

## Cultural and Philosophical Meanings of Sodoran Dance

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rissj.v3i4.500>

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this research is to analyze the cultural values contained in sodoran dance. Sodoran dance is known as 'Sangkan Paraning Dumadi dance' or the dance that expresses the origin of human life on earth. The researchers seek to uncover the cultural and philosophical meaning of the dance. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, and the data collection procedure was carried out by interview, observation, and documentation techniques. The results show that Sodoran dance has deep philosophical and religious values which are rigidly based on ancestral guidelines. The norms and customs are clearly depicted in the attributes and movement of the dance. In addition, the components of Sodoran dance such as body movement, rhythm, outfits, steps, and statues are closely entwined with the culture and philosophy of Tenggerese people.*

### KEYWORDS

*Sodoran dance; Cultural; Values; Tenggerese people*

### INTRODUCTION

Dance has always become a part of the society and culture and it helps keep people's traditions alive through the ages. Dance connects us to a society or culture in many universal and personal ways that deepen our understanding of our world and ourselves. Aristotle defines dance as a rhythmic movement performed at a certain place and time for social purposes, intentions, thoughts and to describe the character and life of humans as they behave Hall in (Rahmah et al., 2020) . Dance culture, as well as specific elements of dance, are inextricably linked to culture in general and to a society's philosophy. Sodoran dance is one of the typical dances of the Tenggerese people that are rich in culture and philosophy Sutarto in (Nicoloos et al., 2012). This dance is a type of dance that has been passed down from generation to generation, inherited from the time of the ancestors. Sodoran dance puts forward philosophical, symbolic, and religious values. All the rules of this dance are still rigidly based on ancestral guidelines. Sodoran dance known as 'Sangkan Paraning Dumadi dance' or the dance that expresses the origin of human life on earth. Sodoran dance performed in the ceremony of Karo as a form of worship to Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa who has created a pair of men and women. (Jati Batoro, 2017) added that Sodoran dance in the Karo ceremony is considered as an effort to serve the ancestors and commemorate the origin of humans back to holiness. Because of the sacred and ritual values present in the dance, the movements in this dance cannot be taught to everyone.

Tenggerese culture and philosophy are closely related to the body posture, rhythm, costumes, steps, and figures used in Sodoran dance. Each element of a dance, the patterns of movement that are used, is part of the culture and reality of the community in which it originated. Tenggerese people, mainly residents of Jetak Village still adhere to the customs and beliefs of the ancestors Geertz in (Barone & Bresler, 2014) . The community still holds a strong Hindu influence and cannot be separated from traditional ceremonies and rituals. Therefore, sodoran dance as the opening of the Karo ceremony becomes an important art form for Jetak community. This dance is performed by 6 to 12 dancers. This dance

symbolizes the meeting between a man and a woman who then gets married, leads a household life, has children, and finally returns to the Almighty (Putri & Desyandri, 2019). The dance is considered an effort to serve the ancestors and as a reminder to the younger generation not to be lulled by a mortal or temporary world. Some people also believe that violations of things that have been done for generations can lead to success or disaster (Alkaf, 2013). Through this dance, humans are made aware of the origin of their nature and therefore must always lead to the truth and righteousness. Sodoran dance has a deep meaning of good norms, values, and beliefs. This dance not only evokes creativity and aesthetics but also strengthens the awareness of norms and virtues (Noordiana et al., 2017).

Sodoran dance incorporates a variety of cultural norms and conveys the desired social structure nonverbally. The element of the dance connects a person with the world around him. The choreography of Sodoran dance particularly reveals the axiological and aesthetic values of dance. The chronological stages of the dances explicitly describe the process of human life and human nature to reproduce (Mcperson, 2019). Sodoran dance has three stages related to the origin of human life. The first stage is Papakan (meeting). The purpose of this stage is the meeting between men and women. The second stage is a fight. At this stage, each dancer brings a tool in the form of bamboo sodor (Amelinda et al., 2021). After meeting, men and women are described as running a married life and continuing their offspring. At this stage, the process of human birth is symbolized by the breaking of the sodor bamboo. The performance of this dance is also inseparable from traditional ceremonies and rituals. This dance is carried out as a form of worship to Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa who has created a pair of men and women and an indication of human origins returning to holiness (Nicolooos et al., 2012). Sodoran dance contains many symbolic and philosophical meanings that need to be revealed. Therefore, this study would like to explore the elements of Sodoran dance that has a significant role in defining Javanese traditions and customs.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach. (Creswell, 2014) say that qualitative research methods are research procedures that produce descriptive data by understanding the phenomenon and delivered by way of description in the form of words and language in a special natural context. The data can be spoken for religious, social, cultural, philosophical research, notes related to meaning, values and understanding. This qualitative method was chosen because the researcher wanted to allow research data as it really is in the field. The data collection process was carried out using a grounded theory, an inquiry-based approach. The data collection procedure was carried out by interview, observation, and documentation techniques (Miles, 1992). The analysis used is data reduction, data display and conclusion/verification. To check the validity of the findings, the researchers used triangulation which consists of method triangulation and source triangulation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Sodoran dance plays an important element of culture and socialization. This dance is closely related to culture in the broad sense and to the philosophy of a society. According to Kraus in (Wijayanti & Andriani, 2020) The patterns of movement that are used is part of the culture and evidence of the values of the community. Sodoran dance brings a story of companionship of man and woman to the origin of human beings. The movement of the body, the sound of the dance, and the tools used in the dance portray the philosophical and religious meanings of the society. Sodoran dance is a sacred dance that symbolizes the occurrence of the first human being (Mcperson, 2019). During the dance, there are several rituals such as worship of the spirits of the ancestors and disclosure of gratitude for good

