

Study of Tortor Ilah Majetter's Ethical Values in the Simalungun Community

Ruth Hertami¹, Dilinar Adlin, Tifan Muhammad A

{ruthhertami@unimed.ac.id¹}

Dance Education State University of Medan, Medan, Indonesia

Abstract. Tortor Ilah Majetter is an entertainment dance that is always present at the Rondang Bittang Party. This research aims to determine the ethical values contained in it. The theory used to explain the ethical content in this tortor is ethical theory according to Bartens (2013). The method in this research uses a qualitative descriptive method. The research results show that Tortor Ilah Majetter contains 4 norms. First, religious norms, which are expressed through the poetry that accompanies the tortor, second, moral norms, which are visible through movements carried out together and simultaneously which indicate that the Simalungun community is very closely related, third, politeness norms, expressed in neat, well-organized ways. Neat movements and floor patterns. Apart from that, it can also be seen through the dancers' clothing and make-up. The fourth norm, namely legal norms, is not found in the movements of these perpetrators.

Keywords: Ilah Majetter, Ethical values, Simalungun.

1 Introduction

Tari is the oldest form of art. This aligns with the view that dance can be older than the art itself [1, p. 2]. For this reason, almost every ethnic group in the world, such as the Simalungun people in Indonesia, has dance as a means to express their aesthetic soul. The Simalungun people have a cultural event known as the Pesta Rondang Bittang, which is a celebration that is usually held by the ancestors for the purpose of socializing, offering advice, and engaging in artistic expressions that stem from the traditions of the Simalungun community. The word "Simalungun" is derived from two meanings: "Sima" means heritage, and "lungun" means loneliness. Therefore, based on this, Simalungun refers to a heritage that is lonely. Another interpretation is "si" meaning person, and "malungun" meaning missed or longed for, meaning that Simalungun could refer to someone who is longed for, or a heritage that is dearly missed. Dance, in essence, is a creative and constructive activity that can evoke emotional intensity and meaning [2]. In the Simalungun language, dance is called *Tortor*. Tortor embodies the principles of togetherness, brotherhood, or solidarity for the common good. Tortor serves as a means of communication for the Simalungun people and is always present in various community activities.

Tortor Ilah Majeter is one of the traditional dances of the Simalungun people. This dance is not just a performance; it also reflects the cultural wealth and life philosophy of the Simalungun people, which is *Habonaron Do Bona*. This philosophy teaches the Simalungun people to always uphold truth in every aspect of their behavior. *Habonaron do bona* (truth is the

foundation of everything) refers to a set of life principles that emphasize truthfulness in actions. *Habonaron do bona* represents living with honesty and contains noble values that are central to it [3]. Through the introduction and understanding of *tortor* rooted in *Habonaron Do Bona*, the life meaning of the Simalungun people can be found, as expressed in *Tortor Ilah Majeter*. The movements in this dance reflect and represent the attitudes, character, behavior, and ethical experiences of the Simalungun community.

Tortor is used as one way to interact. The interaction here is symbolic, conveyed through the movements in *tortor*. These movements carry a meaning that is considered important, as they convey a message. *Tortor Ilah Majeter* has become a hallmark of the Simalungun people, created collectively due to the communal nature of their society. This dance is an activity that connects and interacts with other activities, carrying cultural messages that the community wants to share. Through its simple movements, *Tortor Ilah Majeter* has become an integral part of the identity of the Simalungun people. It is a dance performed by young men and women during a full moon, accompanied by songs of rhymed verses. The ethical values embedded in it should be explained as a guideline for the community, to ensure the harmonious life of the younger generation in the Simalungun society. This *tortor* plays a role as a medium of communication to deliver messages or objectives and is an essential part of the social life and cultural activities of the Simalungun people. Through its aesthetic experience, it reveals the life meaning of the Simalungun community, reflecting a distinct local environment with norms and ethics that shape their community.

