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Mythology as the guardian of the authenticity of the angkola *Tor-tor* dance in traditional wedding ceremonies in the modern era

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of mythology in maintaining the authenticity of the Angkola *Tor-tor* Dance in contemporary wedding traditions. By examining the phenomena of cultural commodification, simplification of movements, and the use of digital media that can obscure the meaning of rituals, this study explores how mythological narratives, ancestral symbols, and ceremonial structures serve as normative references and sources of legitimacy for these practices. This study applies a qualitative methodology using cultural mythology and ethnochoreology. The methods used include literature review, participant observation in several Angkola wedding ceremonies, and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders and artists. The research findings reveal that mythology, particularly the story of the origins of the Angkola *Tor-tor*, the relationship between humans and ancestral spirits, and the value of respect for the clan, serves as a framework of meaning that maintains consistency between form (movement, costume, formation) and function (prayer, respect, social cohesion). In the context of modernization, innovation is still permitted as long as it does not violate the main mythological principles: the order of presentation, the ethics of family interactions, and the symbolic meaning of attributes. Performance curation provides an understanding of the ritual context, and the use of digital media to document accurate interpretations. The implications of this research emphasize that the power of mythology is not only about the romanticism of the past, but also a flexible cultural capital to negotiate the identity, customary authority, and aesthetic sustainability of *Tor-tor Angkola* in the current cultural context.



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1. Introduction

Modernization and festivalization tend to push the *Tor-tor* dance towards entertainment and commodities, so that its sacred aspects and deep meaning are reduced or pushed aside on the contemporary stage, giving rise to value tensions between commercialization and the sacred traditions of the Batak community, including Angkola [1]. The structure and function of primitive societies, as well as the social order of certain civilizations, have made various religious rituals closely intertwined with relevant myths or sacred narratives. Such myths significantly influence and shape patterns of interaction among members within a community [2]. Studi kasus *Tor-tor* Cawan pada masyarakat Batak Toba menunjukkan pengurangan nilai spiritual dalam peralihan dari konteks ritual ke seni pertunjukan modern ini menggambarkan pola umum pergeseran makna dan hilangnya unsur mitologis di berbagai varian *Tor-tor* Batak, [3]. The influence of globalization is seen as a major driver of cultural shifts in Angkola *Tor-tor*, driving changes in format, purpose, and social acceptance, often moving away from the roots of community ritual and communication [4]. Within the broader Batak performance ecosystem

(e.g., Batak Opera, which frequently features *Tor-tor*), modernization has transformed the character of performances, diminishing the practice of "traveling theater" and its original social context. This is linked to a redefinition of function and meaning, as well as the pressures of commercialization. One of the ways communities express their cultural identity, reflecting their values, beliefs, and worldview, is through traditional dance. The *Tor-tor* dance, a traditional performance of the Mandailing community, is commonly presented in various customary ceremonies, including wedding rituals, and is accompanied by a set of musical instruments known as *gondang* [6]. Physically, the *Tor-tor* dance is distinctive for its characteristic hand movements, particularly the continuous motion of the fingers [7]. Historically, these finger movements served as a form of nonverbal communication used to convey messages to the audience in accordance with the type or purpose of the *Tor-tor* being performed [8]. One variation of this tradition is the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance, which has existed for generations. Historical accounts suggest that the dance originated from ancient religious ceremonies performed by the Angkola community to seek protection and blessings from the deities [9].

