

LITERATURE STUDY: AESTHETIC VALUES IN THE TRADITIONAL GAME OF *MACEPETAN*

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ABSTRACT

Bali is renowned for its ancestral linguistic and cultural heritage, one of which is traditional games that are gradually being abandoned. Traditional games are not merely a form of entertainment but also carry noble values passed down from generation to generation. One such example is the traditional game of Macepetan, a cultural heritage rich in noble values and aesthetic appeal, yet its existence faces challenges in the modern era. This study was conducted to examine the aesthetic values contained in the Macepetan game. Macepetan, derived from the word "cepet" meaning agile, is a game that requires agility, speed, and cooperation among players. The method used is a qualitative approach with literature review, including text analysis from the documentation "Traditional Games of Bali" (1986) and other relevant sources. The findings reveal that Macepetan not only serves as a form of entertainment but also embodies noble values such as sportsmanship, cooperation, and fairness. This game reflects important aesthetic, social, and moral aspects in shaping children's character. Thus, this study is expected to enrich the understanding of the aesthetic values of traditional games as an integral part of the nation's cultural identity.

Keywords: *Literature review, Aesthetic Values, Traditional Games, Macepetan*

1. INTRODUCTION

Bali, as an island rich in cultural heritage, has various forms of traditional games that reflect the noble values of the local community. Traditional games are a form of intangible cultural heritage that not only serve as a means of entertainment, but also embody noble values that shape the character and identity of the community¹. One of Bali's traditional games that is still played today is *Macepetan*, a game that requires agility, speed, and cooperation between players. The word *Macepetan* itself comes from the Balinese root word *cepat*, which means agile or quick, emphasizing.

The nature of the game, which requires speed of movement and quick thinking². The game of *Macepetan* is generally played by two groups of children of equal strength, both in terms of numbers and physical ability. In practice, this game not only trains the body, but also instills the values of sportsmanship, cooperation, and positive group fanaticism. Additionally, *Macepetan* also has aesthetic aspects, both in terms of movement, interaction patterns, and rules of play that have been passed down orally from generation to generation.

The study of traditional games such as *Macepetan* is highly relevant, especially from a philological perspective. Philology, as a discipline that studies texts, oral traditions, and cultural artifacts, plays an important role in reconstructing the history, meaning, and aesthetic values contained in folk games³. Philological studies play an important role in the preservation and deep understanding of intangible cultural heritage, including traditional games. Philology is not only related to the study of ancient texts, but also includes analysis of cultural documentation in various forms, including ethnographic records of traditional games⁴. Through a philological approach, it is possible to reconstruct, interpret, and conduct in-depth analysis of the cultural aspects contained in traditional games⁵. Documentation of traditional games in scientific works such as the book "*Permainan Rakyat Daerah Bali*" (Traditional Games of the Balinese People), published in 1986, is a valuable primary source in the context of philological studies. This work not only records the forms of games, but also the socio-cultural context in which these games developed, so that from a philological perspective, this document can be treated as a "text" that requires critical analysis to understand the meaning and value contained within it⁶.

Macepetan is one of Bali's traditional games documented in the 1986 publication "*Permainan Rakyat Daerah Bali*" (Traditional Games of Bali) and reflects the local wisdom of the Balinese people in developing recreational activities that are not only entertaining but also rich in educational and aesthetic values. From an etymological perspective, the word "*Macepetan*" originates from the Balinese language and indicates the specific characteristics of this game. A philological analysis of this term can provide an understanding of the basic concepts behind the game, including the philosophy and values that are conveyed through the activity of playing. This game is not only part of the oral tradition of the Balinese people, but also a representation of the value system and worldview embraced by the community at that time⁷.

¹ Cahyani et al., "Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Karakter dan Budaya Melalui Permainan Tradisional Pada Siswa Sekolah Dasar."

² Manuara, "Permainan Tradisional Macepetan sebagai Media Pendidikan Bahasa Bali Yang Menyenangkan Pada Siswa Kelas 4 Sekolah Dasar Negeri 1 Bongkasa."

³ Suci et al., "Kajian Filologi dan Hakikat Ilmu Rasa dalam Naskah Raos Jawi."

⁴ Fahmi, "Kajian Filologi pada Perubahan Sintaksis dan Morfologis Arab."

⁵ Aprianto, "Cerita Pandai Besi dalam Sêrat Rama, Arjunawiwaha, Saha Kempalan Dongeng : Kajian Filologi dan Kritik Respon Pembaca."

⁶ Astuti, Hardyanto, dan Kurnia, "Naskah Adji's (Sentolo): Kajian Filologi."

