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Interpreting the *Tebe Bei Mau* Dance in the *Hamis* Ceremony of the *Manu Uman Kiik* Tribe in Relation to the Feast of Pentecost

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Abstract

The *Tebe Bei Mau* Dance in the *Hamis* Ceremony and the Feast of Pentecost share similar meanings and values. In the *Tebe Bei Mau* dance, the *Manu Uman Kiik* community offers corn and animals as sacrificial offerings to express gratitude to God and to honor their ancestors. Likewise, during the Feast of Pentecost in the Old Testament, the Israelites expressed their gratitude for the blessings and harvest they had received while also demonstrating reverence and fear of Yahweh. This study focuses on exploring the relationship between the *Tebe Bei Mau* dance in the *Hamis* ceremony and the Feast of Pentecost within the life of the *Manu Uman Kiik* community.

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research participants consisted of members of the Manu Uman Kiik community. The findings reveal that the Tebe Bei Mau dance in the Hamis ceremony is related to the Feast of Pentecost through its expressions of thanksgiving and reverence. Based on these findings, the researcher concludes that the Feast of Pentecost in the Catholic Church carries a similar meaning, namely thanksgiving for the wheat harvest and reverence toward Yahweh in the Old Testament, which is comparable to the thanksgiving celebration for agricultural harvests practiced by the Manu Uman Kiik community through the Tebe Bei Mau Dance in the Hamis Ceremony.

Keywords: *Tebe Bei Mau* Dance, *Hamis* Ceremony, Pentecost Feast, Thanksgiving, *Manu Uman Kiik* Community, Inculturation.

Introduction

Culture is a pattern of human life that develops throughout the course of human existence. As cultural beings, humans live together with others and create various behaviors and works that reflect distinctive ways of life. These contributions play a significant role in social life.

One element of culture is art, which serves as a medium through which people express their thoughts, feelings, and desires in various aesthetic forms. These symbolic expressions are manifested in written and spoken language, body movements, sounds and melodies, lines and colors,

dimensions and sculptures, weaving and textile production, as well as various forms of architecture. Dance is a part of culture closely related to aesthetics. It serves several functions, including entertainment, education, ceremonial purposes, and performance. Art itself is an experience expressed through sensory media arranged in an appealing and organized manner. Art is created to be communicated, contemplated, and to provide spiritual enjoyment to human beings.

The *Tebe Bei Mau* dance is a cultural heritage inherited from the ancestors of the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe in Malaka Regency. This dance possesses forms, meanings, functions, and aesthetic values that deserve to be studied, analyzed, and appreciated so that they may benefit both the local community and society at large. The dance is not performed arbitrarily but only on specific occasions considered sacred. *Tebe Bei Mau* may only be performed during the harvest season as an expression of gratitude for God's blessings. According to Paulus Kehi, the chief of the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe, the timing of this dance is highly sacred and must not be violated. Any violation is believed to bring misfortune to the tribal leader.

Today, the existence of the *Tebe* dance is becoming increasingly diminished and is at risk of disappearing altogether. This situation is largely influenced by technological advancement and globalization, accompanied by the rapid development of science and technology, which increasingly challenge human existence and erode cultural identity. As a result, people, despite being civilized beings, have begun to neglect the noble heritage passed down by their ancestors. Nowadays, traditional dances are often viewed by young people as outdated. Contemporary youth tend to prefer instant forms of entertainment and are more attracted to modern dances originating from foreign cultures than to local cultural traditions and dances.

The *Hamis* traditional ceremony within the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe embodies important cultural values that have long been practiced in community life. According to the tribe, customs and traditions are ancestral practices inherited from generation to generation and continue to be observed by their descendants today. In daily life, customary practices are often given greater priority than religious activities. This means that the people of the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe tend to adhere more strongly to customary traditions than to religious observances. They believe that they became familiar with and practiced their customs long before they embraced formal religion.

According to the *Manu Uman Kiik* community, the *Tebe Bei Mau* ritual performed before the *Hamis* ceremony is intended to celebrate the abundant corn harvest resulting from their effort,

perseverance, and hard work. Before conducting the ritual, members of the community must refrain from consuming young corn. Prior to the *Hamis* ceremony, they first celebrate through the *Tebe Bei Mau* ritual. Through dance and collective singing, they express their joy and gratitude, viewing the ceremony as an expression of faith in the Almighty God who creates, protects, nurtures, and blesses their crops with a fruitful harvest at the appropriate time.

In the Old Testament, the Feast of Pentecost was established as a "Holy Convocation." On this day, people were prohibited from engaging in strenuous work, and all Israelite men were required to gather at the holy sanctuary (Leviticus 23:21). At the sanctuary, priests offered animal sacrifices for the atonement of sins and for salvation, while two loaves of bread made from fine flour and leaven were presented before God (Leviticus 23:17–20). As a joyful feast (Deuteronomy 16:15), devout Israelites expressed gratitude for the blessings and harvest they had received while also demonstrating reverence and fear of Yahweh (Jeremiah 5:24).

