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Exploring Symbolism in the Torompio Dance within the Traditions of the Pamona Tribe

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand the symbolism and meanings of the Torompio dance among the Pamona indigenous people in Lambarese Village. This research uses an ethnographic analysis. Ethnographic analysis is an approach that begins with field facts, analyzes them based on cultural theories and relevant arguments to explore the cultural situation of the community, and ultimately yields a conclusion. The results show that the Torompio dance is a rich manifestation of symbolism and profound meaning, depicting complex interactions between humans, nature, and spirituality. The name "torompio" and the "paporapa" concept demonstrate how the Pamona indigenous people communicate values and emotions symbolically. Dance movement symbols reflect social and spiritual values and harmonious relations with nature. The transition of traditional attire from "karaba" to fabric and beads shows cultural adaptation in preserving traditions amidst changing times. The verses (kayori) underscore the symbiotic relationship between the community and nature and reflect a spiritual view of creation. All elements in the Torompio dance synergistically express the "Fervor of Love," which is central to the cultural expression of the Pamona indigenous people. Therefore, it is recommended that the Department of Education and Culture of East Luwu Regency, the Lemba Pamona Luwu Indigenous Institution, and the Pamona indigenous people take strategic steps in preserving and promoting the Torompio dance. First, integrating the Torompio dance into the school education curriculum in East Luwu. Second, the Lemba Pamona Luwu Indigenous Institution should regularly organize workshops and cultural festivals featuring the Torompio dance as the main event. Third, the Pamona indigenous people are advised to continuously innovate and adapt their cultural expressions to modern times while maintaining the essence and original values of the Torompio dance. These initiatives will contribute to preserving the Torompio dance as an essential part of the cultural heritage and identity of the Pamona indigenous people while enriching Indonesia's cultural diversity.

Keywords: Indigenous People; Symbolism; Traditional Dance.

INTRODUCTION

Renowned for its cultural diversity, Indonesia features various tribes across its regions (Akhirun & Septiady, 2022). Among them, the Pamona tribe in Central and South Sulawesi stands out for its unique ways of preserving and maintaining its culture. Particularly in Poso and East Luwu Regency, this tribe actively preserves its cultural heritage, which includes important aspects such as engagements, weddings, traditional dances, arts, and customary attire. Thus, the presence and activities of the Pamona tribe symbolize the rich cultural diversity of Indonesia, adding vibrancy to the national cultural mosaic.

The history of the Pamona tribe reflects their long journey through time, marked by significant events. Their origins trace back to Salu, Moge in East Luwu, where their ancestors initially settled before moving closer to the governmental centers of that era (Lapasila et al., 2020). This relocation, prompted by the conquest by Macoa Bawalipu from Wotu, East Luwu, brought them nearer to the governmental hub in Mangkutana, East Luwu. The Darul Islam rebellion later spread them further, including to Central Sulawesi, demonstrating the Pamona tribe's resilience and adaptability in the face of social and political changes (Sangaji, 2007).

The Pamona tribe is known for its history of strengthening unity and brotherhood among various tribal groups. This concept of unity is embedded in the name Pamona itself, derived from "Paka Roso Mosintuwu Naka Molanto," meaning "Strengthening the Unity of Brotherhood" (Sumo et al., 2020). The declaration of the Pamona name in Tentena City and the construction of the "Watu Mpoga'a" or separated rock monument are significant symbols of this tribe's origins and unity (Gimbo & Harisantoso, 2023). Further, the establishment of traditional councils such as the Lemba Pamona Poso Indigenous Institution and the Lemba Pamona Luwu Indigenous Institution shows how the Pamona tribe has institutionalized their traditional values and customs to ensure the preservation and respect for their cultural heritage today and in the future.

