

An Analysis of The Cultural Meaning of The Osuleng Dance in The Banggai Island Regency

Patrick K R Linggar

Sastra Inggris, Universitas Pembangunan Indonesia Manado, North Sulawesi

✉ email: patricklinggar555@gmail.com

Received:

July 2, 2026

Revised:

July 25, 2026

Accepted:

July 25, 2026

Published:

August 1, 2026

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research are (1) to find out function of the utilized in the Osuleng dance. (2) to get description of elements and roles of the Osuleng dance in the socio-cultural life of the Banggai Islands ethnic (3) to comprehend the symbolic meaning of the 'upturned hand' movement in the Osuleng dance. This research is descriptive qualitative study. The data were taken based on observation of researcher concerning the Osuleng dance. In identifying and analysing the function the role and meaning use semantic theory. Based on the result of the research it can be concluded that in preserving the Osuleng dance by learning it not only as a performance but also as a living philosophy containing values of togetherness, openness, and respect for ancestors. The Osuleng dance should be integrated into the formal and informal education curriculum, such as local content subjects or extracurricular activities in schools, to instil cultural values from an early age.

Keywords: *Cultural Meaning; Osuleng Dance; Banggai Island Regency*

INTRODUCTION

The *Osuleng* dance is typically performed at various traditional events, celebrations, and rituals, which demonstrates the connection between art and the social life of the Banggai Islands ethnic. Through movements followed by several people forming a circle, wearing scarves (cloth) around their necks with both hands raised and extended to the sides, accompanied by traditional musical instruments namely *gendang* and *batong* (*Gong*), this dance conveys symbolic messages related to daily life, beliefs, and hopes of the community. Therefore, analyzing the cultural meanings of the *Osuleng* dance will not only provide insights into aesthetic aspects but also about the social, historical, and spiritual contexts that background it.

Osuleng culture is one of the cultural ceremonies of the Banggai Islands Regency community that holds important values in the lives of the people. The core of this *Osuleng* cultural ceremony is the *Tolak Bala* ritual (disaster avoidance) to avoid the negative impacts that may arise (Moh Farid, 2013). At a broader level, the *Osuleng* dance reflects the interaction between tradition and modernity, as well as how the Banggai Islands community adapts to changing times without losing their identity. Through analyzing

the meanings contained in this dance, we can gain a deeper understanding of the values upheld by the local community, such as togetherness, gratitude, and respect for nature.

By conducting this analysis, it is hoped that it can reveal how the *Osuleng* dance functions as a communication medium that connects generations, strengthens cultural identity, and contributes to the development of cultural tourism in the region. Furthermore, this research also aims to increase public awareness about the importance of preserving local traditions amid the continuously growing currents of modernization. Through a deeper understanding of the cultural meanings of the *Osuleng* dance, it is hoped that the community can better appreciate and preserve the cultural heritage that has existed for a long time.

Research focused is limited to the analysis of the cultural meaning embedded within the *Osuleng* Dance in the Banggai Islands regency. Research does not delve deeply into chronological history or technical aspects of choreography; rather, it emphasizes the symbolic interpretation of movement elements, props, and musical accompaniment as a medium for conveying the philosophical values of the Banggai ethnic.

In general, analysis is the activity of thinking to break down a subject or whole into smaller parts, examine the relationships between those parts, and interpret their meaning to gain a comprehensive understanding. In a general sense, analysis is the process of breaking down a problem or object into smaller parts, observing, examining, and interpreting data or information, and a method of thinking to understand the relationship between the parts and the whole. As stated by Matthew B. Milles and A. Michael Huberman (1992, pp. 16-19) Analysis consists of three simultaneous activities, namely data reduction (the process of selecting and simplifying data), data presentation (presenting a set of findings), and drawing conclusions or verification (searching for meaning, patterns, and explanations from the data). Analysis is a series of logical, rational, systematic, and objective thinking activities that apply scientific methodology in order to examine an object as a whole and break it down into smaller subcomponents (Soejadi, 1997, p. 107).

Analysis is a fundamental ability in thinking that enables humans to understand the complex world by breaking it down into simpler parts. With analysis, we can see structures and patterns, understand cause-and-effect relationships, make better decisions, and solve problems effectively.

From the background of the research that has been stated, the purposes of the research are as follow; (a) To find out function of the utilized in the *Osuleng* dance; (b) To get description of elements and roles of the *Osuleng* dance in the socio-cultural life of the Banggai Islands ethnic; and (c) To comprehend the symbolic meaning of the 'upturned hand' movement in the *Osuleng* dance.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research design. Qualitative research was selected because it aims to understand social and cultural phenomena in depth from the participants' perspective. This method does not rely on statistical data but rather on verbal descriptions and narratives to uncover the meanings behind social and cultural

actions. The primary objective is to obtain a holistic understanding of the cultural meanings contained within the Osuleng Dance.