In the Batak Angkola culture, the *Tor-tor* dance is more than an artistic performance; it is a ritual imbued with profound symbolic and spiritual meaning [10]. The dance serves as a medium of communication between humans and their ancestors, as well as a form of respect for traditional values passed down through generations. Each movement, the rhythm of the *gondang*, and the sequence of the performance contain mythological elements that connect the Angkola community to its cultural heritage [11]. The *Tor-tor Angkola* dance originated from customary harvest celebrations in which the Mandailing community performed *Tor-tor* as an expression of gratitude for abundant crops. As one of the traditional dance forms of Angkola, *Tor-tor* is believed to be an ancient art deeply embedded in various Angkola customary rituals, whether in *siriaon* (joyous events) or *siluluton* (sorrowful events), [12]. In the early phases of Angkola cultural development, estimated to have emerged long before the Islamic period, *Tor-tor* had already become an integral part of the community's ancient belief system known as *Si Pelebegu*. This corresponds with the expression "*sombado mula ni Tor-tor*", meaning that *Tor-tor* originally functioned as a ceremonial act of praise [13]. Thus, the *Tor-tor* dance is clearly rooted in ritual practices dedicated to honoring ancestral spirits (referred to as *begu* in Angkola tradition). These ancestral spirits were believed to possess syncretic, supernatural, and magical powers that influenced many aspects of daily life within the Angkola customary community. They were thought to dwell in sacred sites known as *naborgo-borgo*, which could be located beneath large trees, in forests, caves, or other spiritually significant places. Even today, the influence of syncretic belief systems remains evident in the worldview of traditional communities, who continue to believe that ancestral spirits may cause disasters, illness, or other misfortunes. This belief is reflected in traditional terms for illnesses, such as *nahona tampar* and *nanionjapkonnnasonida* [14]. The *Tor-tor Angkola* dance is not merely a performance but is deeply intertwined with the spiritual values, traditions, and mythological beliefs of the Angkola community [15]. Within the context of customary ceremonies, the performance of *Tor-tor* is governed by regulations shaped by myths and traditional rules passed down through generations. These myths illustrate the interconnected relationship between humans, their ancestors, and the divine forces they believe in [16].

In its early development, the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance held a sacred and exclusive position, as only the *Raja* (customary king) or members of the royal family were permitted to perform it [17]. This exclusivity signified that the *Tor-tor* functioned as a symbol of authority, honor, and ancestral proximity. The movements within the dance were believed to possess spiritual significance, reflecting interactions between humans, the natural world, and unseen supernatural forces [18]. Over time, along with societal developments, the original functions and values of the *Tor-tor* dance began to transform. The dance, once restricted to specific groups, is now performed by the wider community [19]. Nevertheless, the performance of *Tor-tor* must still adhere to customary oversight. Any individual or group wishing to present the *Tor-tor* is required to obtain permission from the *Raja* (customary king), *pemimpin adat* (customary leader), or the local *kepala suku* (tribal head) in their respective region, [20]. The shifts brought about by modernization have led to significant transformations in societal values and perceptions regarding traditional arts [21]. The *Tor-tor* dance, which was once a sacred

element of customary wedding ceremonies, is now frequently performed in various entertainment events and cultural festivals, often with modifications to its presentation. As a result, the mythological and spiritual values inherent in *Tor-tor* are frequently overshadowed by aesthetic preferences and commercial interests [22]. In this context, mythology plays a crucial role in safeguarding authenticity by ensuring that the original meaning, ritual function, and cultural identity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance remain preserved amid the pressures of modernization. From previous research, it is clear that some authors emphasize the importance of academic documentation as a basis for preservation policies in many publications; the greater focus is on the *Tor-tor* variant, while detailed studies of the Angkola variant are relatively limited, thus encouraging the need for further research specifically on the *Angkola Tor-tor* Dance. In this context, mythology plays an important role as a protector of authenticity and ensures that the original meaning, ritual function, and cultural identity of the *Angkola Tor-tor* Dance are not lost amidst the current of modernization.