The *Torompio* dance is one of the cultural manifestations that enrich the cultural treasury of the Pamona tribe. The name "*Torompio*" comes from combining two words in the Pamona language, "*toro*," meaning "to spin," and "*pio*," meaning "wind," translating literally to "spinning wind." This etymology not only names the dance but also reflects the essence of its dynamic and elegant movements, similar to the swirling wind. The Torompio dance symbolizes the beauty of movement and the rich emotional and cultural values the Pamona indigenous people uphold.

The meaning of "fervor of love" inherent in the Torompio dance reflects the Pamona tribe's understanding of love in various dimensions of spiritual, social, and communal life (Dewi, 2012). This meaning extends beyond affection between lovers to include reverence for the homeland, compassion among humans, and gratitude to God. It shows how the Torompio dance expresses deep spiritual, social, and cultural values. It is more than just an artistic performance but a tangible manifestation of principles that influence social interactions within the Pamona indigenous community.

Accompanying the Torompio dance with songs verse by dancers and musicians adds depth to the dance's aesthetics and meaning. This tradition creates harmony between movement and music, producing an aesthetically touching experience for the audience. The dance's performance in open spaces, such as courtyards or larger public areas, demonstrates the inclusive and communal nature of the Pamona tribe's culture. Often presented at major cultural events like harvest traditions, customary weddings, and dignitary receptions, the dance emphasizes strengthening social bonds and maintaining the cultural identity of the Pamona tribe.

The Torompio dance conveys various symbols and meanings through verbal and non-verbal elements. Communication in the Torompio dance is not limited to dance movements but also includes aspects such as song verses, traditional attire, and interactions among dancers. Although the dance is rich in cultural values and traditions, there needs to be more understanding of its meanings and symbols, especially among the younger generation and broader society. A lack of appreciation and understanding of these values threatens the sustainability of the dance as part of the cultural heritage.

Based on the description above, this research aims to understand the symbolism and meanings of the Torompio dance among the Pamona indigenous people in Lambarese Village. By delving deeper into the symbolism of the name and movements of the dance, this research hopes to uncover layers of meaning that have yet to be fully understood by the wider community, particularly the younger generation. Moreover, this research also explores how the dance functions as a means of communication and cultural preservation amidst social changes. The benefits of this research are expected to provide new insights for the academic community about the cultural richness of the Torompio dance, as well as strengthen community appreciation and participation in preserving this cultural heritage.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand groups of people, objects, situations, conditions, ongoing events, and even thought systems (Whitney, 1960). This research was conducted in Lambarese Village, East Luwu Regency. This research utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Data was collected through interviews with key informants, field observations, literature study techniques, and document analysis concerning the processes and the symbols and meanings embedded in each cultural ritual. The acquired data was then analyzed using ethnographic analysis. Ethnographic analysis is an approach that begins with field facts, analyzes them based on cultural theories and relevant arguments to explore the cultural situation of the community, and ultimately yields a conclusion (Hicks et al., 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Torompio dance reflects a profound uniqueness in the culture of the Pamona indigenous people, where the dance serves not merely as an art performance but also as an earnest expression of gratitude to God. With its dynamic and spirited movements, the dance mirrors a storm that fosters harmony and peace rather than bringing destruction. Within the swirling dance, deep meanings of love, curiosity, recognition, affection, and belonging manifest in everyday life, extending beyond individual relationships to include love for the homeland and fellow humans.

This dance frequently appears at major events, such as harvest traditions, customary weddings, and the welcoming of guests. The Torompio dance performed during the rice harvest articulates a narrative of togetherness and gratitude. It is a moment when the community unites in joy to celebrate the successes achieved together. Thus, the dance symbolizes profound thanks to God, whom the Pamona indigenous people call "Mpue Mpalaburu." The concept of God as the creator and giver of life is vividly reflected in this dance, where every movement and rhythm communicates boundless gratitude for the bountiful harvest.