Data analysis in this research will be conducted interactively and continuously from the beginning to the end of the research. The analysis model used is the Miles and Huberman model, which encompasses three streams of activity: (a) data Reduction: In this stage, the researcher will simplify raw data obtained from the field (observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents) to produce meaningful information and facilitate drawing conclusions; (b) data display: After data reduction, the next step is data presentation. In qualitative research, data presentation can be done in the form of brief descriptions, charts, tables, or descriptive narratives. The purpose of data presentation is to organize information so that it facilitates the researcher's understanding of what is happening and planning subsequent work; (c) conclusion Drawing and Verification: The third step is drawing conclusions and verification. Initial conclusions are tentative and may change if strong supporting evidence is found. However, if the conclusions presented in the initial stage are supported by valid and consistent evidence when the researcher returns to the field, then those conclusions can be considered credible. The conclusion in this study is a new finding regarding the cultural meaning of the Osuleng Dance that has not previously been explained in detail.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Osuleng originates from the Banggai language, meaning "to stand and move," and is a dance performed in pairs or groups involving male and female dancers together. This dance features dynamic movements where the dancers rotate while circling a central point, symbolizing unity and brotherhood.

Based on the data obtained, *Osuleng* dance is one of the traditional dances still preserved in the Banggai Kepulauan region, particularly in wedding ceremonies. Previous research by Moh. Farid (2013) reveals that the *Osuleng* culture must be performed during wedding ceremonies by the people of Oluno Village, Bulagi Subdistrict, Banggai Island Regency. Although it has undergone changes in its execution, the local community continues to maintain the *Osuleng* culture to this day.

Tari Osuleng is often performed alongside other typical Banggai Laut dances, such as *Tari Balatindak*, *Tari Kontao*, *Tari Ridan*, *Tari Toluni*, *Tari Laasia*, and *Tari Lambutati*. The dance gained public attention when a Sanggar Seni from Dusun Lala, Bangkurung, delivered a captivating performance at the Lipu Celebes Festival 2024 held in Banggai Laut Regency.

1. Identification of the Sash Property in *Osuleng* dance

From the data tracing results, the properties used in *Osuleng* dance include various traditional Banggai attire attributes, one of which is the sash or long cloth worn by the dancers. In the context of traditional dance in general, the sash functions as a property worn around the neck or waist of the dancer. Specifically, the sash in *Osuleng* dance has the following characteristics:

a. Analysis of the Sash Function in *Osuleng* Dance

Based on the analysis of the collected data, the functions of the sash in Tari *Osuleng* dance in Banggai Island Regency can be elaborated into three main functions: aesthetic function, symbolic function, and technical function.

Table 1. Summary of the Sling's Functions in *Osuleng* Dance

No	Type of Function	Description	Form in <i>Osuleng</i> Dance
1	Aesthetic Function	Enhancing the appearance and dance movements	Visual dynamics, colors, fabric flow
2	Symbolic Function	Representing cultural values and customary meanings	Symbols of status, social bonds, religious values
3	Technical Function	Supporting the smoothness of the dancer's movements	Dance dynamics, paired harmony

1) Aesthetic Function

The selempang in *Osuleng* dance has a dominant aesthetic function. This function refers to the ability of the dance property to beautify and enhance the dancer's appearance as well as the overall dance movements.

In the context of *Osuleng* dance, the aesthetic function of the sash is embodied through:

- Visual Dynamics of Movement : The characteristic rotating movements around a central point in *Osuleng* dance become more vibrant with the presence of the sash that flutters and flows following the dancer's movements. The flowing sash creates beautiful lines in the air, enriching the visual composition of the dance.
- Addition of Color and Texture : The contrasting colors of the sash against the base costume provide striking color accents. The texture of the fabric as it drapes and billows adds a visual dimension that cannot be achieved by body movements alone.
- Shaping the Dance Character: The use of sash also helps shape the character of *Osuleng* dance as a dynamic yet graceful dance. This aligns with findings from various other traditional dances that utilize shawl or long cloth properties.