⁷ Manuara, "Permainan Tradisional Macepetan sebagai Media Pendidikan Bahasa Bali Yang Menyenangkan Pada Siswa Kelas 4 Sekolah Dasar Negeri 1 Bongkasa."

However, philological research on traditional games in Bali is still very limited. This is due to the lack of written literature and the dominance of oral transmission in the preservation of these games. Many aspects of the history and socio-culture of Balinese folk games, including *Macepetan*, have not been scientifically and systematically documented, requiring in-depth study to uncover their origins, development, and values. From an aesthetic point of view, traditional games in Bali not only emphasize entertainment, but also cultural values such as togetherness, honesty, creativity, discipline, and sportsmanship. Aesthetics in this context are not only limited to the beauty of the movements or forms of the games, but also to the social harmony and symbolic meanings contained within them.⁸ A philological study of *Macepetan* can open up new insights into how these aesthetic values have been passed down, interpreted, and practiced by Balinese society over time.

Studies on aesthetic values in the traditional game of *Macepetan* are highly relevant in the context of cultural preservation and character education development, especially in this era of globalization when traditional games face serious challenges from the dominance of modern and digital game⁹. The philological approach in this study allows researchers to not only describe the game, but also explore hidden meanings, analyze changes that have occurred over time, and reconstruct the cultural context behind the game.¹⁰ This study will use a philological approach with a focus on analyzing the text "*Permainan Rakyat Daerah Bali*" (1986) as a primary source through textual analysis for an in-depth study of the description of the games, contextual analysis to understand the socio-cultural context at the time of documentation, comparative analysis with other traditional games that have similar characteristics, and aesthetic analysis to identify and interpret the aesthetic values contained in the games.

The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach that combines the study of art, culture, and character education. Recent research shows that traditional games have religious, nationalistic, integrity, independence, and mutual cooperation values, and can foster positive attitudes. In the game of *Macepetan*, aesthetic value is not only seen from visual beauty alone, but also from aspects of social harmony, local wisdom, and the transmission of cultural values contained within it. Traditional games train sensory skills, mathematical abilities, social and motor interactions, and highlight aesthetic values or beauty. This approach provides a new dimension in understanding traditional games as a medium for preserving a living and sustainable cultural aesthetic.

This research is expected to contribute to cultural preservation through the academic documentation and analysis of the aesthetic values contained in traditional Balinese games, particularly the *Macepetan* game. Through a philological approach, this study highlights the aesthetic richness of *Macepetan* as an integral element of Bali's cultural heritage and the nation's cultural identity

2. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method¹¹. A literature study was chosen because this research aims to examine and analyze the aesthetic values contained in the traditional game of *Macepetan* through a review of various relevant sources. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because this study sought to understand socio-cultural phenomena in depth and interpretatively, particularly in relation to aesthetic values that are subjective and complex in the context of traditional games. The approach used in

⁸ Ardhiyasa dan Wirajaya, "Kajian Estetika Melayu Klasik Dalam Syair Ibadat."

⁹ Rizal, "Nilai Estetika dan Pendidikan Naskah Singir Mitera Sejati dan Ngudi Susila Karya Kiai Bisri Musthofa."

¹⁰ Yulianti, Sariada, dan Marajaya, "Nilai Estetika Musik Iringan Drama Tari 'The Blessing of Siva-Visvapujita.'"

¹¹ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R&D*.

this study was a descriptive-analytical approach with an interpretative paradigm. This study sought to describe and analyze the aesthetic values in the traditional game of *Macepetan* based on an in-depth literature review. The interpretive paradigm was chosen because aesthetic values in traditional culture require contextual understanding and deep interpretation of the symbolism and philosophy contained therein. The descriptive-analytical approach allows researchers to not only describe the phenomena found in the literature, but also to analyze and interpret the deeper meaning of these aesthetic values.

The data sources in this study are divided into two main categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data includes reference books on traditional Indonesian games, scientific journals that specifically discuss the traditional game of *Macepetan*, academic articles on aesthetic values in traditional culture, and official documentation from cultural institutions. Meanwhile, secondary data consists of popular articles and news about traditional games, photo and video documentation of *Macepetan* games, official local government websites discussing local culture, and previous research reports relevant to the research topic. The selection of diverse data sources aims to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth perspective on the aesthetic value of the traditional game of *Macepetan*. Data collection was carried out using two main techniques, namely literature study and documentation.

The literature study was conducted by searching for literature from various sources, including university and regional libraries, online journal databases such as Google Scholar, educational institution repositories, and national and international scientific publication portals. The documentation technique was carried out by collecting supporting documents in the form of photographs of the traditional game of *Macepetan*, documentary videos or recordings of the game, newspaper and magazine articles, and official government documents related to cultural preservation. The data collection process was carried out systematically using relevant keywords and structured search strategies to ensure the completeness and relevance of the data obtained.