The Torompio dance also stands out as a symbol of the fervor of love among young men and women, making it more than just a traditional dance. It celebrates life, blessings, and harmony within the community, binding its members with strong ties of affection. Further discussion will explore the more profound symbolism and meanings of the Torompio dance for the Pamona indigenous people, revealing how the dance is a physical and spiritual celebration that portrays the community's values, hopes, and prayers.

A. Symbolism in the Naming of the Torompio Dance

In studying the Torompio dance's name symbolism among the Pamona indigenous people, a semantic richness exists that merely transcends the name. "Torompio" combines "toro," meaning to spin, and "pio," derived from the root word "lompiu," indicating a tornado (Legislation Council, 2021). However, to avoid the frightening connotations of "lompiu," "pio" serves as a gentler euphemism for "wind." This transformation reveals how the Pamona indigenous people use symbolism to communicate concepts that might be taboo or feared (Dewiyanti et al., 2023).

The concept of "paporapa," originating from "rapa," meaning as if or for instance, becomes crucial in the communication context of the Pamona indigenous people. The tendency to communicate through metaphors illustrates a more refined and polite approach to conveying messages (Rusman et al., 2023), especially those related to emotions and desires. Within the Torompio dance context, this reflects how expressions of romance and deep feelings are implicitly conveyed through dance movements, song lyrics, and interactions among young dancers. Furthermore, expressing sincere desires or intentions to elders before channeling them through dance while singing and exchanging verses indicates a social structure and norms that support such communication.

The Torompio dance represents a significant cultural manifestation for the Pamona indigenous people, where the dance serves as entertainment and a medium for communicating life values and philosophies. Accompanied by traditional musical instruments like drums, gongs, and guitars, the Torompio dance expresses joy and togetherness during significant communal moments. This dance, an original heritage of the Pamona tribe, marks a distinct cultural identity and differentiates them from other ethnic groups.

The development of the Torompio dance, which has innovated through new versions, is an effort to adapt to changing times. Artists from the Pamona tribe strive to integrate modern elements into the dance without losing its essence and philosophy. This initiative reflects the cultural dynamics that seek to maintain the relevance of traditions in a contemporary context, demonstrating the flexibility and sustainability of culture in responding to the times (Rahmadani et al., 2024).

The concept of semiotics in culture, which studies how meaning is created and understood through symbols (Sasmita et al., 2022), is highly relevant in analyzing the Torompio dance. Each movement in the dance is not merely aesthetic but also contains deep meanings related to the relationships between humans, God, and each other (Zaluchu, 2021). Therefore, the dance serves as a medium that portrays hopes for harmony and balance in life, reflected in the interactions between dancers and the audience and the values conveyed through the dance.

Through the Torompio dance, the Pamona indigenous people express the beliefs and values that underlie their lives, highlighting the harmonious relationship between humans and transcendent forces. It exemplifies how art and tradition bridge spiritual concepts and social realities, strengthening community bonds while preserving cultural heritage in an ever-changing context (Ahmad et al., 2023).

B. Symbolism in the Movements of the Torompio Dance

Twelve dancers, comprising six men and six women, perform the Torompio dance. Each movement they execute is a series of aesthetic gestures and carries deep symbolism for the Pamona indigenous people. The symbolism in the movements of the Torompio dance reflects the values, traditions, and life philosophies of the Pamona indigenous people, where each movement communicates specific cultural messages related to life, nature, spirituality, and social relationships within the community. Therefore, understanding the meanings behind the dance movements is crucial for a deeper appreciation of the cultural richness and identity of the Pamona tribe. The following discussion will delve further into various movements in the Torompio dance and interpret their meanings, providing insights into how this dance serves as a medium to preserve and communicate cultural heritage to future generations.

