

Torajan's Pray through Carving in Rampanan Kapa' Semiotics Perspective)

Normalia Sirande¹

Judith Ratu Tandi Arrang²

Linerda Tulaktondok³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja, Indonesia

¹normaliasirande@ukitoraja.ac.id

²judithratu87@gmail.com

³linerda@ukitoraja.ac.id

Abstract

Toraja is one of the tribes in Indonesia that gets a legacy of carving motifs as a means of teaching for posterity of their ancestors. This research aimed to find the types of carving motifs used in the decoration of traditional wedding events in Toraja. This research used qualitative research methods of ethnographic type and purposive sampling techniques. The results of this study found at least fifteen types of carving motifs that have been used in decorations for traditional wedding events, *Rampanan Kapa'*, by Torajan. The carving motifs are *Pa'tukku pare* means an invitation for the bride and the groom to be humble, *Pa' lolok tabang* means a pray to believe that the base of their new family is God, *Pa' bungkang tasik* means a pray for a safe distant journey, *Pa' tangke lumu'* means a pray to become a positive source of energy for the surroundings, *Pa' erong* means a pray for the family to show respect and sacrifice to God along their life, *Pa' Bombo wai* means that the family will be able to face their challenges calmly, *pa' bare' allo* means a pray to be a light to others, *Pa' batang lau* means they will be in a true brotherhood, *Pa' kapu' baka* means a pray to keep their privacy or secret as husband and wife during their life journey, *Pa'bulintong* means a process of maturation, *Passekong kandaure* means togetherness and harmony in diversity, *Pa' tedong* means the highest sign of love, *Pa' bulu londong* means dare to defend the truth and protect the weak, *Passora* means the highest mark of respect for the man to the Divine, and *Pa' poya mundan* means capturing humility. It can be concluded that the fifteen carving motifs contain prayers and hopes from all those who attended the *Kapa' Rampanan* event for both brides.

Keywords: *meaning, semiotic, carving motifs, Torajan's wedding, Rampanan Kapa'*

Introduction

Regional culture is part of the national culture. Regional culture serves as a forum to build togetherness and also become the wealth of the nation. ¹Culture also serves as a whistleblower of habits or the results of activities carried out by a group of people. So, to recognize every habit in the local community, it can be seen from the culture.

Each region has its own culture that lives and develops in a society not genetically but through social interactions involving the exchange of information through symbols.² However, the problem here is the lack of sources of information that can be learned by the younger generation. The same problem has also been expressed

by Johana R. Tangirerung that the use of symbols through carving is less attention, so the use of motifs is poorly understood by those who use them. This is a threat to the preservation of culture in society. This problem is also experienced by the Toraja community in the preservation of its cultural wealth, namely carving.³

Toraja has a variety of cultural and literary uniqueness that needs attention, especially from the younger generation to be studied as a step to preserve the culture. The culture that is intended includes the traditional ceremony rambu *Solo'*, which even makes the name Toraja known for the ritual of death, Rambu *Tuka'*, tourist attractions and carvings. One of the uniqueness of Toraja culture is the carving motif on traditional Toraja houses, ⁴*Tongkonan*, and also in barns that contain very high values. The values implied in each carving motif are believed to be the way the ancestors of the Toraja people in educating generations. The carvings are installed all over the outside of the body of the house with the aim that their descendants can learn at any time looking at the ⁵*Tongkonan house*.⁶

There are several researchers who have done similar studies. Paganna has deciphered the carved motifs in the Tongkonan house as well as their meaning. The study of meaning here uses a semiotic approach to analyze the meaning of carved motifs. The same study was also conducted by Sande who raised about carving motifs with symbols of plants, animals, and celestial bodies. Next, Ramadan examined the meaning of ornamental carvings on the arch of Sunan Drajat tomb as the cultural heritage of the archipelago. The results found meaning that indicates a process of human life begins to be born, live socializing with others as well as in relation to their God, and towards eternal life with every charity during his life. Finally, Johana R. Tangirerung conducted a study of the meaning of carvings on the Tongkonan wall from a theological point of view. ⁷⁸⁹¹⁰

This research raises the study of the meaning of the motifs used in the decoration of the Kapa' Rampanan event in Toraja. Compared to the above studies, this study specifically discusses the meaning of carving motifs used in decorations in Rambu *Tuka'*, Rampanan Kapa' in Toraja, with data collection in Buntao's District.