3. LITERATUR REVIEW

There are very few sources related to the traditional game of *Macepetan* that discuss the ins and outs of this traditional game. However, there are several pieces of literature that discuss the traditional game of *Macepetan*. The first literature study is a book about Balinese Folk Games published in 1986 as part of the Balinese Regional Culture Inventory and Documentation Project, located in the Kirtya Building library in Singaraja, Bali ¹².

Figure 1. Cover of the book *Permainan Rakyat Bali* (Balinese Folk Games)
Source: Personal collection

In addition, there is research conducted by I Gede Sugata Yadhya Manuara (2017), "The Traditional Game of *Macepetan* as a Fun Medium for Teaching Balinese Language to Fourth Grade Students at Sekolah Dasar Negeri 1 Bongkasa." The results of his research explain that the potential of the traditional game of *Macepetan* in instilling the pillars of Balinese language education can be proven by the many connections between traditional games (the traditional game of *Macepetan*). The implementation of traditional *Macepetan* games can be carried out in order to foster interest among the younger generation of Bali to continue using the Balinese language through the family environment (informal), school environment (formal), and community environment (non-formal) ¹³.

Previous researchers have conducted field-based studies utilizing the traditional game of *Macepetan* as a learning medium. However, no studies have

¹² (Mayun 1986)

¹³ Manuara, "Permainan Tradisional Macepetan sebagai Media Pendidikan Bahasa Bali Yang Menyenangkan Pada Siswa Kelas 4 Sekolah Dasar Negeri 1 Bongkasa."

been found that reveal information about the aesthetic values contained in the traditional game of *Macepetan*. Therefore, this study is important because it will provide new information about the aesthetic values in the traditional game of *Macepetan* and is expected to provide a more holistic understanding of Balinese culture.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Aesthetic Values in the Traditional Game of Macepetan

Figure 2. Illustration of the traditional game of *Macepetan*

Source: Personal documents

Based on literature analysis, the traditional game of *Macepetan* contains various aesthetic values that can be identified through various aspects of the game:

(a) Aesthetics of Movement and Agility

Macepetan showcases the beauty of dynamic movements through blocking, dodging, and attacking. These movements create an aesthetic pattern involving hand coordination, footwork, and body twists, forming visual harmony in the game. The agility displayed is not just physical skill, but an art combining speed, precision, and coordination. Players must quickly move to avoid their opponent while trying to touch an agreed part of their body. This harmony creates a captivating visual spectacle, where unplanned actions form an aesthetically pleasing movement. The beauty also lies in the players' adaptability to game conditions. In *Macepetan* with a center line, players must work in limited space, while in *Macepetan awuran*, freedom allows greater movement exploration, resulting in varied aesthetics, from controlled to expressive.

(b) Social and Democratic Aesthetics

The social aesthetic value is evident in the democratic and populist nature of the game. It breaks down social barriers such as caste and economic status, creating a beautiful sense of togetherness that transcends the social stratification of Balinese society. In the context of Balinese society, which traditionally recognizes a caste system, *Macepetan* provides a social space that allows for interaction across strata regardless of the socioeconomic background of the participants. This democratic beauty is also reflected in the process of dividing groups, which prioritizes balance and fairness. Children naturally develop a system that takes into account differences in physical abilities and individual skills, creating a balanced and enjoyable competition for all parties ¹⁴. There is no external

¹⁴ (Yulianti dan Marheni 2021)

authority regulating this division; everything happens through consensus and mutual agreement that reflects the values of participatory democracy. The social aesthetics of *Macepetan* can also be seen in its inclusiveness of various age groups. Although it is generally played by children aged 5-15 years, before the 1950s adults also participated by grouping themselves according to their age categories. This phenomenon shows that this game has a universal appeal that is able to unite different generations in the same activity, creating cultural continuity between generations.

(c) Musical Aesthetics

There is an aesthetic musical dimension in the form of accompanying songs. Although rarely used due to the children's enthusiasm to immediately compete, these songs demonstrate an awareness of the importance of musical accompaniment in traditional games. The lyrics of these songs not only serve as accompaniment, but also contain moral messages and game rules that are conveyed in an easy-to-remember form. The musical aspect of *Macepetan* reflects the oral tradition of Balinese society, which is rich in songs and mantras. These accompanying songs serve as a medium for cultural transmission, conveying values and game rules from generation to generation¹⁵. The use of the *Macepetan* song as a warm-up activity in elementary education illustrates its aesthetic potential for integration into formal learning contexts.