1. The Linggi Doe Respect Movement

In the Torompio dance, the "linggi doe" movement plays a crucial role as an expression of prayer and deep respect, reflecting the cultural values esteemed by the Pamona indigenous people (Sherlita, 2013). The respect inherent in this movement is not merely formal but a spiritual expression that aligns with prayer, seeking safety and well-being for all present at the gathering. The linggi doe movement is not just a ritualistic greeting but also a symbol of openness and readiness to embrace the possibilities that may arise, reflecting a life attitude that values interpersonal relationships and divine presence in every aspect of life.

Furthermore, non-verbal communication theory becomes relevant in analyzing the meaning behind the *linggi doe* movement in the Torompio dance. According to this theory, body movements, postures, and facial expressions are

forms of communication that can convey complex messages without the need for words (Ibrahim et al., 2022). In the context of the Torompio dance, the *linggi doe* movement serves as a powerful medium to communicate respect, spirituality, the interconnection between the individual and the universe, and larger spiritual entities. It emphasizes that in the culture of the Pamona tribe, dance is not merely an aesthetic performance but also a means of communicating deep spiritual and social values.

The *linggi doe* movement of respect in the Torompio dance illustrates how dance can reflect the life principles of the Pamona indigenous people, where social meetings and interactions are valued as moments rich with meaning and spirituality. The openness symbolized through this movement teaches the importance of accepting and respecting others, and it reminds us of the presence of God as the center of all interactions. Thus, this movement reveals cultural identity and the life philosophy the Pamona indigenous people embraced, making the Torompio dance a vital medium for preserving and transmitting cultural values to future generations.

2. The Ina Dore Farewell Movement

The "ina dore" farewell movement in the Torompio dance holds profound connotations for the Pamona indigenous people, reflecting optimism and belief in human relationships that each farewell is temporary and there will be future reunions (Parinsi, 2018). This movement is not merely about parting; it symbolizes the ongoing life cycle, where social interactions are seen as a continuous series of meetings and farewells. The Pamona indigenous people view farewells not as an end but as a pause before the next reunion, highlighting the values of family and togetherness in their culture.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism theory, which emphasizes the meanings formed through social interactions and how individuals interpret symbols in society (Sulaeman et al., 2021), the *ina dore* movement in the Torompio dance can be understood as a physical manifestation of abstract concepts such as hope, togetherness, and the life cycle. This movement teaches that each meeting and farewell carries meanings and lessons that can strengthen social bonds and deepen human understanding of life.

Furthermore, the *ina dore* movement in the Torompio dance demonstrates how dance can effectively communicate complex emotions and cultural values. Through dance, the Pamona indigenous people can express concepts that may be difficult to articulate with words, allowing the audience to feel and understand the implicit meanings behind the dance movements. This showcases the cultural richness and wisdom of the Pamona indigenous

people in using dance to preserve and communicate their cultural heritage to future generations.

3. The *Mosipanca* Meeting Movement

The "mosipanca" meeting movement in the Torompio dance depicts the search and union of partners in the dance. It reflects a profound expression of fervent love, central to the values the Pamona indigenous people uphold (Sherlita, 2013). In this dance context, mosipanca extends beyond mere physical movement; it embodies the desire to share moments of togetherness and express feelings of affection. The song accompanying this movement narrates the beauty and depth of these encounters, illustrating how each meeting can serve as a means to express and strengthen bonds of love.

Semiotics theory, which examines the meanings behind signs and symbols in communication, provides insight into understanding how the *mosipanca* movement in the Torompio dance functions overall as a medium to convey messages of love and togetherness (Erfiani et al., 2022). In this context, every movement, step, and rhythm in the dance becomes a symbol rich with meaning, communicating the social and emotional values important to the Pamona indigenous people.

Furthermore, integrating the concept of love into the *mosipanca* movement indicates that the Torompio dance is not just a physical celebration but also an emotional and spiritual one. It underscores the importance of love in maintaining healthy and harmonious interpersonal relationships between partners in the dance and within the broader community context (Guilbault et al., 2020). Thus, the Torompio dance serves as a means for the Pamona indigenous people to celebrate and strengthen bonds of brotherhood, creating a social climate where love forms the foundational basis of every interaction and meeting.