2) Symbolic Function

The symbolic function represents the deepest aspect of using the sash in *Osuleng* dance. Based on research conducted on the *Osuleng* culture in Oluno Village, this dance is rich with customary values represented through various elements, including the sash property.

a. Symbol of Social Status

In the context of traditional wedding ceremonies where *Osuleng* dance is typically performed, the sash used can represent the social status of the dancer or the family hosting the event. The quality of the fabric, colors, and manner of wearing the sash serve as markers of specific status within the social structure of the Banggai community.

b. Symbol of Bonds and Attachments

Similar to the function of sash in traditional dances from various regions, the sash in *Osuleng* dance symbolizes bonds. In the context of paired dancing, the presence of the sash can be interpreted as a symbol of the attachment between the male and female dancers, representing marital bonds or social ties within the community.

c. Symbol of Religious and Spiritual Values

The majority Muslim community of Banggai Island also incorporates religious values into their culture. The sash, as a property that covers certain parts of the body, reflects the values of modesty taught in Islamic teachings. This demonstrates how Islamic values are integrated into local traditional arts.

d. Symbol of Togetherness and Brotherhood

The movements of *Osuleng* dance, which circle around a central point, carry meanings of togetherness and brotherhood. In this context, the sash used collectively by the dancers can be interpreted as a symbol of unity and strong communal bonds within the Banggai community.

3) Technical Function

In addition to its aesthetic and symbolic functions, the sash in *Osuleng* dance also serves a technical function related to the smooth execution of dance movements.

a. Physical Description of the Movement (Denotation)

Denotatively or literally, the "upward-facing hands" movement in Tari *Osuleng* can be described as follows:

Denotative Aspect	Description
Palm Position	Facing upward (supination), not clenched, not gripping
Finger Position	Open yet relaxed, not rigid, forming a natural curve
Arm Position	Variable: extended to the sides (in certain movements) or bent with

	elbows close to the body (in other movements)
Height	Generally from waist to chest level, not exceeding the head
Duration	In accordance with the beats of the accompanying music (<i>Batongan</i> music or other traditional instruments)

This movement is always performed simultaneously with both hands, not just one, signifying balance and harmony.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the research as follows: The sash (*selempang*) used in the *Osuleng* dance serves three main functions: aesthetic, symbolic, and technical. Aesthetic Function: The sash enhances the visual dynamics of the dance. Its fluttering and flowing movements, especially during the rotating motions, create beautiful lines, add contrasting colors and textures to the costume, and shape the character of the *Osuleng* dance as dynamic yet graceful. Symbolic Function: The sash carries deep cultural meanings. It symbolizes: *Social status*: The quality, color, and manner of wearing the sash can indicate the dancer's or host family's status. *Bonds and attachments*: In paired dancing, the sash represents marital bonds and social ties within the community. *Religious and spiritual values*: Reflecting Islamic values of modesty, as the sash covers certain parts of the body.

Using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the 'upturned hand' movement (*lente-lente tangan*) carries layered meanings:

Denotative Meaning (Literal): Both palms face upward (supination), fingers are open yet relaxed, arms are extended or bent at the sides, and the movement is performed simultaneously with both hands, following the rhythm of the accompanying music.

Suggestion

Based on the research findings and conclusions, the following suggestions are addressed to various stakeholders.

For the Banggai Islands Community

The community, especially the younger generation, should actively participate in preserving the *Osuleng* dance by learning it not only as a performance but also as a living philosophy containing values of togetherness, openness, and respect for ancestors.

For Local Government (Banggai Islands Regency)

The local government should formulate regional cultural preservation policies that support the *Osuleng* dance, including allocating budgets for art studios, festivals, and documentation efforts. The *Osuleng* dance should be integrated into the formal and informal education curriculum, such as local content subjects or extracurricular activities in schools, to instill cultural values from an early age. The government should promote the *Osuleng* dance as a cultural tourism asset without commodifying or reducing its sacred and symbolic essence..

REFERENCES

- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, music, text*. Hill and Wang.
- Chaer, A. (1994). *Linguistik umum*. Rineka Cipta.
- Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Farid, M. (2013). *Dampak negatif dan positif budaya Osuleng bagi masyarakat Banggai dalam upacara adat pernikahan khususnya di Desa Oluno* [Skripsi, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo].
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.
- Koentjaraningrat. (2009). *Pengantar ilmu antropologi*. Rineka Cipta.
- Lowie, R. H. (1937). *The history of ethnological theory*. Farrar & Rinehart.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1992). *Analisis data kualitatif* (T. R. Rohidi, Penerj.). Universitas Indonesia Press.
- Soedarsono. (2000). *Tari-tarian Indonesia I*. Proyek Pengembangan Media Kebudayaan, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Soedarsono. (2004). *Tari: Sebuah pengantar*. Departemen Pendidikan Nasional.
- Soejadi. (1997). *Pengantar matematika*. Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Sudarmaji. (2015). *Apresiasi seni tari tradisional*. Graha Ilmu.
- Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, Religion, language, art and custom*. John Murray