Rampanan Kapa' or commonly referred to as Rambu *Tuka* is a traditional Toraja wedding party. According to Palembang (2017: 123-124), *Rampanan Kapa'* is the process of the implementation of marriage among Toraja community. It is considered the first order in Toraja cultural values. The marriage provisions of the Toraja people are widely associated with the social layering of derivative communities. According to Lembang (2012: 102), *Rampanan Kapa'* or *Rambu Tuka'* is an offering that contains hope, joy, and gratitude to *Puang Matua*, the God and spirit of all His blessings, regarding success in the effort or intention achieved.

The Ceremony of *Rampanan Kapa'* or *Rambu Tuka'* is a traditional way that emphasizes more on the thanksgiving ceremony. In this ceremony, there will be no sadness or wailing of tears. There is only joy and joy.

One form of joy felt by the Toraja people in *Rampanan Kapa'* with the creation of a wedding place to sit and stand to welcome the invitees present at the event. The mirror also uses a cloth full of Toraja carvings. The carving is used according to the strata of the bride-to-be. Carvings are made using special carving tools on a wooden plank, pole, custom house, windows, or doors, and those printed on fabric using special tools. Not the origin of the carving, every carving motif from Tana Toraja has a unique name and meaning. Regularity of involvement is a common feature in Toraja wood carvings. In addition, Tana Toraja's carvings have abstract and geometric properties. Plants and animals are often used as the basis of the Toraja ornament.

The basic understanding of the Toraja people, according to *Aluk Todolo*, about marriage has been determined in *langi'* (sky = upper world). Today the prototype of human marriage on Toraja earth refers more to the process of marriage *Datu 'Laukku'* with *Totabang Dua di langi'* conducted by *Puang Matua*. But after western influence, especially the teachings of Christianity, the marriage process was adjusted to the beliefs of each party but did not abandon the rules of *Aluk Todolo*.

Kapa' is the agreement held at the inauguration of the wedding. In the event of a divorce, couples who violate the marriage promise must pay *kapa'* (fine) to the party who is not in trouble. The value of *kapa'* is measured in buffalo according to the social strata of society, except for the *kaunan* (servant) group in pig.

Method

This research uses qualitative methods to describe the meaning contained in the Toraja carvings used in the *Kapa' Rampanan* ritual in *Buntao'*, North Toraja. The participants for this study were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. Three individuals were involved in this study: the cultural practitioner, the engravers, and the researchers. Data collection methods included observation and interviewing. The researcher analyzed the data through the following steps: 1) data reduction, 2) presentation of data, and 3) withdrawal of conclusions and verification.

Results

Observation is carried out by visiting the traditional ritual of *Rampanan Kapa'* (marriage). Because of the less supportive conditions, namely the Coronavirus outbreak, we can only collect data from five *Rampanan Kapa'* events. This observation found 15 carved motifs on the decoration of *Rampanan Kapa'*. These motives have different meanings. In addition, the results of the interview obtained data that show that the use of Toraja carving motifs at *Rampanan Kapa'* can be seen from two points of view, namely culture and aesthetic value.