4. The Mompalakanamo and Mosangkalima Facing Movements

In the Torompio dance, the facing movements "mompalakanamo" and "mosangkalima" hold rich symbolism for the Pamona indigenous people (Dewi, 2012). They represent beautiful encounters and a close union among individuals. The mompalakanamo movement, where dancers face each other while singing verses that depict the beauty and uniqueness of the encounter, reflects profound aesthetic and emotional values. Through these verses, the encounter becomes a moment laden with meaning, strengthening the social and emotional bonds among the dancers (Li & Zhang, 2023).

The subsequent "mosangkalima" movement, which involves male dancers placing a necklace on female dancers followed by a handshake, symbolizes unity and respect. Placing the necklace is not merely a gesture of

respect but also a symbol of giving, receiving, and appreciation (Ortis, 2023). The following handshake reinforces the concept of unity, demonstrating respect and equality among the dancers. It reflects the social structure of the Pamona indigenous people, where interpersonal relationships are built on mutual respect and support.

Symbolic interactionism theory, which examines how individuals interact with each other through the creation of meaning from symbols in society, is relevant in understanding the significance behind the *mompalakanamo* and *mosangkalima* movements. In this context, these movements are not just physical expressions but also mediums for communication, building, and strengthening social bonds (Aisyah, 2022). Each movement serves as a means to convey messages and values held dear by the Pamona indigenous people, making the dance an artistic performance and an embodiment of their social and cultural life.

The *mompalakanamo* facing movement in the Torompio dance shows the dancers facing each other while singing verses (*kayori*) that narrate how this encounter is beautiful, impactful, and unforgettable. Meanwhile, the subsequent *mosangkalima* movement displays male dancers placing a necklace on female dancers and continuing with a handshake to express their close union.

C. Symbolism in the Traditional Attire of the Torompio Dance

Traditional attire in the Torompio dance plays a crucial role in conveying the identity and traditions of the Pamona indigenous people. Originally made from "karaba" or bark cloth, the attire reflects their closeness to and respect for nature, given that the raw materials are sourced directly from trees in the mountains (Posumah, 2013). Using these garments in specific contexts such as weddings, guest receptions, and dances highlights the significant role of traditional attire in social and cultural rituals while also affirming the uniqueness of the Pamona tribe's culture. The fragility of "karaba," which quickly deteriorates when wet, underscores the ephemeral nature and specific usage of this traditional attire, adding a layer of meaning to the preserved values and traditions.

The evolution of traditional attire from "karaba" to fabric adorned with beads marks a cultural adaptation to changing times and material limitations. This innovation in traditional attire reflects the dynamic culture of the Pamona tribe, which preserves its cultural heritage while adapting new elements to ensure the continuity of traditions. The use of colorful beads in the latest traditional garments introduces an appealing visual aspect, enhancing the aesthetic beauty of the Torompio dance and strengthening the visual identity of the Pamona indigenous people.

Material culture theory, which explores how material objects reflect and influence social and cultural life, is relevant in understanding the significance behind the traditional attire in the Torompio dance. As material objects, traditional garments serve as clothing and mediums to convey values, social status, and cultural identity (Maiyo et al., 2023). The distinction between short-sleeved traditional attire for the youth and long-sleeved for the elderly, for example, reflects the social structure and norms within the indigenous people, where attire is a marker of age, status, and possibly social roles within the community (Özdil, 2021).

Thus, traditional attire in the Torompio dance is not merely an aesthetic component but also a vital vessel for the Pamona indigenous people to communicate and preserve their cultural heritage. The transition from "karaba" to fabric and bead decorations demonstrates cultural adaptation and sustainability in facing challenges and changes over time while also reaffirming the cultural values and unique identity of the Pamona tribe.

