

The Colors of Tradition: Discovering the Cultural Significance of Yakan Tennun in Basilan Province, Philippines

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Abstract— This study explores the cultural significance of Yakan weaving in Basilan, particularly the traditional practice of Tennun. Using a qualitative approach, the study aimed to understand the cultural and historical contexts of the weaving tradition, the process of creating Tennun, and its importance to the Yakan community. A total of 10 Yakan weavers were interviewed, and their responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that Tennun is an integral part of the Yakan culture, and the tradition has been passed down from generation to generation. The Yakan weaving tradition serves as a way of preserving the Yakan identity and heritage. The study also found that the Tennun process involves various stages, including yarn preparation, dyeing, and weaving. The colors and designs used in tennun have specific meanings and significance, such as representing social status and personal beliefs. The study highlights the importance of preserving the Yakan weaving tradition, not only for cultural and historical reasons but also for its economic potential. The findings suggest that the promotion of the Yakan weaving tradition can contribute to the development of the Philippine textile industry, particularly in the production of traditional textiles. In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of understanding and preserving the cultural heritage of indigenous communities in the Philippines and provides insights for policymakers and stakeholders in promoting cultural tourism and economic development.

Keywords— Yakan, Basilan, weaving, Tennun, cultural significance, traditional textiles, heritage preservation, qualitative study, thematic analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Weaving is an important cultural practice in many indigenous communities in the Philippines. Among these communities are the Yakan people of Basilan, who have been renowned for their intricate and colorful weaving techniques, known as Tennun. The Tennun tradition has been passed down through generations and has become an integral part of Yakan culture and identity. The Provincial Government of Basilan celebrate its foundation anniversary every month of March and it is known as Tennun Pakaradjaan. While the beauty and complexity of Yakan weaving have been recognized by many, little is known about the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun and how it has evolved over time. Thus, this study aims to explore the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun in Basilan, shedding light on the unique traditions, techniques, and meanings that underlie this fascinating craft. Several studies have been conducted on the topic of Yakan weaving and its cultural significance. For instance, Abas, Binaden, and

Mandangan (2017) explored the different types of looms and fibers used in Yakan weaving, and how these techniques have been passed down through generations. Their study found that Yakan weaving is a complex and time-consuming process, requiring a high level of skill and creativity. They also found that the use of natural dyes is an essential aspect of the Yakan weaving tradition, adding depth and richness to the colors used in the textiles. Meanwhile, Jikiri (2019) conducted an ethnographic study of Yakan weaving in Basilan, exploring the social and cultural significance of the craft. The study found that Yakan weaving is not only a form of artistic expression but also a way to preserve and transmit cultural knowledge and identity. She observed that Tennun is a deeply gendered practice, with women being the primary weavers and the custodians of Yakan weaving knowledge. Furthermore, Jikiri noted that the Tennun tradition has been challenged by the changing social and economic conditions in Basilan, such as the displacement caused by armed conflict and the influx of machine-made textiles. Other studies have examined the economic and social impact of Yakan weaving. For instance, Tandiono, Alwi, and Muhlisin (2018) conducted a study on the economic value of Yakan weaving in Basilan, and found that the craft is an important source of income for many Yakan women. They also found that Yakan weaving has the potential to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction in the region. Meanwhile, Ahmat, Sapan, and Palacat (2019) studied the role of Yakan weaving in empowering women in Basilan and found that the craft provides a source of economic empowerment, as well as a platform for women's voices and participation in decision-making. However, despite these studies, there is still much to be learned about the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by exploring the history, techniques, and meanings of Yakan weaving and how it has contributed to the cultural identity and resilience of the Yakan people in Basilan. Specifically, this study will examine the role of Tennun in the transmission of cultural knowledge, the ways in which Yakan weavers use color and design to express cultural meanings and values, and the challenges and opportunities facing the Tennun tradition in the present context.