From a cultural point of view, the use of carved motifs in the decoration can be viewed as a way of showing the identity or social status of the bride and groom. Motifs with this intent are usually found at *Rampanan Kapa'*, held in *Tongkonan*. Because talking about *Tongkonan*, it will indirectly come into contact with the family's social status that performs the marriage. While from an aesthetic point of view, it is usually found in wedding decorations carried out in buildings, such as hotels. Generally, the decorations used here are more concerned with aesthetic value, which is adjusted to the condition of the building. So in this context, it is rather difficult to guess the social status of the bride and groom. The explanation of the meaning of the carving motif is found as follows:

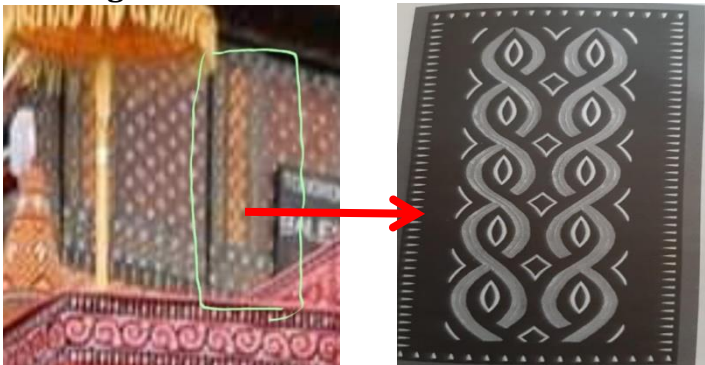
Pa'tukku Pare



Picture 1. Pa'tukku Pare

Pa'tukku Pare is a Torajan carving that takes rice "*Pare*" as its name. *Pa'tukku Pare* is one of the carved motifs that points to a fully-contained rice grain that is ripe and bows (*tukku*) to the ground. This symbol is often used to show humility, as there is a saying, "Like rice is getting contained the more it looks down". Through the motifs, Torajan is invited to live a simple life. Through this motif, the ancestors of Torajan want to convey the importance of "humility" for anyone, like rice that increasingly contains more and more subdue itself. By using this carving motif on the wedding, *Rampanan Kapa'*, decoration is a way for Torajan to pray for the bride and groom that they will be humble in their new life as a husband and wife.

Pa'lolo Tabang



Picture 2. Pa'lolo Tabang

Pa'lolo tabang, or *palm leaf motif*, is a form of grace given freely by God to humans. This motif is often interpreted as a symbol of protection from Almighty God for humans from various diseases. In the litany of the thanksgiving procession, *Mangrara Tongkonan*, a stanza alludes to *tabang*.

"...tarimba-rimbapa tabang
Tabang tangtakita to'na
Tangtaissan saenna
Tabang tangnaola tau
Tangnapatunggo toline
Tangnaosok taumata
Tabang pantananna Puang
Pangrarakna Deata
Pa'pararukna Deata
Pa'parumaka'-maka'na Puang..."

This stanza told that tabang is not an ordinary plant, because God who planted, it is not human "*Tangnaosok taumata Tabang pantananna Puang*". *Tabang* is very close to the ritual of thanksgiving Mangrara Tongkonan. In Kaperokan, it is placed on *lettoan* (a well-decorated replica of Tongkonan used to put a pig in the ritual). It is also put on the top of *bate* (like a tower, well-decorated to show the number of generations of the family who held the ritual of kaperokan) as a symbol of God's grace that is so great for *toma'rapu tallang* (family). Thus, *toma'rapu tallang* is grateful for the great grace commonly known as *massebokan* (distributing windfalls through banquets and meat sacrificed in the ritual of Tongkonan thanksgiving). Through this motif, Torajan is reminded that unity in a Tongkonan will be impossible to be closely intertwined without God's intervention. Because of this belief, the Torajans believed that the Almighty God had created human life. Thus, using this motif on the wedding decoration is a way to pray to God for the bride and groom to believe that the base of their new family is God.

Pa'bungkang Tasik



Picture 3. Pa'bungkang Tasik

Pa'bungkang *tasik* is a motif of Torajan carving which takes its name from an animal's name. *Bungkang* (crab) and *tasik* (sea) are two words used as the name of this motif to express the hope of Torajan for his grandchildren. Torajan's ancestors spoke to his descendants about a journey to a distant land to bring a fortune back to his community for his family. This prayer can also be seen in the "*bungkang tasik*" in wedding decorations. It is hoped that the bride and the groom will have a safe distant journey, and one day they will come to bring a windfall for their family and society.

