

Integrating Character Values in La Kadandio's Poem within Linda's Dance: A Hermeneutic Study for Cultural Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of character values in the La Kadandio poem in the Linda Dance performance of the Muna community through a hermeneutic approach. As an oral literary work, La Kadandio is not merely a dance accompaniment, but rather a representation of identity, collective memory, and cultural values rooted in the historical narrative of the exile of the 11th King of Muna, La Ode Ngkadiri. This study aims to: (1) look at the structure and deeper meaning of the La Kadandio poem as a cultural text; (2) understand the character values shown in the symbols of the Linda Dance performance; (3) explain how the text, symbols, and social culture are connected using the ideas of Paul Ricoeur and Clifford Geertz; and (4) create a model to combine these values to enhance cultural education. The method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques in the form of observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and hermeneutic analysis of the poem text and performance context. The results show that the La Kadandio poem in the Linda Dance contains essential character values such as fortitude, loyalty, and local wisdom. These findings are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of cultural symbolism and provide practical contributions to the preservation of local culture and strengthening character education based on Muna local wisdom for the younger generation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization marked by the massive penetration of digital culture, contemporary society—especially the younger generation—faces a major challenge in the form of the erosion of local cultural identity (Manara & Weber, 2023; Zulkarnain, 2024). Modernity's universal values often clash with the local wisdom that has long guided the Indonesian archipelago's moral compass. In the Indonesian context, the government has emphasized the importance of strengthening character education (Marzuki & Samsuri, 2022; Sakban & Sundawa, 2023). However, schools often adopt a formalistic approach to character education, disconnecting it from its cultural roots.

Effective cultural education should not only teach physical artifacts but also explore the depth of meaning and character values embedded in oral literature and traditional performing arts (Lin et al., 2024; Majda et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2023).

The Muna people of Southeast Sulawesi have a wealthy cultural heritage, one of which is the Linda Dance (Firmansyah et al., 2019). The Linda Dance is not simply an aesthetic dance, but a transition rite for Muna women, embodying the values of femininity, purity, and steadfastness (Ardin et al., 2017). The dance's uniqueness lies in the integration of the La Kadandio verse, which is sung throughout the procession (Niampe, 2018). This poem is not merely a rhythmic accompaniment, but a cultural text laden with historical weight and collective emotion. La Kadandio refers to the poignant narrative of the exile of the 11th King of Muna, La Ode Ngkadiri, known as Sang Omputo Sangia (Aderlaepe, 2016).

Textually, this poem captures grief, longing, and resilience in facing life's trials (Aderlaepe, 2016). However, in many modern performance practices, audiences and even artists often focus solely on the physical movements of the dance, while the character values hidden within the hermeneutical layers of La Kadandio's poem are increasingly forgotten. Without more profound meaning, Tari Linda risks losing its "soul" and becoming merely a commercial spectacle devoid of educational value (Firmansyah et al., 2019).

To uncover these hidden character values, an approach that goes beyond simple structural analysis is required. Hermeneutics, as the art of interpretation, offers a precise methodology for understanding the relationship between text (Busacchi et al., 2022; MacLeod et al., 2023; Tomkins & Eatough, 2018) (La Kadandio), action (Tari Linda), and context (Muna society). This study employs Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory to conceptualize poetry as an "autonomous text" that transcends the author's original intent (Rendtorff, 2022). Ricoeur helps us comprehend how contemporary Muna society reinterprets the text (Simonotti, 2024). Meanwhile, Clifford Geertz's perspective on "culture as text" (Bazancir, 2023; Sbrocco & Prequero, 2025) helps us dissect the symbols in the Linda Dance performance as a web of significance.

Through this interpretive process, we can see how values such as sabar (patience), takwa (obedience), and adhati (adherence to custom) are not only spoken but also brought to life through movement and sound. This is what makes this study relevant for cultural education; past texts are re-enacted to address present-day moral challenges.

Previous research on the Linda Dance has generally focused on its choreography, costumes, or sociological function in Muna society (Aderlaepe, 2016; Ardin et al., 2017; Firmansyah et al., 2019; Niampe, 2018). On the other hand, studies of La Kadandio poetry have typically been limited to purely philological or literary analysis. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of these three domains: examining how character values in literary texts (poetry) are symbolically manifested in movement art (dance) and how the synergy between the two can be formulated as systematic cultural education material. Rarely has research on Muna local culture combined Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic dialectic (explanation to understanding) with Clifford Geertz's in-depth

description. This research offers methodological novelty in examining cultural phenomena as a unity of text and performance that interpret each other.