The Jewish people celebrate Pentecost seven weeks (fifty days) after Passover to commemorate their liberation from slavery in Egypt. For them, this feast has two significant meanings: commemorating the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai and expressing thanksgiving for the harvest from their land. From the harvested wheat they made bread symbolizing the two stone tablets inscribed with God's law. This significance is reflected in the Pentecost liturgy, during which the story of the Sinai event is proclaimed, recounting how God revealed Himself to His people through storm and fire to deliver His law (Exodus 19–20).

Pentecost is also an important feast day for Catholics. During the Pentecost celebration, Catholics are encouraged to bring agricultural produce such as corn, rice, cassava, beans, vegetables, and fruits. Similarly, in the *Tebe Bei Mau* ritual, the people of the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe not only celebrate together but also present harvest products such as corn, rice, and several cattle as offerings of thanksgiving to the Almighty, whom they commonly refer to as *Maromak*. This practice is intended to seek continued blessings from the Almighty so that future harvests may be abundant and the community may enjoy prosperity in the years to come.

Culture encompasses the entire way of life of a society, passed down from one generation to the next and serving as a distinguishing characteristic of a particular human group. Culture refers to physical objects and artifacts created and utilized by a community, such as houses, clothing, tools, and technology (Koentjaraningrat, 2004, p. 13). Culture also includes ideas, values, beliefs, social

norms, language, and systems of knowledge that are shared among members of a society. Furthermore, culture is associated with the arts, literature, and music, which are often regarded as possessing high aesthetic and intellectual value and are generally accessed by educated or elite groups (Selo Soemardjan, 2005, p. 32).

The *Tebe Bei Mau* dance is a cultural heritage inherited from the ancestors of the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe in Malaka Regency. This dance possesses forms, meanings, functions, and aesthetic values that deserve to be studied, analyzed, and appreciated so that they may benefit both the local community and society at large. The dance is not performed arbitrarily but only on specific occasions considered sacred. *Tebe Bei Mau* may only be performed during the harvest season as an expression of gratitude for God's blessings. According to Paulus Kehi, the chief of the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe, the timing of this dance is highly sacred and must not be violated. Any violation is believed to bring adverse consequences to the tribal leader (Paulus Kehi, personal communication, February 2, 2023).

Several previous studies have suggested that the existence of the *Tebe* dance is gradually fading and is at risk of disappearing altogether. This condition is influenced by technological advancement and globalization, accompanied by the rapid development of science and technology, which increasingly challenge human existence and contribute to the erosion of cultural identity. Consequently, people, despite being civilized beings, have begun to neglect the noble heritage inherited from their ancestors. Today, traditional dances are often perceived by young people as outdated. Contemporary youth tend to prefer instant forms of entertainment and are more inclined toward modern dances originating from foreign cultures rather than local cultural traditions and dances (Adriana V. Hoar Klau, 2020). Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring the meaning of the *Tebe Bei Mau* dance itself and examining its relationship with the Feast of Pentecost.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through repeated observations and interviews (V. Wiratna Sujarweni, 2014). In this context, the study sought to examine the meaning of the *Tebe Bei Mau* dance in the *Hamis* ceremony of the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe and its relationship to the Feast of Pentecost.

This research was grounded in the social reality of the *Manu Uman Kiik* community. The informants consisted of ten members of the *Manu Uman Kiik* tribe, the tribal chief, and religious leaders within the tribe. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation.

The study commenced in December 2024 and continued until February 2025, with the intensive phase of data collection and research activities taking place from March to April 2025. The research was conducted in Kamanasa Village, Malaka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Data analysis was carried out through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Results and Discussion

- The Meaning of the Sekaf Ritual among the Haumen Tribe Community

  The meaning of the *Sekaf* ritual, as expressed by traditional leaders interviewed by the researcher, encompasses several interpretations.

  First, the *Sekaf* ritual is understood as a form of respect for a mother who has left her family to join her husband. It serves as an important symbol in the process of transitioning the social status of a woman entering a new life within her husband's family. However, her role is symbolically replaced by the eldest daughter, represented by *ike suti apian paku a hoe tai*. According to informants BFH and YAK, this ritual is not merely an act of honoring a mother, but also functions as a bond that strengthens relationships between both families.