Pa'tangke Lumu'



Picture 4. Pa'tangke Lumu'

Pa'tangke *lumu'* (moss stalk) is a motif that contains the hope of how Torajan can be a source of positive energy for nature and the people around. In its habitat,

Tangke lumu' (moss stalks) are found only in places with an eternal source of water, never dry, whose water is clear and clean, not in a place where the water is murky. The branches of moss grow through a reasonably long process instead of once growing. Then the appearance of this plant (moss) in the water becomes a source of life energy for creatures there, such as fish. Through this motive, there is an ancestral message that he wants to teach his grandchildren so that they have the patience to go through a long process in their life. In addition, the ancestors want to teach their children and grandchildren to learn from a spacer of moss to always go through a clean life process in the water that continues to flow until finally, it can be a source of energy for the creatures around it. Murky, non-flowing water is not a suitable place for *tangke lumu'* to grow. Therefore, we can conclude that the progenitors' vision of their children's future was not one of boredom, stagnation, and falsehood. By using this motif in the wedding decoration of Torajan, there is hope and prayer that those who are about to begin their new life journey will be like the moss; live in a healthy environment and be the source of positive energy for others around them.

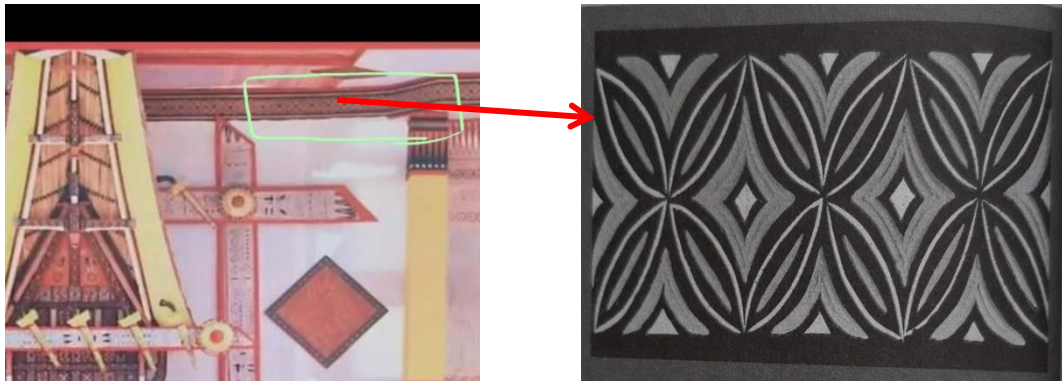
Pa'erong



Picture 5. Pa'erong

Pa'erong is one of the motifs that is often misinterpreted. Some say that it is only used in the rite of grief. This understanding arises due to the word "*erong*," i.e. coffin. *Erong* is a chest that is not just used. This magnificent coffin is constructed of sandalwood trees for individuals who have completed their life's trek and are fully satisfied. The motif depicts two heads bowing in a tranquil figure, the top looking down like a reverent hermit and the bottom doing the same. The meaning or message that the ancestors here want to convey is respected to God and others in complete surrender. This motive shows a stage of life that has reached perfection or has completed its life journey in the world perfectly through unconditional, peaceful surrender. Using this motif on the wedding decoration, Torajan put their prayer that the family will show respect and sacrifice to God along the journey.

Pa'bombo Wai



Picture 6. Pa'bombo wai

Bombo wai is a motif named after an animal that lives in water, more dominant on the water's surface. This animal is sagacious to jump on the surface of the water, not only in calm water but also on the surface of heavy currents; even when there is a threat from the outside, it will drown itself in water. So, it could withstand the heavy winds and one calm current. This motif implied the message from Torajan's ancestors that is "do not get carried away" in facing the problem of life for his grandchildren. It cannot be denied that humans are sometimes so easily carried away in living life. This magnificent sandalwood casket is for people who have completed their life's voyage and are thoroughly interviewed. A tranquil figure is formed by two heads bowing serenely, the top one looking down like a revered hermit. By using this motif on the wedding decoration of Toraja, the pray is there that the bride and groom and the family will be able to face their challenges calmly.