Furthermore, this research highlights unique character values, namely those born from the narrative of exile and the suffering of a leader (King La Ode Ngkadir). The novelty here lies in the idea that character education can be built from collective memory of resilience in the face of historical injustice, which is then transformed into a moral force for contemporary society. This research goes beyond simply discovering meaning but goes further by offering ideas on how the results of this hermeneutic interpretation can be integrated into educational curricula or learning media based on local wisdom. This work addresses the gap between cultural theory and educational practice in the field.

2. METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a hermeneutical study design. This qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to understand cultural phenomena in depth through interpreting the meaning behind symbols, texts, and human actions in their natural context. This research does not stop at surface descriptions but rather explores the layers of meaning behind poetry and dance. The hermeneutical framework used is an integration of:

- a. Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics: Used to dissect the dialectic between text (La Kadandio) and action (the Linda Dance). Analysis focuses on the explanation (structural analysis of the text) and understanding (interpreting the text's meaning for the reader/listener today).
- b. Clifford Geertz's Hermeneutics: Used through a thick description method to examine the Linda Dance as a "cultural text" practiced within the social structure of the Muna community.

The data in this study are classified into two types:

- a. Primary Data: Audio recordings and original transcripts of the La Kadandio poetry, direct observations of the Linda Dance performance, and in-depth interviews. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, consisting of traditional figures (Parabela), Linda Dance maestros, Muna cultural figures, and cultural education practitioners.
- b. Secondary Data: Historical documents regarding the 11th King of Muna (La Ode Ngkadir), literature on local Muna character values, and relevant educational curriculum documents in the local area.

To obtain credible data, this study employed four techniques:

- a. Participatory Observation: Researchers participated in observing Linda Dance performances to observe how the interaction between dancers, chanters, and audience members created a meaningful space.
- b. In-Depth Interviews: Conducted to explore the subjects' perspectives on the moral values contained in each verse and dance movement.

- c. Documentation Study: Collected ancient texts or oral accounts that had been recorded regarding the La Kadandio narrative.
- d. Audiovisual Recording: Documented the performance for repeated analysis to ensure accurate interpretation of the sound (vocal verses) and visual (dance movements).

The data analysis process followed a circular model (Hermeneutic Circle), which included the following steps:

- a. Semantic Stage: Translating the poem "La Kadandio" from Muna into Indonesian while maintaining the nuances of the original language.
- b. Structural Reflection: Analyzing the poem's internal structure (theme, tone, message) and physical structure (word choice/diction, imagery) to uncover implied character values.
- c. The World of the Text: Connecting the meaning of the poem with the symbolic movements in the Linda Dance. Here, the researcher examined how the values of "steadfastness" or "loyalty" in the text are manifested in the aesthetics of the movements.
- d. Appropriation: Drawing the discovered meanings into a contemporary context, specifically how these values can be "reclaimed" by the younger generation through cultural education.

Data validity was ensured through technical triangulation (comparing interview data with observations and documents) and source triangulation (confirming interpretations with several different traditional figures). Additionally, member checks were conducted with arts practitioners to ensure that the researcher's interpretations did not deviate from the sacred values believed in by the Muna community.

The results of this hermeneutic analysis were synthesized into a Character Education framework. The researcher identified key character values (such as Patience, Family, Leadership, and Religiosity), which were then conceptualized into teaching materials or enrichment modules for local content subjects at the school level.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Structural and Semantic Analysis of the La Kadandio Poem

Building upon the transcription and translation results, the La Kadandio poem consists of stanzas that use natural metaphors to describe human suffering. Semantically, the word "Kadandio" itself refers to a type of bird that sings with a mournful tune, which symbolizes the exile of King La Ode Ngkadiri. One of the key stanzas analyzed reads:

"O kadandio, sembali-mbali tula-tula, mbadai-mbadai tula-tula..." (O kadandio bird, tell this story, tell this suffering...)

Hermeneutic Analysis: The explanation stage shows that this text is not simply a lament, but an instrument of political and moral communication. The bird bears silent witness to the injustice inflicted on the leader.

Symbolic Manifestation in the Linda Dance

Observations show that the character values in the poem do not stand alone, but rather "embodied" in the movements of the Linda Dance. The Lariangi movement (a gentle yet firm hand movement) is a visual representation of the poem's content, which teaches calm amidst storms of trials.

