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Exploration of Pakarena Dance Movement Philosophy: A Qualitative Approach through Ethnography and Peirce's Semiotics

Nur Sekreningsih Marsan[1*], I Komang Sudirga[2], I ketut Suteja[3], Ni Made Arshiniwati[4]
Institut Seni Indonesia Denpasar
Corresponding Author: Nur Sekreningsih Marsan nursekreningsih@isi-dps.ac.id

A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

References related to the origin, basic movements, and principles of Pakarena dance are still limited, and until now, information about Pakarena dance is not always consistent. Each artist has a different interpretation of this dance. This research aims to investigate and understand the values in Pakarena dance movements that are full of philosophical meanings of human life. A qualitative method with an ethnographic approach was used, involving careful analysis of data from collection to interpretation of information. Pakarena dance movement data was collected through interviews with competent resource persons, and Peirce semiotics was applied to explore the meaning of dance movements. The results show that each movement expresses deep symbolism regarding human relationships with the environment and the divine dimension. The lower area reflects a human's attachment to nature and its origins, while the technique of stepping by dragging the feet using abdominal movements creates an image of human strength. The middle area reflects the dynamics of human life, which is always active, and the hand movements symbolize busyness in the context of daily life. The upper area represents faith in divine consciousness with minimal head movements and a solemn chin position, reflecting simplicity and spiritual focus in visual expression

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INTRODUCTION

Pakarena Dance, a South Sulawesi cultural heritage, emerged during the time of Sultan Hasanuddin, the XVIth King of Gowa, and was introduced directly by I Limatakontu, Sultan Hasanuddin's mother. The continuity and development of the Pakarena Dance were then continued by I Badde Daeng Tommi and I Petta Nisali, the first and second consorts of I Malombassi Daeng Mattawang, so that it became an integral part of the legacy of the royal family (Sapada, 1999).

Since the people of Makassar embraced Islam, there has been a shift from old beliefs, such as animism and dynamism, to the teachings of Islam that emphasize the oneness of God, resulting in a major transformation in spiritual aspects. Pakarena, originally a ritual called Sere Jaga, changed its name and function along with the adoption of Islam. Pakarena's function evolved as a complement to royal ceremonies, including the coronation of the king and the ceremonial cleaning of royal heirlooms in the life cycle of the king and his family. The name change from Sere Jaga to Pakarena or akkarena, which means play or player, was done because mentioning Sere Jaga was considered sacred and could only be performed at certain times and places (Angraini, 2019).

According to Daeng Serang, a gendang maestro in Makassar, "Pakarena" comes from the word "Akarena," a term for playing gendang. Ridwan Aco, another Makassarese artist, explains that Pakarena is a celebration game involving men who display their skills in martial arts. Aco adds that the gestures and movements in Pakarena not only depict martial arts skills but also incorporate aspects of life into the symbolism, giving meaning to each aspect of the ritual in which it is danced. This interpretation can be seen in Ma' Coppong's version of the Pakarena dance.

Pakarena dance is a crucial element in South Sulawesi's cultural heritage, requiring exploration and interaction to understand its philosophical meaning. References to the origin, basic movements, and rules of Pakarena dance are still scarce, with variations in information from previous research, culturalists, and artists in South Sulawesi. The difficulty of meeting the maestro of Pakarena dance has led to different interpretations among each artist in the area.

Documentation and writings regarding the aesthetics of basic movements, meaning relationships and limitations in the development of Pakarena Dance still face obstacles in discovery. Previous writings related to this dance have not specifically focused on analyzing motion and sign-meaning relationships from an aesthetic perspective. Instead, previous research tends to be limited to understanding the meaning of motion from a semiotic point of view or interpreting motion signs based on existing dances. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further investigation through a rooted ethnographic approach, to fill this void in aesthetic exploration that focuses on the reinterpretation of motion and meaning in Pakarena Dance.

Peirce's semiotics, known as triadic semiotics or semiotics of signs, can be a highly relevant analytical tool in understanding Pakarena dance and fills a void in the research of the aesthetics of movement and meaning of this dance. Peirce's semiotics offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing the signs and meanings contained in Pakarena dance. By understanding the relationship

between the sign, the object represented, and the interpretant, research can delve deeper into the symbolic meaning of the movements, costumes, props, and other elements involved in this dance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakarena dance has evolved in its presentation and properties, where the initial use of rice has been replaced by a fan (Latief, 1996). Anjani's research reveals that each variant of baju bodo reflects markings in social stratification, where the color green is intended for nobles, white for mothers who are nursing babies, and so on. There has been a change from a plain sarong to a patterned sarong, while the shawl is placed on the left shoulder when dancing, with a color that matches the baju bodo. The use of fans in this dance has also evolved, made of palm leaves or cloth, and played using the right hand. (Anjani, 2021).