This study emphasizes that mythology is a key element in maintaining the authenticity of *Tor-tor Angkola* in traditional wedding ceremonies amidst the currents of modernization. In the theoretical aspect, this study formulates an authenticity framework that focuses on meaning (not just form), by distinguishing between the main sacred elements and elements that can be adapted. In terms of methodology, this study provides tools to map various elements such as movement, music, speech, and symbols, and authenticity respects the sacred aspects. This study addresses the gap in documentation of variations in *Tor-tor Angkola* Dance, maps changes in practice, provides guidance for curatorial ceremonies, tools for disseminating knowledge that maintains meaning, recommendations for customary standards, increased intergenerational cultural understanding, and a more equitable cultural economy. In the academic field, the *Tor-tor Angkola* phenomenon has become a global reference on how to combine tradition and modernity with a strong ethics of representation. Overall, this study offers a framework, tools, and practices that can connect the needs of the modern era with the integrity of ritual meaning, so that *Tor-tor Angkola* can remain developed, relevant, and appreciated without losing its sacred essence.

2. Method

This research applies qualitative methodology using cultural mythology and ethnographic research types [23]. A qualitative methodology was chosen because the purpose of this study is to understand the symbolic meaning, mythological values, and authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* Dance in the context of culture and wedding traditions, using the theory of Claude Levi-Strauss (myth structuralism): reading the narrative structure of the myth that animates the *Tor-tor Angkola*. Meanwhile, a cultural mythology approach is used in tracing the symbolic meaning and spiritual values in *Tor-tor*, which are sourced from Angkola mythology. Through this approach, the dance is understood not merely as aesthetics, but as the embodiment of the cosmological and spiritual narrative of the community [24]. An ethnographic approach is used to analyze dance as a series of Angkola wedding ceremonies (pre-ceremony, main ceremony, post-ceremony), a cultural system, not only in terms of movement, but also from the function, value, and mythological meaning contained within it [25]. By integrating these two approaches, this study provides not only a descriptive account of how the *Tor-tor* is performed but also an interpretation of the relationship between mythology and authenticity as reflected in the symbolism of its movements, music, and ritual structure within Angkola wedding ceremonies. The research was conducted in Padangsidempuan Hutaimbaru between August and September 2025. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and document analysis. To ensure data validity, methods such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and peer debriefing were applied. The data analysis process consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [26].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Role of Mythology in the *Tor-tor Angkola* Dance

The findings indicate that the *Tor-tor* is perceived not only as a performing art but also as a medium of communication with supernatural forces and ancestral spirits. In earlier times, the

community believed that the *Tor-tor* served as a space through which ancestral spirits could appear and convey messages through individuals who entered a trance state. This practice, known locally as *pasusur*, involves a designated dancer becoming possessed by a spirit, enabling them to provide answers to community concerns regarding the success of a ceremony, agricultural outcomes, or various social matters. Claude Lévi-Strauss's Mythology Theory (Mythological Structuralism) posits that myths represent a mode of thinking among traditional societies and that they consist of symbolic structures that shape collective understanding, [27]. In this context, the mythology embedded in the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance functions as a system of signs that regulates interactions between humans, their ancestors, and the natural world. The structural elements within these myths serve as the foundational framework that helps preserve the values and authenticity of the dance, ensuring their continuity despite the passage of time and cultural change. Based on this theory, it can be understood that mythology also serves as a moral foundation within the community. Any violation of customary norms related to the performance of the *Tor-tor Angkola* is believed to bring misfortune or disaster. For instance, if an individual holds a ceremonial event without obtaining permission from the *raja adat* (customary leader), the community considers the event illegitimate and potentially harmful. Such beliefs create both fear and communal awareness, reinforcing adherence to customary procedures. In this way, mythology functions as an unwritten norm that structures social order and maintains harmony within the community.