D. Symbolism in the Verses (Kayori) of the Torompio Dance

The verses (*kayori*) in the Torompio dance play a crucial role in conveying messages and values highly regarded by the Pamona indigenous people (Balebu, 2010). *Kayori* not only complements the dance movements but also reveals more profound layers of meaning, where each word and phrase is carefully chosen to communicate specific messages from the dancers to the audience. In the context of the Torompio dance, *kayori* serves as a bridge between the dancers and the audience, allowing the dancers to express the intended meaning of the dance, often related to life experiences, social relationships, and human interactions with nature.

Semiotics theory, which focuses on interpreting signs and symbols in communication (Suparni & Saputra, 2023), provides insights into analyzing *kayori* in the Torompio dance. According to this theory, every element in *kayori*—from word choice to phrase structure—can be viewed as a sign carrying specific meanings for the Pamona indigenous people. For example, the *kayori "Lemba Kutanondo,"* which describes the beauty of nature, like the fertility of the soil, mountains, valleys, seas, and rivers, is not just a praise of physical beauty but also an acknowledgment of nature's vital role in human life. This expression in *kayori* underscores the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, showing how the Pamona indigenous people value and maintain harmony with their environment.

Furthermore, *kayori* in the Torompio dance also reflects the spiritual outlook of the Pamona indigenous people towards nature and life. Recognizing the fertility of the soil and the beauty of nature as blessings from God reflects the deep-seated beliefs of the Pamona indigenous people about the spiritual connection between humans and their Creator. It shows how dance and verses serve as means to

express gratitude and respect for the universe and the creative force behind it (Huller, 2023).

Thus, *kayori* in the Torompio dance is not just an aesthetic aspect that beautifies the performance but also a critical element that conveys profound messages about social values, human relationships with nature, and the spiritual beliefs of the Pamona indigenous people. Through *kayori*, the Torompio dance becomes more than just a dance; it becomes a reflection of the cultural identity, traditions, and life philosophy of the Pamona indigenous people, making the dance an essential vessel for preserving and communicating their cultural heritage.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the Torompio dance for the Pamona indigenous people in Lambarese Village is a rich manifestation of symbolism and profound meaning, depicting complex interactions between humans, nature, and spirituality. The name "torompio" itself, with the substitution of "pio" for the fearsome "lompiu," and the concept of "paporapa," demonstrate how the Pamona indigenous people communicate values and emotions symbolically. Symbolism in dance movements, such as linggi doe, ina dore, mosipanca, mompalakanamo, and mosangkalima, reflects not only aesthetic values but also social and spiritual ones, such as respect, unity, memorable encounters, and harmonious relations with nature. The transition of traditional attire from "karaba" to fabric and beads shows cultural adaptation in preserving traditions amidst changing times. The verses (kayori), particularly "Lemba Kutanondo," underscore the symbiotic relationship between the community and nature and reflect a spiritual view of creation. All elements in the Torompio dance synergistically express the "Fervor of Love," which is central to the cultural expression of the Pamona indigenous people, demonstrating local wisdom in understanding and appreciating life.

Based on the conclusions above, it is recommended that the Department of Education and Culture of East Luwu Regency, the Lemba Pamona Luwu Indigenous Institution, and the Pamona indigenous people take strategic steps in preserving and promoting the Torompio dance. First, integrating the Torompio dance into the school education curriculum in East Luwu can enhance the younger generation's awareness and appreciation of their cultural heritage. Second, the Lemba Pamona Luwu Indigenous Institution should regularly organize workshops and cultural festivals featuring the Torompio dance as the main event to strengthen cultural identity and attract tourists. Third, the Pamona indigenous people are advised to continuously innovate and adapt their cultural expressions to modern times while maintaining the essence and original values of the Torompio dance. These initiatives will contribute to preserving the Torompio dance as an essential part of the cultural heritage and identity of the Pamona indigenous people while enriching Indonesia's cultural diversity.

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