METHODS

This research applies qualitative methods with an ethnographic approach, utilizing triangulation data collection techniques. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and direct learning from Pakarena dance artists. The author recorded basic movements and observed, and explored the impact of the Pakarena Dance in the daily lives of several maestros. In the initial stage of the method, an analysis was carried out first by using an interaction approach and analyzing the data obtained through oral interviews with relevant sources.

Data analysis in this research involves a series of stages, starting from the process of data collection, reduction, classification, description, and conclusion drawing, to the careful interpretation of information. Data related to Pakarena Dance movements, both in the form of videos and images, will be collected to form a collection of information and knowledge about the dance movements. This source of information is obtained through interviews with competent sources, providing an accurate database as a foundation for the process of interpreting each movement in the Pakarena Dance. In this context, Peirce's semiotics is applied to explore the meaning of Pakarena Dance movements in depth.



Figure 1. Studio Work Process: Interpreting Each Movement in Pakarena Dance, 9 October 2021
Source: Photo Courtesy of Nur Sekreningsih Marsan

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traditional dance movements have their beauty and meaning hidden in the means of transportation. Ethnic or traditional dance is one of the customs passed down from generation to generation repeated many times and contains values or norms that bind the community. Thus it can be concluded that traditional dance is a dance that develops in a population and creates the cultural identity of the people in the area (Aditya, 2021). Ethnic or traditional dance is one of the customs passed down from generation to generation and contains values or norms that bind the community (Sekreningsih, Reviving the Identity of Riau Islands Through Traditional Dance, 2021).

Pakarena dance is one of the traditional dances originating from South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This dance has a deep philosophical meaning, reflecting the relationship between humans, nature, and spirituality. Pakarena is usually performed in various events such as traditional ceremonies, celebrations, and art performances.

The pakarena can be divided into three sections that represent different philosophical concepts: lower, middle, and upper.

1. Lower / Navel to Toe (Birth / Fusion with Nature)

The first part of the Pakarena dance movement reflects early human life, birth, and fusion with nature. The soft and natural movements illustrate the balance between humans and their environment. The use of hand gestures that symbolize nature such as leaves and flowers creates a harmonious atmosphere. This image reflects human life that is closely connected to nature from the beginning of life.

2. Middle / Navel to Chest (World Life)

The middle part of the Pakarena dance movement represents the daily life of humans in the world. The movements in this section reflect the activities, social interactions, and journeys of everyday life. The dance creates a picture of community life, togetherness, and cultural diversity. The dynamic and expressive movements reflect the dynamics of daily human life in the community.

3. Upper / Divine Consciousness (Chest to Head End)

The upper part of the Pakarena dance movement leads to the spiritual dimension and divine consciousness. The movements in this section reflect the human relationship with the Almighty. The slower and gentler expression of the movements creates an atmosphere of solemnity and respect for a higher being. The dance reflects the desire to establish a deep spiritual connection and achieve a higher understanding of human existence (Sayogyo, 2015: 123-135).

According to Aco and several artists in South Sulawesi, achieving Divine consciousness is considered the highest peak in understanding the three aspects of Pakarena dance. Divine consciousness reflects a spiritual dimension that involves a deep connection with the divine, providing a deeper dimension of meaning and depth in the interpretation and execution of each Pakarena dance movement.

The principles of art involved in pakarena dance include three important aspects. First, the principle of balance demands efforts to maintain harmony between creative development and respect for the traditional values of pakarena dance. Second, the principle of harmony encourages the creation of a harmonious unity involving movement, music, costumes, and other elements. Finally, the principle of expression emphasizes the use of dance as a means to convey messages and emotions, creating an immersive experience that captivates the audience. By integrating these three principles, pakarena dance becomes a work of art that combines traditional beauty with creative innovation, providing a unique and profound artistic experience.

The elements involved in Pakarena Dance include a variety of elements that work together to create a mesmerizing work of art. Movement, as the main foundation, develops by maintaining the softness and beauty of the basic movements of the Pakarena Dance, while exploring new movements that can describe everyday life in depth. Floor patterns are generated by taking inspiration from the structure of Pakarena Dance movements, coupled with innovations to give a fresh and interesting feel. Fashion is directed towards designing costumes that not only reflect the beauty and elegance of Pakarena Dance but also consider functionality and compatibility with the context of everyday life. Makeup is carefully applied, adjusting the overall concept of the work and paying special attention to details that can accentuate the dancers' facial expressions. Musical accompaniment, adapted to the concept of revitalization, may involve a mix of traditional and modern instruments. Furthermore, stage design becomes an important element with special attention to lighting, layout, and other stage elements to optimally support the dance

presentation. All these elements collaborate harmoniously, creating a unique and captivating work of Pakarena dance art.