harvest. Some of the values of local wisdom in this dance include the value of mutual respect, the balance between the love of nature, and social responsibility. This dance is carried out in conjunction with the Karo traditional ceremony. This ceremony is celebrated once a year at Purnama Sasih Karo, based on the calculation of the Saka Year (Noordiana et al., 2017). This dance begins with a sodor dancer from the elders commonly called mblara'i. Then proceed with Kirab Manten Sodor (younger dancers) consisting of six to twelve dancers in total.



**Figure 1.** Sodoran Dance Performance



**Figure 2.** Sodoran Dance Performance



**Figure 3.** Sodoran Dance Performance

From this picture, we can see that Sodoran dance is performed with wuluh bamboo sticks. Each dancer holds a bamboo stick (sodor) which is then struck by each dancer to the stick of his partner dancer with a soft and full appreciation. There are twelve bamboo sticks which

indicates that there are 12 months in a year. Sodoran Dance is a dance that describes the husband-wife relationship of the ancestors of the Tengger Tribe (Ratih and Juwariyah, 2020). The meaning embodied in this dance is gratitude to God Almighty for the creation of Joko Seger and Roro Anteng as the ancestors of Bromo and 25 of his descendants. In fact, all residents, from children to elders, do not miss the Karo traditional ceremony from the first day to the next 10 days. In this dance, klontong (buffalo horns) and sodor (bamboo sticks) are used. The number of dancers in this Sodoran Dance, reaches 6 to 12 people (ibid). The bamboo used for this thrust is given coconut fiber at both ends and the body of the bamboo is wrapped with yellow leaves. The inside of the bamboo is filled with palawija seeds. This klontong and sodor are deliberately used as symbols of the existence of the Tengger Tribe until now.

Sodoran dance tells about two kinds of human beings (Karo), namely men and women as their ancestors. So the Karo ceremony is associated with their ancestors, namely Rara Anteng and Jaka Seger Purwasito in (Wijayanti & Andriani, 2020) . Sodoran dance has three stages related to the origin of human life. The first stage is Papakan (meeting). There are 3 times the plank movement with a meet-back-meet-back pattern up to 3 times. The purpose of this stage is the meeting between men and women. Life in the universe begins with the meeting of two human beings as Adam and Eve met. The second stage is a fight. At this stage, each dancer brings a tool in the form of bamboo sodor. This bamboo is a symbol of Sarutama's heritage. In the Karo Legend, this magic heirloom belonging to Aji saka is at stake by Setia and Setuhu. At Ajisaka's orders, Faithful keeps the heirlooms. On Ajisaka's orders, Setuhu took the heirloom. This commensurate battle between the two servants of Aji Saka ended with the death of both of them. "Ajisaka in the Karo legend is actually a parable. Aji means good, saka means pillar. If you have become a parent, it should be good. Meanwhile, the sarutama heirloom is a symbol of male weapons (Saru: taboo, guest: main). That's why (servant) Setia must guard Sarutama's heirloom. This symbolization actually conveys the message that honor must be maintained.

Sodor describes Sarutama's heirloom. Physically, sodor is a tool made of bamboo, wrapped in a twist with yellow leaves. At the end of the sodor is touched so that the seeds come out." The meaning in this fighting stage cannot be separated from the previous stage. After meeting, human men and women are described as running a married life and continuing their offspring. At this stage, the process of human birth is symbolized by the breaking of the sodor bamboo. The art of sodoran dance is not only about moving the body to the rhythm but has strong philosophical and cultural values (Hasanah & Sukmawan, 2020). The Sodoran dance represents the Karo traditional ceremony itself which is a form of gratitude for the Tengger Tribe for God and at the same time respecting the ancestors. In Sodoran Dance there is a movement of lifting the index finger. This movement contains a symbol of the occurrence of the first human originating from purusa (soul) and pradana (physical), namely the two elements of the universe as the creation of all living things. This ceremony aims to return to holiness, which is called satya yoga, which is to return humans to their holy nature, hold fast to the truth, be simple, and be honest.

## **CONCLUSION**

The movements of the dance contain and display the community's culture as well as the dancer's personal experiences as an interpreter. Cultural values are embodied and integrated into dancers' physicality during the social construction of the human body. Sodoran dance performance in Jetak village is a traditional art that is full of cultural and philosophical meanings. It has a deep philosophical meaning about the origin of humans and human existence on earth. This dance follows the ritual of the karu ceremony which is specifically

carried out for asking safety for both men and women. Sodoran dance reflects the knowledge of sangkan paraning dumadi which is symbolized in the form of a human dance so that Tengger people can understand and continue to remember how this life began and where it will return. By understanding the essence of the sodoran dance, we will be able to see the evidence of the values of the community and the mental qualities of its members.

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