Observations indicate that the Linda Dance is not merely a physical movement but rather a "living text." The character values contained in La Kadandio Poetry are no longer abstract, but become concrete through the dancers' body movements. This indicates that the community supporting this culture uses dance as a medium for transmitting moral values that are more easily absorbed by both the audience and the dancers themselves. Hermeneutically, the poetic text and the dance movements engage in a reciprocal (dialectical) relationship. Poetry provides the "soul" or philosophical message, while the Linda Dance provides the "body" for that message. The result is a holistic cultural education, where character values are taught through aesthetic experiences. This observation proves that the Linda Dance functions as an aesthetic bridge that transforms La Kadandio's poetic message into concrete action. The Lariangi movement is the culmination of this symbolism, depicting the balance between moral flexibility (gentleness) and steadfastness of faith (solidity), which is the core of local wisdom-based character education. The following is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Linda Dance

In-Depth Interview Findings: Internalization of Character Values

To explore the depth of meaning, researchers conducted interviews with several key informants. The following are important points discovered:

The Value of Fortitude (Patience)

Informant Mr. L.M.I. (Traditional Leader/Parabela) stated:

"The La Kadandio poem teaches how to face destiny. When the Linda dancers move slowly following the rhyme of the poem, they are practicing patience. It conveys the value that a leader or ordinary person should not waver even in the darkest of exiles (difficulties)."

Mr. L.M.I.'s statement regarding "how to face fate" demonstrates the profound value of fortitude. Hermeneutically, La Kadandio's poetry serves as an ethical guideline for individuals to accept the realities of life without losing dignity. This reflects the local community's view that hardship is not the end, but rather a test of integrity. Through Mr. L.M.I.'s perspective as a traditional figure, it is revealed that the synchronization between the poem's rhyme and the slow movements of the Linda Dance is a methodology for internalizing values. These slow movements are a physical manifestation of the concept of patience taught by La Kadandio. Symbolically, this prepares individuals to have fortitude in facing 'exile' or the lowest phase in life, making it a model of character education that prioritizes self-control and mental resilience.

Values of Loyalty and Integrity (Kapatuli)

Mrs. W.O.H. (Linda Dance Maestro) explains the relationship between the text and the female character of Muna:

"We teach dancers that Linda is 'the pinnacle of purity.' The accompanying La Kadandio verse reminds us of the people's loyalty to the exiled King. For students or the younger generation, this is the value of integrity—remaining true to principles even when the environment is unfavorable."

The results of this interview reveal that Linda's dance serves as a character education curriculum. Through the aesthetics of movement and oral literature (poetry), Kapatuli's values are transformed from mere historical loyalty to the king to personal integrity relevant to facing the challenges of the times for future generations. Becoming a Linda dancer means learning to be a person of moral purity and possessing a steadfastness unshaken by external circumstances.

Values of Justice and Empathy

Interviews with local education practitioners revealed that this verse evokes collective empathy:

"When children listen to and interpret this verse, they don't just learn art. They learn about the history of past injustices and how to appreciate the suffering of others. This is a powerful empathy-based character education."

The interviews revealed that a curriculum based on local wisdom (through poetry) is far more effective in developing students' morality than purely theoretical instruction. The value of justice is learned not through definition, but through emotional reflection

on the collective experiences of their ancestors. Teaching these poems to children is an effort to create a generation that is "historically literate" and possesses high emotional intelligence to empathize with the suffering of others.

Integration into Cultural Education

Through Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical lens, the process of appropriation occurs when the past meaning of the La Kadandio verse is drawn into the contemporary world of education. The research identified three main pillars of integration in Table 1.

Table 1. Integration into Cultural Education

Character Values	Symbols in Poetry/Dance	The Relevance of Cultural Education
Resilience	Narrative of the King's Exile	Students' mental resilience in facing the challenges of the times.
Ethics/Manners	Crouching Movement (Kandoli)	Character formation through respect for parents and history.
Identity	Archaic Muna Language	Strengthening national identity through the preservation of regional languages.

This research found that the "art of mourning" has transformed into "the art of character building." The Linda Dance is no longer seen merely as a welcoming dance, but rather as an open classroom where Muna moral values are transmitted auditorily (in poetry) and kinesthetically (in dance).

The analysis shows that, through hermeneutic study, the La Kadandio poetry in the Linda Dance functions as a vehicle for the holistic transmission of character values. The cultural education process occurs when the subjects (students/dancers) reinterpret the history of their King's suffering into moral motivation to maintain integrity and fortitude in the future.

Discussion

The discussion in this study focuses on how the process of interpreting the La Kadandio poem in the Linda Dance yields a new understanding of character values essential to the cultural education of the Muna people.