The movements in Pakarena Dance are performed with a balanced subtlety and intensity. Each step is executed with full energy, yet without the slightest stomp, keeping the soles of the feet in soft contact with the floor. The head always remains level with no up-and-down movement, while the eyes are focused at a 45-degree angle toward the edge of the floor. As a study material in this research, the author explores Pakarena Dance movements through videos that reflect the characteristics and philosophical meanings that have been described https://youtu.be/VsXXovjU7cg?feature=shared.



Figure 2. Pakarena A'pa Tau Performance Result of the Author's Interpretation (Nur Sekreningsih Marsan), 18 October 2021
Source: Photo Courtesy of Nur Sekreningsih Marsan

Although there is no standard for Pakarena Dance, its characteristics can be inferred from the Pakarena dance video above. The exploration of movement and philosophical meaning in this section is based on the source and structural analysis the author conducted through the exploration of movement in the video. The author also applies Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis to connect the movement with the concept of Pakarena Dance, so that a coherent meaning can be obtained between the movement and the philosophical meaning contained.

Semiotics is the study of signs and meaning, and Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher, contributed his concept to semiotics. In the context of analyzing dance works, we can use Peirce's concepts of representamen, object, and interpretant to understand how signs in dance form meaning.

Representamens, in the context of dance, involve any form of dance movement, facial expression, or other visual element used to convey meaning or tell a narrative. For example, movements that mimic a flying bird can function as a representamen that reflects the existence of the bird itself. The object, in this case, refers to the substance represented by the representamen, i.e. what is to be conveyed or expressed through the medium of dance. In the

case of the flying bird representamen, the object may include the concept of freedom, natural beauty, or even specifics such as the type of bird that has special meaning in a culture. The Interpretant, as the individual's response to the representamen, includes the understanding or meaning formed in the mind of the audience or dancer as they watch or follow the dance movements. Along with the variety of interpretations that may arise between individuals, this is influenced by their diverse experiences, backgrounds, and knowledge. For example, one spectator may interpret the movement of a flying bird as an expression of beauty, while another may see it as a symbol of freedom (Piliang, 210:310).

In analyzing a dance work using Peirce's semiotic approach, we can examine how the representamens (movements, expressions, visuals) in the dance lead to the object (the intended meaning or message) and how the interpretant (the response of the audience or dancer) forms a unique understanding. For example, we can explore how certain movements represent certain concepts (representamen), what the choreographer or dancer wants to convey (object), and how the audience interprets it (interpretant). Peirce's semiotics open the door to understanding the complexity of meaning in dance and how the elements interact to create a symbolically rich experience.

The author applies the concepts of representamen, object, and interpretant to describe how the lower, middle, and upper regions in Pakarena dance contain philosophical meanings about human relationships with the environment and the divine dimension.

1. **Lower Area**
    - **Representamen:** The representamens in the lower area can be seen in the movement of the feet always in contact with the earth, the stepping technique of dragging the feet using abdominal movements, and the attachment to the floor. This creates visual images and movements that represent a human's relationship with their origins, the land, and their environment.
    - **Object:** The object of this representamen is the philosophical relationship between human and their environment. The feet remaining fused to the floor reflect the concept of human detachment from nature, and the technique of stepping by dragging the feet using abdominal movements perhaps reflects the strength and agility in human existence.
    - **Interpretation:** The interpretation of the lower area is the philosophical understanding that humans cannot be completely separated from nature, and the dance becomes a symbol expression of the deep connection between humans and their environment.
2. **Middle Area**
    - **Representamen:** The dynamics of the hands create a representamen of the dynamics of human life, which is always active. This symbolism is represented by the continuous movement of the hand, creating a visual analogy of the busyness of human beings in their daily lives.

- **Object:** The object of the representamen of the middle area is the dynamics of human life, which is always active and full of activity. The dominating hand creates an image of the role of constantly moving elements in daily life.
- **Interpretation:** The interpretation of the middle area is the artistic and symbolic impression that the Pakarena dance succeeds in depicting a dynamic and active life.