(d) The Aesthetics of Justice and Balance

The group division system in *Macepetan* embodies the aesthetic value of fairness. Rules for stronger players, such as playing with one hand (*nganehin*) or one foot (*nengkleng*), emerge organically as creative means of maintaining balance. These limitations function not as penalties but as artistic challenges that enhance the game's visual and performative appeal. The concept of *sapih* (draw) further reflects an aesthetic appreciation of balanced outcomes and sustainable competition.

(e) Temporal Aesthetics

Macepetan features a distinctive temporal rhythm, played at dusk during the dry season and bright moon phases. This timing creates an aesthetic atmosphere that harmonizes with Bali's natural environment, enhancing the visual drama of the game. The concept of a "game season" reflects an awareness of natural cycles, as play is aligned with optimal weather and lunar conditions. Children's intuitive sense of timing, based on environmental cues rather than formal schedules, embodies a traditional aesthetic that emphasizes living in harmony with nature's rhythms, producing beauty that is both visual and philosophical.

(f) Spatial Aesthetics

The use of space in games, whether limited (with a center line) or free (*Macepetan awuran*), demonstrates an aesthetic awareness of the use of space as a strategic and beautiful element of the game. In *Macepetan* with a center line, the division of space into two symmetrical parts creates a balanced and orderly visual composition. The center line not only functions as a boundary, but also as an aesthetic element that provides visual structure to the game. The flexibility in choosing the location of the game—from home yards, schools, temples, to

¹⁵ Jaya, "Kajian Antropologi, Semiotika, Estetika Dan Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Permainan Tradisional Kul Kuk."

highways—shows the aesthetic adaptability of *Macepetan* to various spatial contexts. The absence of standard dimensions for the playing field allows for creative freedom in using the available space, creating unique aesthetic variations according to the characteristics of each location. This reflects an aesthetic principle that prioritizes essence over formal form. In *Macepetan awuran*, total spatial freedom creates a different aesthetic dynamic. Without spatial constraints, players can explore the entire available area, creating more complex and unpredictable movement patterns. The concepts of “*bokongan*” (sheltered place) and “*bisen/misen*” (attack from behind) demonstrate an aesthetic understanding of spatial architecture and spatial strategy that adds to the visual complexity of the game.

(g) Estetika Moral

The concept of “*saalem-putih*” (seeking truth between black as dishonesty and white as purity) demonstrates a deep moral aesthetic value in resolving game conflicts. This color symbolism reflects an aesthetic understanding of the fundamental moral dualism in Balinese culture. The use of color metaphors to explain moral concepts shows that aesthetics and ethics are closely intertwined in this traditional game. The process of searching for “*saalem-putih*” through a rematch between two conflicting players creates a special aesthetic moment. All other players stop playing and watch closely, creating a focus of attention that increases the dramatic intensity.

This situation shows that conflict resolution in *Macepetan* is not only a technical matter, but also an aesthetic moment that requires collective appreciation of the process of searching for truth. The absence of a referee in the game of *Macepetan* demonstrates a moral aesthetic that relies on personal honesty and integrity. Each player is responsible for upholding the rules and acknowledging defeat fairly, creating a moral beauty based on mutual trust. This system teaches that moral aesthetics do not require external authority, but can arise from collective consciousness and personal commitment to the values of truth and justice.

5. CONCLUSION

The traditional game of *Macepetan*, derived from the Balinese word “*cepat*” (fast), emphasizes agility and speed in blocking, dodging, and attacking, passed down through generations in Bali. Its origins are unclear but may be linked to *Badung* and *Buleleng* regions and the influence of *pencak silat*. Usually played by village children in the late afternoon during a full moon, the game offers entertainment as well as deep aesthetic, social, and moral values like fairness, cooperation, and creativity. It also creates an inclusive social space where children from diverse backgrounds interact regardless of caste or social status, strengthening unity and togetherness.

The aesthetic values in *Macepetan* go beyond play. Its focus on agility, speed, and fluid movements creates a dynamic visual and performative experience reflecting Balinese artistic sensibilities. The game’s rhythms, use of space, and cooperative interactions show high aesthetic awareness balancing beauty, fairness, and social harmony. *Macepetan* serves as both cultural entertainment and an expression of community identity and creativity. Preserving it means safeguarding a living art form embodying harmony between movement, space, and social values in Balinese tradition.

Researchers interested in the traditional game *Macepetan* are encouraged to conduct deeper studies on its cultural, social, and educational aspects. Focus can be on how *Macepetan* influences children’s character development and its potential integration into formal education to teach collaboration, problem-solving, and resilience. Additionally, exploring regional variations and the game’s adaptation to changing social contexts is important.

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