In addition, mythology plays a crucial role in providing customary legitimacy in determining the validity of a ceremony. The *raja adat*, who is believed within Angkola tradition to possess a special connection with the ancestors, serves as the key figure responsible for authorizing the performance of the *Tor-tor Angkola*. The community believes that the prayers and blessings offered by the *raja adat* constitute an essential aspect of the tradition that is closely linked to spiritual power. Consequently, mythology reinforces the authority of the *raja adat* while simultaneously affirming the existing social structure. Previous research on mythology in poetry suggests that within lyrical works, poets often express the idea that when a person becomes separated from things or entities that are usually close to them, the impulse to return, protect, and fight for what is good becomes significantly stronger than when they remain in constant proximity [28]. The findings of this study also reveal that mythology is closely intertwined with the *syair* or *onang-onang* that accompany the *Tor-tor*. These lyrical chants not only contain prayers and supplications to God but also embed symbolic elements that reflect ancestral teachings. As a result, mythology becomes integrated into the song lyrics, the rhythm of the *gondang*, and the choreographic patterns of the dance, forming a unified meaning that is difficult to separate. The function of the *Pepe-pepeka* dance performance is rooted in its role as a ritual associated with the transmission of Islamic teachings. Several cultural values are reflected in the *Pepe-pepeka Ri Makka* dance, including philosophical values tied to the Makassar community's worldview. This includes the mythological concept of *appak sulapa* (the fourfold square), which encompasses *tana* (earth), *jekne* (water), *angin* (wind), and *pepe* (fire). The lyrics accompanying the *Pepe-pepeka Ri Makka* dance contain profound meanings related to the spread of Islam, [29]. In connection with previous studies and the strengthening influence of Islam in the Angkola region, the role of mythology has undergone noticeable transformation. Practices involving spirits and trance states have gradually diminished, as they are increasingly viewed as incompatible with Islamic teachings. However, a portion of the community still believes that violating customary norms invites misfortune. This indicates that even though explicitly magical elements have declined, mythology persists as a form of social belief passed down across generations. Thus, it can be concluded that mythology within the *Tor-tor* functions as a bridge between humans and ancestral spirits, as a form of social regulation, and as a source of customary legitimacy. Although modernization and religious influences have diminished mystical practices, mythological values remain a crucial foundation for preserving the authenticity and sacred meaning of the *Tor-tor* dance within the Angkola community.

3.2. The Authenticity of the *Tor-tor* Dance

The authenticity of *Randai Intan Sari* cannot be separated from the *silek* elements embedded within it, such as *sambah*. The creative adaptations applied to these authentic components make this version of *Randai* a movement style uniquely originating from the Intan Sari Dance Studio.

Creative aspects in the Randai Intan Sari dance at the Minang Maimbau Arts Studio, located in Nagari Koto Baru, encompass fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, and sensitivity. Fluency in Randai Intan Sari requires dancers to prioritize stamina, strength, and energy, as the performance involves numerous rapid movements. For flexibility, the condition of the waist, joints, and arms is crucial. Efforts to maintain this flexibility include hand exercises and rotating the waist to the left and right [30]. Based on previous research, the authenticity of the *Tor-tor* dance is preserved through a set of traditional norms passed down from one generation to the next.

Similarly, the *Tari Sekapur Sirih* serves as a welcoming dance for receiving distinguished guests in Jambi. Its movements are grounded in the philosophy *Alam Takambang Jadi Guru*, which emphasizes observing nature and all its elements, simplified and organized with consideration for artistic value and societal norms in Jambi, [31]. The norms found in the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance encompass dress codes, movement regulations, and appropriate behavior during the performance. Field observations indicate that dancers are required to wear traditional costumes, such as *kain* or *ulos*, which symbolize respect and modesty toward cultural heritage. For example, female dancers are not permitted to wear tight or fashionable clothing. Should they choose to do so, they must cover themselves with a *sarung* or traditional cloth. This demonstrates that the authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* is protected not only through appearance but also through moral and ethical norms upheld by tradition.