3. **Upper Area**
   - **Representamen:** The movement from the chest to the upper of the head, the straight position of the chin, and the eyes directed 45 degrees downward create a representamen of Divine consciousness. The head following the direction of the body and not moving much creates a solemn and contemplative impression.
   - **Object:** The object of the upper area's representamens is belief in Divine consciousness. The minimal movement of the head creates an impression of simplicity and spiritual focus.
   - **Interpretant:** The interpretation of the upper area is a visual expression of simplicity, spiritual focus, and connection to the Divine dimension in Pakarena dance.

Through Peirce's semiotic analysis, we can see how Pakarena dance is not just a physical movement, but also a deep symbol and philosophical representation of human relationships with the environment and the divine dimension.

Peirce's semiotics also divides signs into three main categories, namely icons, indices, and symbols. In the context of analyzing dance works, we can use these concepts to understand how dance elements operate as signs. An icon, as a sign that shows physical or visual similarity to the object it represents, can be recognized in dance movements that concretely reproduce or visualize similarities to a certain object or concept. To illustrate, when body movements mimic a gust of wind or certain natural forms, it can be interpreted as an example of an icon. On the other hand, index refers to a sign that carries a causal or associative relationship with the object it represents. In the context of dance movements, gestures that depict a causal relationship or direct association with a particular object or idea can be seen as an index; for example, a dancer conveying facial expressions or body movements that reflect sadness or joy might be considered an index of emotion. Symbols, as signs that rely on cultural conventions or agreements with the object they represent, are manifested in dance movements or elements that have meanings predetermined by cultural norms or conventions. For example, dance movements that specifically refer to the concept of love or peace because they have been culturally recognized can be considered an example of the use of symbols in dance (Piliang, 210:310-311).

In the context of Pakarena dance, we can analyze the use of icons, indexes, and symbols in the lower, middle, and upper areas to understand the philosophical meaning contained in each movement.

1. **Lower Area**
   - **Icon**
     Feet in Contact with the Earth: The movement of feet in constant contact with the earth is an icon of human's close relationship with nature. It depicts human's attachment to and origin from the land.
   - **Index**
     Dragging Technique and Movement of Blending with the Floor: The technique of stepping by dragging the feet using abdominal movements performed without characterizing fatigue is an index, showing the strength and agility of the body. The movement of merging with the floor is an index trace of human connection with the earth.
   - **Symbol**
     Philosophical Birthplace: Although referred to as the birth area, it does not refer directly to the genitals, but rather to the feet which are always in contact with the earth. This symbolism creates a philosophical meaning of the origin and return of humans to the source of their life.
2. **Middle Area**
   - **Icon**
     Hand Forming a 45-Degree Angle: Hands forming a 45-degree angle can be considered icons in the dynamics of human life, which is always active and not static. This creates a visual depiction of an activity-packed day.
   - **Index**
     Dynamic Hand Movements: Dynamic hand movements are index, showing the diverse and constantly moving activities of humans.
   - **Symbol**
     Visual Analogy of Human Busyness: The hand as the dominant element creates a symbolism of human busyness in daily life, depicting the dynamism and diversity of activities.
3. **Upper Area**
   - **Icon**
     Chest to Head Movement: This movement is an icon of belief in Divine consciousness, depicting spiritual seeking and transcendence.
   - **Index**
     Straight Chin Position: The position of the chin remaining straight is index, creating a solemn and contemplative impression in worship.
   - **Symbol**
     Head with Minimal Movement: The minimal head movement is a symbol, creating a visual expression of simplicity and spiritual focus in Pakarena dance.

Using the concepts of icon, index, and symbol, we can see that each movement in Pakarena dance not only has a physical meaning but also implies a deep philosophical and spiritual message, creating a unity between artistic expression and symbol meaning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pakarena dance is not only a series of physical movements, but also a symbol language that conveys philosophical and spiritual meanings. Through motion exploration and semiotic analysis, it is seen that each movement has a deep symbol representation of human relationships with the environment and the divine dimension. The lower area depicts a human's attachment to nature, the land, and their origins. The technique of stepping by dragging the feet using abdominal movements creates an image of human strength in existence. The middle area reflects the dynamics of human life, which is always active and full of activities. Hand movements symbolize the busyness of humans in the context of daily life. The upper area represents faith in divine consciousness with minimal head movements and a solemn chin position. Simplicity and spiritual focus are reflected in the visual expression.

Further research could explore the philosophical meanings of Pakarena dance by involving interviews with dancers or local cultural figures to gain further insight into the interpretations and values contained in each movement. Although there is no standardized pakem, future research can try to develop more formal guidelines or pakem for Pakarena Dance. This can help in maintaining authenticity and facilitate understanding for both dancers and audiences. A more in-depth study of the cultural context could provide a better understanding of how Pakarena Dance became an integral part of the cultural heritage of the local community.

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