In the future, this kind of activity might become scarce. There is a need to reflect on the thought of preserving the tradition and making the tapping activity more meaningful and essential to the next generation.

This study has some limitations. The first issue was on the length of time for gathering the data. As an ethnography research it should take 6 months. But the researchers conduct it less than 6 months. Another limitation was on the areas of research took place. The researchers only got 3 districts out of 10 in Rote Island. Those are Rote Barat, Rote Barat Daya and Rote Barat Laut. Moreover, the sampling technique which applied in this research was snowball sampling. This technique may bring different results for another researcher who interested in doing the same research, it due to the capability of the informants to give the information about Soda song on Lontar Tree.

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