The movements of the *Tor-tor* dance symbolize its role as a social dance within the everyday activities of the Batak community, functioning as a cherished cultural heritage performed to enliven various events such as wedding ceremonies, reunions, family gatherings, school farewells, and celebrations of victory in sporting competitions. The psychological dimension of the *Tor-tor* has undergone changes related to identity formation, exemplified by the improper use of *ulos* during wedding ceremonies. The social aspect of the *Tor-tor*, as a symbol of Batak identity in the city of Balikpapan, demonstrates that members of the Batak community internalize the implicit meanings of the dance in their daily lives, such as worshipping God Almighty, living according to tradition, respecting others in social interactions, and maintaining a spirit of perseverance to ensure a meaningful life [32]. In terms of movement, the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance possesses characteristics distinct from modern dances, which emphasize freedom of expression. Each movement in the *Tor-tor Angkola* carries a symbolic meaning associated with prayers and supplications. For example, when the hands are raised upward, the gesture is regarded as a symbol of prayer requesting protection from God and the ancestors. This highlights that the authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* lies not only in its visual appearance but also in the philosophical values embodied in each variation of its movements.

The authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance is also preserved through a permission mechanism governed by the *raja adat* (customary leader). Any customary ritual involving the *Tor-tor Angkola* cannot be carried out without the approval of the *raja adat*. This permission process is more than a mere formality; it represents a gesture of respect toward customary authority and ensures that the ritual proceeds in accordance with established traditional rules. Without such approval, an event is considered illegitimate, and community members are generally reluctant to participate. This demonstrates that the authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* is closely tied to the social structure that binds the community together. In addition to dress regulations and the permission mechanism, the authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* is also upheld through several prohibitions. One such restriction is the prohibition against pregnant women participating in the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance, as it is believed that doing so may negatively affect the health of both the mother and the child.

This prohibition is viewed not only from a medical perspective but also from a spiritual standpoint, reflecting concerns that violating traditional norms may lead to undesirable consequences. The research data also indicate that the authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* is maintained through an *adat* deliberation process conducted prior to the event. This customary council aims to ensure that no violations of traditional norms are committed by the family hosting the ceremony. This further reinforces the understanding that the authenticity of the *Tor-tor* is rooted not only in its performance aspects but also in the customary supervisory system

that governs it. Overall, the findings of this study affirm that the authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* has been preserved to the present day due to the strength of customary norms, permission mechanisms, and prohibitions that must be respected, Fig. 1. This authenticity is understood not merely as the originality of an art form, but as a representation of traditional values that must be safeguarded by the entire Angkola community.



Fig. 1. The *Manortor* Performance of the Bridal Couple

Previous studies indicate that the movements within a traditional dance often embody mythological elements in the form of symbolic meanings. In the *Tor-tor Angkola* dance, the upward movement of the hands is interpreted as a prayer and a plea for protection from God and the ancestors. This demonstrates that the movements of the *Tor-tor* are not merely aesthetically pleasing but also carry religious significance that sustains its authenticity. H. Muhammad Nur Dalimuthe, SH, a respected community figure, further explained that the movements of the *Tor-tor Angkola* are ancestral inheritances passed down from generation to generation and must not be altered arbitrarily, as is common in modern dance. According to him, modifying these movements without a customary basis would cause their philosophical meaning to disappear. Therefore, the movement patterns constitute one of the primary aspects that preserve the authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola*.

The performing arts tradition of *barongan* integrates mythological elements into its movements, functioning not only as a form of entertainment for audiences but also as a ritual medium infused with symbolic meaning in each performance. The diverse movement patterns presented in the *Barongan Kusumojoyo* performance generate a dynamic and energetic experience marked by a high degree of spontaneity. These characteristics give the *Barongan Kusumojoyo* art form a distinctive identity that reflects the unique cultural features of coastal artistic traditions [34]. Before the *Tor-tor Angkola* performance begins, a *mengupa* ceremony for the bridal couple is conducted, which serves as a crucial element in the sequence of traditional rituals, Fig. 2. This ceremony symbolizes prayers, support, and well-wishes offered by the extended family and customary elders to the newlyweds. *Mengupa* is understood as a form of strengthening the bond within the newly formed household, as well as the symbolic transfer of social responsibility from the family to the bride and groom. This ritual reflects the values of togetherness, respect, and spirituality inherent in the Angkola tradition. Therefore, the *mengupa* stage reaffirms that the authenticity of the *Tor-tor Angkola* is manifested not only through its dance movements but also through the customary rituals that accompany it.