Pa'bare' Allo

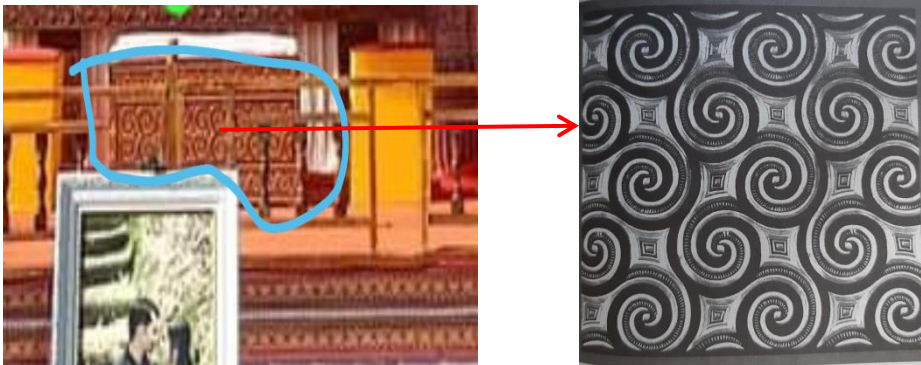


Picture 7. Pa'bare' Allo

Pa' bare' allo is a motif consisting of *bare'* (scratch or circle) and *allo* (sun). This motif means carving a type of sun circle symbol, a symbol that denotes light. It is usually placed at the front and back of the Tongkonan house and barns; usually at the top of perched carvings of rooster motifs that are symbols of immortality dreamed by humans, especially the humans of Toraja. This pattern represents the ancestors' wish that everyone who exits the barrel would always shine (eternal). Torajan people, through this motif, are taught to be light and give life to others. For others, one form of shining and luminosity is the culture of *mendolo dio, maringngan lentek maringan lima, makaritutu papatu inaa* (willingness to help others) when there are activities (*sara'*) he

immediately engages. This motif is a plea for the bride and groom to be a light for others and apply the culture of *mendolo do* when society is active.

Pa'batang Lau



Picture 8. Pa'batang Lau

Pa'batang Lau (machete pumpkin) is a Torajan carving motif that takes symbols from the flowering pumpkin. This motif is usually found on the front or side of the body of Tongkonan or barns. It carries out the meaning of true brotherhood. The Torajan's ancestors would like to teach their grandchildren to live in fair care of one another as a *Rapu tallang* (part of the family in a tongkonan). They can be seen connecting one another and forming a beautiful motif. By using this motif in the wedding decoration of Torajan, there is prayer and hope for the bride and groom that they will be in a true brotherhood by living in properly caring for one another.

Pa'kapu' Baka



Picture 9. Pa'kapu' Baka

Baka is a tool commonly used to carry goods, such as rice and other garden products, made of bamboo and using covers used by women. The cover is usually closed tightly (*dikapu'*), a way used to lock the items to keep them safe. As for *kapu'*, this is made so that it is not easily opened and can only be opened by *ungkapu'i* (who closes it). Finding the *kapu'* is open randomly can be considered that someone is trying to steal the contents of *baka*. Using this motif on the decoration of *Rampanan Kapa'* shows the prayer for the bride and groom to keep their privacy or secret as husband and wife during their life journey as the key to maintaining marriage long last.