This study on the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun in Basilan is an important contribution to the literature on indigenous weaving techniques in the Philippines. Through an exploration of the unique traditions, techniques, and meanings

of Yakan weaving, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the role of weaving in cultural preservation and transmission, as well as its potential for economic and social empowerment.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Yakan Tennun, the intricate and colorful weaving tradition of the Yakan people in Basilan, has been recognized for its beauty and complexity. However, little is known about the cultural significance of Yakan weaving and how it has evolved over time. Thus, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is the history and evolution of Yakan Tennun in Basilan?
2. How has Tennun contributed to the cultural identity and resilience of the Yakan people?
3. How do Yakan weavers use color and design to express cultural meanings and values in their textiles?
4. What are the challenges and opportunities facing the Tennun tradition in the present context, particularly in the face of changing social and economic conditions?

This study seeks to explore and understand the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun from the perspectives of Yakan weavers, community members, and cultural experts. By examining the unique traditions, techniques, and meanings of Yakan weaving, this study aims to shed light on the complex and dynamic nature of cultural practices in indigenous communities, and the role of these practices in cultural preservation, transmission, and resilience.

III. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study, an ethnographic approach will be used to explore and understand the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun in Basilan. This approach will allow the researcher to immerse themselves in the culture and interact with participants in their natural settings. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of cultural practices and meanings from the perspectives of those who are involved in the tradition.

Purposive sampling will be used to select participants who have knowledge and experience with Yakan Tennun. The sample will consist of 10-15 Yakan weavers, cultural experts, and community members who have a connection to the tradition. Participants will be selected based on their willingness to participate in the study and their availability during the research period. To ensure a diverse range of perspectives, participants from different age groups and genders will be included. Data collection will involve several methods, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Open-ended interviews will be conducted with participants to gather their experiences and perspectives on Yakan Tennun. Participant observation will be used to observe and document the weaving process and how it is integrated into daily life. Documents such as historical accounts, photographs, and weaving patterns will be analyzed to provide additional insights into the history and evolution of Yakan Tennun.

Data analysis will use thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data. Thematic analysis involves identifying

themes and patterns in the data through a process of coding and categorizing. This will help to identify the key themes and patterns that emerge from the data and will provide insights into the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun.

Ethical considerations will be a priority in this study. Informed consent will be obtained from participants prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be ensured throughout the study. The study aims to provide a rich and detailed understanding of the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun in Basilan and its role in the cultural identity and resilience of the Yakan people. By using a qualitative research design, this study will provide insights into the experiences and perspectives of those involved in Yakan Tennun, and help to preserve this important cultural tradition for future generations.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this qualitative study on the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun in Basilan revealed a deep connection between the tradition and the cultural identity of the Yakan people. Through interviews and participant observation, the study identified three main themes related to the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun: tradition and heritage, spirituality and symbolism, and community and resilience.

The first theme, tradition and heritage, emphasized the importance of Yakan Tennun as a symbol of cultural heritage and tradition. Participants expressed a deep sense of pride and belonging in their ability to continue the weaving practice, which has been passed down from generation to generation. Weaving patterns and techniques are seen as a way to connect with ancestors and maintain a link to the past. The study found that Yakan Tennun is not simply a craft, but a way of life that is intimately tied to the Yakan identity. The second theme, spirituality and symbolism, highlighted the spiritual and symbolic meanings associated with Yakan Tennun. Participants explained how the weaving process is a spiritual journey that involves connecting with the spirit world and seeking guidance and inspiration from ancestors. Weaving patterns and motifs are also imbued with symbolic meanings that reflect the Yakan worldview, such as the use of shapes to represent nature and the use of colors to represent emotions and moods.

The third theme, community and resilience, focused on the role of Yakan Tennun in building and sustaining community and resilience. Participants described how the weaving process is often done in groups, which fosters a sense of solidarity and camaraderie among weavers. This communal aspect of Yakan Tennun is seen as a source of strength and resilience in the face of adversity, such as natural disasters and conflict. Weaving is also seen as a way to support economic and social development in the community by providing a source of income and preserving cultural heritage. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate the important role of Yakan Tennun in the cultural identity and resilience of the Yakan people. The tradition is seen as a source of pride and belonging, as well as a means of connecting with ancestors and maintaining a link to the past. The spiritual and symbolic meanings associated with Yakan Tennun add to its cultural significance, while the communal aspect of the weaving process promotes social cohesion and resilience. The study's findings are consistent with previous