  Second, the ritual serves as a means of strengthening family ties. The *Sekaf* ritual is interpreted as a unifying mechanism so that, when both parents have passed away, the designated daughter assumes the maternal role for her siblings. One informant, FN, defined the meaning of the *Sekaf* ritual as a bond between the woman's and the man's families. Likewise, FM stated that the *Sekaf* ritual represents an expression of gratitude to a mother, recognizing that only women bear, give birth to, and nurture children. Through the meaning of the *Sekaf* ritual, it becomes evident that this practice is not merely a ritual but also embodies cultural values embedded in everyday life. The ritual involves all members of both the male and female families, clearly functioning as a means of strengthening kinship relations.

- The Purpose of the Sekaf Ritual among the Haumen Tribe Community

  The purpose of the *Sekaf* ritual within the Haumen tribe community is to maintain harmony. LK and BFH stated that the ritual serves as a bond of kinship between the woman's and man's families so that familial ties remain intact. AO defined the purpose of the *Sekaf* ritual as maintaining balance within the household when the maternal role must be relinquished, while also reinforcing the social identity of the daughter entrusted to continue the values of

responsibility and maternal affection. Furthermore, FM explained that the purpose of the *Sekaf* ritual is to complete the kinship structure so that no maternal role is left vacant within the customary lineage.

- Values Embedded in the Sekaf Ritual among the Haumen Tribe Community

  EH stated that the values embodied in the *Sekaf* ritual include affection, kinship, and responsibility. BFH further explained that one of the primary values embedded in the ritual is a mother's love and affection. AO emphasized that the existence of the *Sekaf* ritual ensures that customary relationships remain preserved, even after a mother has left her original clan.

- The Meaning of Women in the Sekaf Tradition among the Haumen Tribe Community

  ALO stated that women are regarded as the guardians of the household, while BFH explained that, within the Haumen tribal tradition, women play a role in continuing family traditions. AO further stated that women are symbolically represented as *eba rumah untuk pulang*—a home to which one may always return.

The meaning of the *Sekaf* ritual within the Haumen tribe community, based on interview findings, reflects noble social and cultural values of significant importance. The *Sekaf* ritual was generally practiced in earlier times. Its implementation involves a series of ceremonial stages. First, the husband, wife, and children enter the traditional house of the woman's family to seek blessings from the ancestors through prayers delivered by the traditional elder. The eldest daughter remains in the woman's traditional house as the *Sekaf*, while the husband, wife, and other children receive blessings from the *atoen amaf*. In addition, the husband's family gives a symbolic amount of money to the *atoen amaf* as a sign that the woman will leave her clan. Nevertheless, family ties are not severed but continue to be maintained. Based on observation, this tradition is carried out properly, and only the *atoen amaf* holds the authority to perform the ritual.

According to the scholar Claude Lévi-Strauss, marriage is not merely a personal relationship but also establishes formal social bonds between the families of both men and women. He further argued that marriage represents a form of social exchange between two family groups. In his perspective, human society is built upon systems of exchange, with women becoming one of the central elements because they are considered connectors who strengthen networks among social groups (Rahayu S. Hidayat, 2006).

The validity of the findings was strengthened through data triangulation involving interviews, observations, and documentation. Informants' statements regarding the meaning of the *Sekaf* ritual demonstrate its significance in reinforcing family bonds within marriage. Observations further revealed that this tradition is performed in accordance with customary law and cannot be conducted by just anyone; rather, only the *atoen amaf* possesses the authority to carry it out. Therefore, the authority of the *atoen amaf* in conducting the *Sekaf* ritual cannot be replaced by any other party. Consequently, those entrusted with performing this tradition must bear responsibility so that its continuity may be preserved without negatively affecting future generations who will inherit and continue the practice.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This study is limited to the *Sekaf* tradition of the Haumen tribe in relation to the sacrament of marriage within the teachings of the Catholic Church; therefore, its findings cannot be generalized to other ethnic groups. Accordingly, future research may examine traditions related to the sacrament of marriage among other tribes. In addition, subsequent studies may explore the educational values embedded in the *Sekaf* tradition as a form of learning for tribal members and, more broadly, for society in general.

Conclusion

This tradition is primarily carried out with the aim of honoring a mother and maintaining familial relationships between the male and female parties. The implementation of this tradition also serves as a means of fostering unity among families and the community, as they collectively participate in other customary activities. Thus, the Sekaf rite is not merely a customary ritual but also possesses profound spiritual values that are relevant to the teachings of the Church. This tradition can serve as a bridge between local culture and Church teachings, enabling believers to preserve their cultural identity.

Furthermore, the Sekaf rite may be interpreted as a form of instruction concerning the values embodied in the sacrament of marriage, particularly for younger generations. Through this tradition, they may learn that the values inherent in the teachings of the sacrament of marriage and cultural practices are not contradictory but rather complementary and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, it is important for the Church and pastoral companions to explore, discern, and guide the positive values embedded in this tradition so that it may increasingly lead the faithful closer to the Church's teachings on the sacrament of marriage.

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