Fig. 2. The *Mengupa* Ceremony for the Bride and Groom

The *Tor-tor Angkola* dance is a central element in every customary ceremony, as it is regarded as a form of homage to the ancestors and a symbol of communal joy. According to community perspectives, without the *Tor-tor*, a customary event loses its meaning and is considered incomplete. The *Tor-tor* is not merely a form of entertainment; it is also a prayer expressed through movement. This demonstrates that the *Tor-tor Angkola* is an essential component of traditional ceremonies, serving as a medium that connects humans with God and their ancestors. Thus, the *Tor-tor Angkola* functions to preserve the sanctity of customary ceremonies within the Angkola community. Before the *Tor-tor* begins, a procession is carried out by customary representatives as they walk toward the *gelanggangan* (*Tor-tor* performance area), Fig. 3. This procession symbolizes physical and mental readiness as participants enter the sacred space of the ceremony. Walking together toward the site is not merely a physical act but a symbol of unity, solidarity, and reverence for the customary place regarded as sacred. Following this, the procession continues with *Manortor Mora* (the performance by parental representatives). At this stage, the Mora, or the female representative, appears first, as she holds the highest position within the *Daliha Na Tolu* customary system. *Manortor Mora* signifies the offering of prayers and blessings to the bridal couple, as well as the customary approval required for the ceremony to proceed with divine favor. The movements performed are simple yet dignified, reflecting the authority of the Mora as a source of blessings in the household life of the newlyweds.



Fig. 3. The Procession Toward the *Gelanggangan* (*Tor-tor* Dance Arena)

3.3. Social Values in Traditional Ceremonies

The *Marpangir* ritual embodies various values, including cultural, moral, religious, and social values. Over time, the manner of performing the *Marpangir* ritual and the materials used have undergone notable changes. This shift has raised concerns among artists regarding the erosion of traditional values among the younger generation, which has contributed to increasing individualism. This stands in contrast to earlier generations in Mandailing Natal Regency, who were well known for their strong sense of togetherness, reflected in the expression “*Sa*

Pangambe Sa Panaili". The artistic work inspired by this ritual adopts a dramatic form and centers on the concern over changing values within the *Marpangir* tradition. The movements employed draw upon the *Tor-tor* dance of Mandailing Natal, selectively developing gestures to ensure that the intended message and meaning are effectively conveyed [35]. Based on previous studies and the account of Abang Kaya Luat Nasution, customary ceremonies contain social values such as unity, cooperation, and mutual respect among families. He explained that each individual within the community holds specific responsibilities during the preparation phase, throughout the ceremony, and after its completion. These shared responsibilities strengthen social bonds among community members. Meanwhile, H. Muhammad Nur Dalimuthe, SH, further emphasized that customary ceremonies function to reinforce interpersonal relationships. Through such events, families who live far apart are able to reunite, demonstrating that the meaning of customary ceremonies lies not only in their ritual components but also in their social dimension. This highlights that the value of togetherness is a fundamental element in sustaining the existence of the *Tor-tor* within the community.