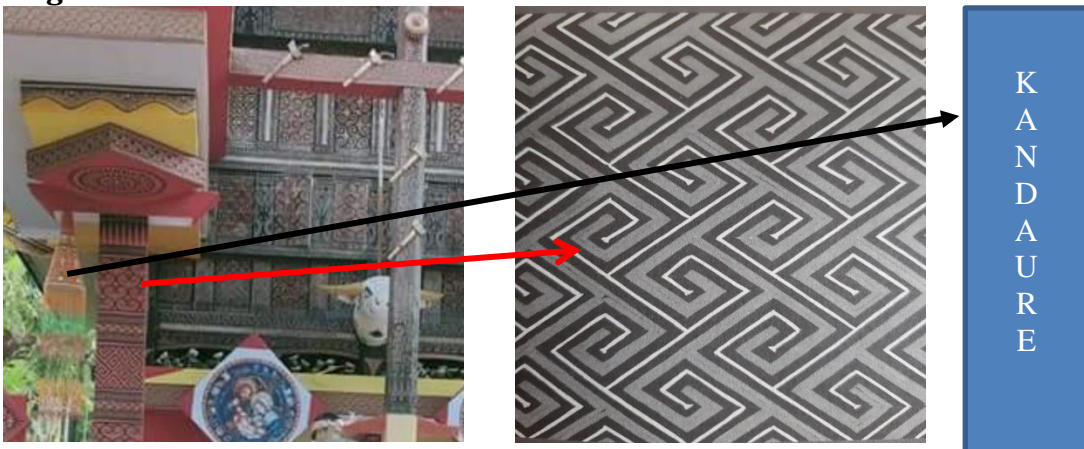
Pa'bulintong



Picture 10. Pa'bulintong

Pa'bulintong is a motif derived from the animal's name, bulintong. *Bulintong* (tadpole) is the forerunner of amphibians, namely frogs, one type of living thing that goes through a perfect metamorphosis process. This motif is more on the depiction of how humans' creation through ideal metamorphosis, just like bulawan tasak (pure gold). It implies how the challenges and their lives form humans; if he follows the process of a life well, they will become mature people (bulaan tasak). This pray is there when Torajan puts Pa'bulintong on the wedding decoration. The family who held the wedding, particularly the bride and groom, will go through life to be mature people (bulaan tasak).

Passekong Kandaure



Picture 11. Passekong Kandaure

This motif is composed of two words, passekong and kandaure. Sekong means arch, and kandaure means a set of colorful beads which create a kind of accessories of Torajan. The colorful beads are arranged to form a beautiful arch motif (see the 3rd picture in figure 11). The meaning of this motif reveals how togetherness and harmony in human life. Togetherness and harmony in differences are expressed in the movement of togetherness and harmony in differences. Passekong kandaure, which means "prayer for peace between the bride and husband," is a Filipino wedding tradition that asks God to help the couple get along despite their differences. Connecting one difference with the others will create harmony in the unity, family, or society.

Pa'tedong



Picture 12. Pa'tedong

Pa'tedong is a motif of Torajan carving, which names derived from the animal's name, tedong, which means buffalo. Pa'tedong can be found in many places, houses, barns, and even at the door of the Torajan's graves. Tedong (buffalo) is the highest offering of the three types commonly used as offering materials. Therefore, when a family dies trying to give valuable, make the highest offering in the hope that Puang Matua (Almighty God) was designed to give the best to him. Using this motif at the wedding decoration of Torajan carries the same prayer for the bride and groom in that wedding that they will get the best from Puang Matua by giving the best of them to God along the journey of their new family.

Pa'bulu Londong



Picture 13. Pa'bulu Londong

Pa'bulu londong takes its name from two words, bulu means feather, and londong means male. It is a motif that resembles the feathers of roosters. This motif does not only refer to the male person but rather refers to the traits presented in the symbol for Torajan descendants without distinguishing gender. So, the term londong more points to the nature and character of humans are said. Londong is male, or show manhood not only physical but rather the meaning of the male is widely showing courage to face their opponent (challenges of life). Living a journey of life must face its ups and downs; therefore, using pa'bulu londong motif on the wedding decoration shows that Torajan put the pray for the bride and groom to be courageous to face their new family life later. As the motif always heads up, it is hoped that the family will always have an open-future sight, and never facing down means looking back.