Dialectics of Text and Action: Paul Ricoeur's Perspective

From Ricoeur's hermeneutic perspective, the La Kadandio poem has undergone a process of "distantiation," where the text is detached from its original historical event (the exile of La Ode Ngkadiri) and becomes an autonomous text that can be interpreted at any time. The results of this study indicate that the Muna people are not simply remembering past political events but are engaging in "appropriation"—making the text's meaning their own in the present.

The character value of resilience found in the poem is no longer about the fortitude of a king in exile, but is transformed into mental toughness for individuals in modern society in facing life's challenges. The integration of the poem into the Linda Dance

creates a space where the "world of the text" (sadness and dignity) meets the "world of the reader" (audience/dancer). This proves that cultural education is most effective when individuals are able to project themselves into the values contained in the cultural text (Majda et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2021).

Culture as a Web of Meaning: Clifford Geertz's Perspective

Through the thick description method, it was discovered that the Linda Dance is not merely a mechanical movement, but rather a "web of meaning." Every hand movement and footstep, aligned with the rhyme of the La Kadandio poem, symbolizes inner balance.

Interviews with traditional leaders confirmed that the integration of poetry into the dance functions as a mechanism of social control. The ethical values (adab) in the Linda Dance teach that emotional expression (the king's sadness in the poem) must be channeled through controlled and dignified movements. In the context of cultural education, this provides an important lesson that strong character is formed through self-discipline and the ability to manage emotions—a social-emotional competency highly relevant in contemporary character education curricula (Dasopang et al., 2023; Murcahyanto & Mohzana, Murtako, 2015).

Transformation of Character Values in Cultural Education

One crucial finding from this discussion is the shift in the function of the La Kadandio poem from mere lamentation to an educational instrument. Three main character dimensions emerge from this integration: (1) Historical-Pedagogical Dimension: Through this poem, local history is not taught as a memorization of years and names, but as a reflection of the value of integrity. Students learn that power may be lost, but dignity and character must remain. (2) Aesthetic-Moral Dimension: The beauty of the Linda Dance serves as a gateway for the younger generation to love their culture. Beneath this aesthetic is a moral message about sanctity and respect for tradition. (3) Social Dimension: This collective performance strengthens the social bonds and collective memory of the Muna community, which serves as the foundation for locally-based citizenship education.

Hermeneutics as a Bridge for Character Education

The novelty of this research lies in the finding that character education need not always be top-down instructional. Through a hermeneutic study of La Kadandio, a Reflective Character Education model was discovered. In this model, values are not imposed, but emerge from the process of independent interpretation by students or the community as they engage in art appreciation.

The integration of values in La Kadandio offers an alternative to cultural education, which has traditionally been considered boring. By understanding the profound meaning behind the king's suffering embodied in the poem, a sense of empathy and positive local national pride emerges. This addresses the meaninglessness of traditional arts

instruction in schools, which often focuses solely on physical skills without addressing the philosophical-hermeneutical aspects.

Overall, the La Kadandio poem in the Linda Dance constitutes a comprehensive "life curriculum." The character values it embodies—patience, loyalty, civility, and resilience—constitute invaluable cultural capital. Hermeneutic studies have successfully revealed that cultural preservation is not merely about preserving the dance from extinction, but also about ensuring that its character values continue to be interpreted and lived out by future generations.

4. CONCLUSION

The La Kadandio poem in the Linda Dance performance is not merely an aesthetic element or musical accompaniment, but rather a "cultural text" that embodies the collective memory and philosophy of life of the Muna people. Through Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach, it was discovered that the historical narrative of King La Ode Ngkadir's exile has transformed into a universal symbol of fortitude that transcends its time. There is a strong correlation between the poem's text, dance movements, and character values. The main values identified include resilience (steadfastness) in facing trials, integrity (loyalty) to principles, and politeness (adab) in expressing emotions. These values are symbolically embodied through the calm yet firm movements of the Linda Dance, reflecting a balance between inner strength and outward behavior. Furthermore, in the context of cultural education, this study demonstrates that hermeneutics can serve as a bridge to revitalize fading local wisdom values. This reinterpretation of the La Kadandio poem provides a reflective model for character education, where the younger generation learns art not only as a physical skill, but also as a process of searching for meaning and identity.

As a suggestion, it is recommended that the Education Office and schools in the Muna region integrate the results of the hermeneutic study of the La Kadandio poem into the Local Content curriculum. Learning materials should not only focus on dance practice, but also on analyzing the meaning of the poem to strengthen students' emotional intelligence and character. This research is limited to the perspective of text and performance hermeneutics. Future researchers can develop this study from an ethnopedagogical perspective experimentally to measure the effectiveness of using the Linda Dance as a medium for internalizing character values in formal school environments.

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