3.4. The Impact of Modernization

The myth of *sigale-gale* is rooted in a folktale describing the creation of a human-like wooden puppet made as an offering to Raja Rahat, who suffered from grief after losing his son in battle. Traditionally, *sigale-gale* was used in funeral ceremonies for individuals who had no descendants. Over time, however, *sigale-gale* has transformed into a form of performing art aimed at attracting tourists. Its role within the socio-cultural context has shifted from a sacred ritual to a more public and commercial performance. Initially, *sigale-gale* was accompanied only by *Sordam* and *Sabangunan* music ensembles, but contemporary performances now incorporate *gondang*, gongs, and flutes. A typical *sigale-gale* performance involves approximately five to seven dancers [36]. Based on the above discussion, the passage of time has brought significant effects on the presentation of the *Tor-tor* dance. The findings indicate that, along with societal progress, mythological practices once embedded in the *Tor-tor*, such as rituals intended to summon ancestral spirits, have gradually been abandoned. The spread of Islam accelerated this shift, as such practices are viewed as incompatible with religious teachings. Islamic scholars argue that associating the *Tor-tor* with spirits or excessive forms of spiritualism belongs to the past and should be avoided. Although its mystical elements have begun to fade, the *Tor-tor* has not been abandoned. Instead, it has experienced a shift in function. Originally sacred in nature, the *Tor-tor* now also appears in contexts of entertainment and tourism. It is frequently performed at cultural festivals, government events, and other official occasions that do not necessarily carry ritual significance. This illustrates that modernization has created new opportunities for the *Tor-tor* to evolve while still retaining its identity as a cultural heritage.

Modernization has also introduced greater flexibility in the practice of the *Tor-tor*. Whereas in the past every ceremony required permission from the *raja adat*, this requirement has now begun to adjust to contemporary needs. In entertainment settings, the involvement or approval of the *raja adat* is no longer always necessary. However, for significant customary ceremonies such as weddings or *pesta horja*, approval from the *raja adat* is still considered essential as a sign of respect for tradition. In addition to changes in ritual procedures, modernization has influenced the presentation of the *Tor-tor*. Certain movement variations and modern costume elements have begun to be adopted, although customary leaders continue to emphasize the importance of preserving tradition. These changes may be viewed as cultural adaptations to contemporary developments. Nevertheless, if not carefully regulated, there is concern that such adaptations could gradually erode the original values of the *Tor-tor* handed down by the ancestors. The findings reveal differing perspectives within the community regarding the influence of modernization. Some individuals perceive these changes as positive, as they help the *Tor-tor* become more widely recognized and remain relevant in contemporary life. However, others express concern that modernization may diminish the sacredness of the *Tor-tor*, especially if customary rules are no longer respected. These contrasting viewpoints illustrate the inherent tension between preserving tradition and adapting to societal developments. Amid these changes, the role of customary leaders becomes crucial in defining the boundaries between innovation and transgression. Customary leaders strive to ensure that

the *Tor-tor* remains aligned with traditional values, even when presented in more modern forms. In doing so, the *Tor-tor* is able to sustain itself as a symbol of Angkola cultural identity without losing its authentic value. In other words, modernization presents not only challenges but also opportunities for the continuity of the *Tor-tor*. The transition from a sacred function to an entertainment context expands the spaces in which the *Tor-tor* can exist, while customary rules continue to serve as the foundation for safeguarding its authenticity. This highlights that although modernization brings significant changes, the *Tor-tor* endures as a living cultural heritage within the Angkola community.

4. Conclusion

The *Tor-tor* dance plays a highly significant role in the life of the Angkola community, functioning not only as a performing art but also as a medium for prayer, a social connector, and a symbol of customary recognition. Its presence in various traditional ceremonies reflects its deep association with religious, social, and kinship values that have been passed down from generation to generation. The mythological elements once associated with the *Tor-tor*, such as trance practices involving ancestral spirits, have increasingly been abandoned as the community adjusts to religious values and modern ways of thinking. Nevertheless, symbolic elements and religious meanings remain present in the movements, the *gondang* accompaniment, and the *onang-onang* chants that continue to be preserved by the community. This demonstrates an ongoing effort to sustain tradition while remaining grounded in the cultural values inherited from the ancestors. Modernization has brought a dual impact on the continuity of the *Tor-tor*. On one hand, it has diminished some of the sacred values once associated with the dance; on the other hand, it has opened new opportunities for the *Tor-tor* to exist in public spaces, such as cultural festivals, the tourism sector, and government events. Thus, modernization does not eliminate the *Tor-tor* but instead encourages a broader shift in its functions.

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