Passora



Picture 14. Passora

Passora is a carving motif that draws or paints gold plates that are only used by Puang, the nobleman, as a place to eat when visiting his territory at that time. It is common to find *Passora* in the barns of a noble family to show masculine meaning carries out by this motif. This meaning is also supported by the meaning *sora pindan* (holy plate), which is used by the noble only. This motif has a form that looks like a pyramid. This motif is placed on the wooden ends or corners of the building. It is to show the ideals of Torajan on their life journey, i.e., to end up with dignity and glory (*pindan*). This pray is there when Torajan puts on the wedding Torajan. They believe the new family will follow all the ups and down of the life journey and end up the journey in dignity and glory as of the belief of Torajan.

Pa'poya Mundan



Pa'poya mundan is a symbol that describes how the Torajans tried to catch (*umpoya*) grace through self-openness. Torajan's descendants should always submit their great thoughts to God, and Torajan should never give up on life when stranded or distressed. Next, *mundan* is Torajan's name for a wild-duck species. Through the wildness of this animal, there is a message behind this motif that humans try to catch the grace of Almighty God, which a human cannot control. To catch the grace, the human should be humble. Being humble in life is a prayer from Torajan for the bride and groom who will start their new life journey as husband and wife. *Pa'poya mundan* is used in Torajan wedding decorations in this way.

Based on the explanation of the fifteen motifs used by Torajan in the wedding decoration, it is emphasized that each carving motif has its meaning. So, every motif here is considered a system of indigenous messenger symbols. Furthermore, similar to the Minangkabau community, the carvings used are still maintained as a philosophy of life in society. This research on carving motifs for decoration at rampanan kapa' can be seen from two points of view, namely, cultural point of view and aesthetic value. Torajans, particularly those from Tongkonan, are encouraged to pray and hope in the carvings. The symbolic use of "prayer and hope" on wedding decorations will benefit the bride and groom more than simply. The concise meaning of the fifteen carved motifs found in this study can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Torajan carving motifs and their meaning

Motif	Meaning
Pa'tukku pare	Being a humble, successful human being
Pa' lolo tabang	Safe in the protection of the Almighty
Pa' bungkrank tasik	Making a living across the country
Pa' tangke lumu'	It becomes a positive source of energy for the surroundings
Pa' erong	A sign of respect and total surrender of the toraja people
Pa'bombo wai	Don't get carried away with the flow
Pa' bare' allo	Be a light to others
Pa' batang lau	True brotherhood
Pa' kapu' baka	Keep a good secret
Pa' bulintong	A process of maturation
Passekong kandaure	Togetherness and Harmony in Diversity
Pa' tedong	The highest sign of love
Pa' bulu londong	Dare to defend the truth and protect the weak
Passora	The highest mark of respect for the man to the Divine
Pa' poya mundan	Capturing humility

The presentation above shows such beautiful prayers and hopes behind every carving motif used in the Torajan wedding, rampanan kapa', decoration. Compared to the writing of Paganna, the use of carving motifs in Tongkonan is almost the same. Due to the impact of the surrounding surroundings, Rampanan Kapa employs such themes in many ways. Torajan's ancestors taught Tongkonan's elders' children. These pieces in rampanan kapa represent prayer and hope for the family organizing the event.

To investigate the value of education for the future generation, Tangirerung uncovered four reoccurring motifs in Torajan ancestors' messages. As a result, each Torajan carving pattern has deep meaning. To avoid misinterpretations of the motif's meaning, we must consider the context. Ends up this finding, the researcher would like to say that the meaning put in this research is one of some different meanings because it is influenced by the location where the motif is being used. So, this is not the only meaning of those motifs because there is no writing from the ancestors about it. It is

only passed over from one generation to the next generation spoken; consequently, it is possible to find any other meaning.

Conclusion

This post's statement is based on our research on Torajan carving themes. Rambanan Kapa has fifteen carving motifs that express Torajan's wishes for his descendants. The difference is carried out by the context in which they are used. It influences the interpretation of the meaning of somewhat changed; namely, the prayer and hope go for those getting to start a new family life in that *Rampanan Kapa'*. Based on the conclusion of this study, the researcher hopes that future research needs to examine the cultural awareness of the practitioners of wedding decoration to combine cultural and aesthetic values in their work. Thus, cultural values are maintained as they continue to be developed.

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