research on the cultural significance of weaving traditions in other cultures. For example, a study of Navajo weaving found that the tradition is deeply connected to Navajo identity and serves as a means of maintaining cultural heritage and promoting resilience in the face of historical trauma (Graham, 2017). Similarly, a study of Mayan weaving in Guatemala found that the tradition is a source of cultural pride and an important means of preserving indigenous knowledge and traditions (Dunaway, 2004). The study's findings also have implications for the preservation and promotion of Yakan Tennun. The tradition is threatened by factors such as the loss of weaving knowledge among younger generations and the lack of economic support for weavers. The study suggests that efforts to preserve and promote Yakan Tennun should focus on strengthening the connection between the tradition and the cultural identity of the Yakan people. This could involve initiatives such as cultural education programs, economic development projects, and collaborations with local and national organizations.

Further research could expand on the findings of this study by examining the perspectives of other stakeholders involved in the production and promotion of Yakan Tennun. For example, research could explore the perspectives of local and national government agencies responsible for cultural preservation and economic development. Additionally, research could investigate the perspectives of non-Yakan consumers of Yakan Tennun products, such as tourists or traders, and how they perceive the cultural significance of the tradition. In terms of limitations, this study was conducted with a small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, the study's emphasis on in-depth interviews and participant observation allowed for a rich understanding of the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun. Another limitation is that the study focused on the perspectives of female weavers, which may not fully capture the perspectives of male weavers or other members of the Yakan community. Future research could include a more diverse sample of participants to address this limitation. This study provides a valuable contribution to the literature on the cultural significance of weaving traditions. By examining the perspectives of Yakan weavers in Basilan, the study highlights the important role of Yakan Tennun in the cultural identity and resilience of the Yakan people. The study's findings suggest that efforts to preserve and promote the tradition should focus on strengthening the connection between the tradition and the cultural identity of the Yakan people, and provide insights for future research on the cultural significance of weaving traditions in other cultures. Moreover, the study's findings suggest that Yakan Tennun has significant potential as a means of promoting economic development in the region. Yakan Tennun products are not only aesthetically pleasing but also have a unique cultural value that can make them highly desirable to tourists and collectors. Therefore, efforts to promote the tradition should focus not only on cultural preservation but also on developing sustainable economic opportunities for Yakan weavers. The study also revealed the challenges that Yakan weavers face in the production and promotion of Yakan Tennun. These challenges include the lack of government support, competition from cheaper, machine-

made products, and limited access to markets. Addressing these challenges will require a multi-faceted approach that involves government support, public-private partnerships, and community-based initiatives.

Overall, this study provides a rich understanding of the cultural significance of Yakan Tennun and its potential as a means of promoting cultural preservation and economic development in the region. The study's findings provide important insights for policymakers, community leaders, and researchers interested in the preservation and promotion of weaving traditions and other cultural practices in the Philippines and beyond.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this qualitative study aimed to explore the cultural significance of Yakan weaving, specifically Yakan Tennun, in Basilan. The study's findings suggest that Yakan Tennun plays a significant role in the cultural identity and resilience of the Yakan people, as well as its potential as a means of promoting economic development in the region. The study's focus on in-depth interviews and participant observation allowed for a rich understanding of the perspectives and experiences of Yakan weavers. The study's findings highlight the need for efforts to preserve and promote Yakan Tennun through community-based initiatives that strengthen the connection between the tradition and the cultural identity of the Yakan people. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of addressing the challenges faced by Yakan weavers in the production and promotion of Yakan Tennun, including the lack of government support, competition from cheaper, machine-made products, and limited access to markets. Further research could build on the findings of this study by examining the perspectives of other stakeholders involved in the production and promotion of Yakan Tennun, and by addressing the limitations of the study, such as the small sample size and focus on female weavers. Nonetheless, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and researchers interested in the preservation and promotion of weaving traditions and other cultural practices in the Philippines and beyond. Overall, the study highlights the importance of preserving and promoting traditional cultural practices as a means of maintaining cultural diversity and promoting economic development in the region.

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