The movements in *Tortor Ilah Majeter* are not diverse, but they are rich with values conveyed through movements, lyrics, and the atmosphere. In a performance of *Tortor Ilah Majeter*, the lyrics may change depending on the situation or event where it is performed. For example, during the Pesta Rondang Bittang, the lyrics are about Rondang Bittang. The lyric “O...Siharjurle o simonjab-onjab” is characteristic of *Tortor Ilah Majeter* and is also considered a chant to call the spirit of Siharjurle. The movements are done carefully, neatly, and fluidly, with everyone moving together, reflecting the close unity of the Simalungun people. The ethical values are also reflected in the movements, including boundaries and rules regarding clothing and floor patterns. The *Tortor* serves as a medium for community bonding and cultural literacy, reinforcing social ties and shared heritage among the Simalungun people [4], [5].

The costumes worn in *Tortor Ilah Majeter* include Ragi Paneh or Ragi Cantik and Suri-Suri for female dancers, while male dancers typically wear black shorts, a sarong, Suri-Suri, and Ragi Paneh. The rules to be followed in life, such as always being grateful for the blessings given by God, respecting one another, and maintaining politeness in all actions and behavior, are also important. *Tortor Ilah Majeter* is an emotional expression, reflected in the movement motifs full of meaning. Interested in understanding the ethics embedded within it, this study will provide a more detailed explanation of *Tortor Ilah Majeter* and the ethical values in Simalungun society, related to their way of life. The theory used to explain the ethical content in this *tortor* is the ethical theory by Bartens, who defines ethics as morality that deals with human behavior by regulating actions normatively, stating what should be done and what should not be done [6].

2 Research Methods

The implementation of this research was carried out using a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This was intended to explore the existing data to obtain the necessary information for the study. The use of this method aims to collect detailed data, so that in-depth

analysis can be conducted to obtain accurate explanations. Based on this, before the research was conducted, steps or procedures for data collection and analysis regarding *Tortor Ilah Majetter* in the Simalungun community were prepared. Systematic categorization and synthesis of data to derive meanings from the movements, costumes, and musical accompaniments of *Tortor* [7].

This qualitative method is understood as a method that does not involve counting. Therefore, before conducting the research, the researcher must prepare procedures for collecting data on the ethical values of *Tortor Ilah Majetter*. Data collection techniques refer to the methods or steps used by researchers to gather information, which serves as supporting facts in presenting the research. The three data collection techniques used are: observation, which involves observing and collecting data from an object being studied with the aim of obtaining accurate information regarding the subject of research; interviews, which involve a question-and-answer process with informants to gather information for the study; and documentation, which is a method of collecting data by taking photos or videos of information that has been obtained in order to gather evidence and make the research more detailed.

The data obtained from the analysis of the ethical values of *Tortor Ilah Majetter* is organized into a research form based on relevant theories. The first stage is selecting concrete information and aligning it with the research topic, which is the ethical values of *Tortor Ilah Majetter*. The results are then explained in descriptive form, through images, and other formats, to focus the discussion on the research object. The results are then summarized and presented in written form.

3 Results and Discussion

The Simalungun Regency is one of the regencies located in North Sumatra Province, inhabited by several ethnic groups, including the Batak Toba, Karo, and Mandailing. Simalungun covers an area of approximately 4,386.60 km², with an elevation ranging from 0 to 1,400 meters above sea level. It also has a forest area of 138,838.46 hectares. Administratively, Simalungun Regency consists of 31 districts, 310 villages/nagori, and 21 urban villages. The capital of Simalungun Regency officially moved to Raya on June 23, 2008, from Pematangsiantar[8].

Geographically, Simalungun Regency is located between 3°18' – 9°36' North Latitude and 98°32' – 99°35' East Longitude, with a total area of 438.66 hectares, or 6.12% of North Sumatra Province's total area. Purba is one of the districts within Simalungun Regency, covering an area of around 206.50 km². The people of Simalungun are an ethnically cohesive group united by language, arts, customs, and unique traditions. The Simalungun people have a strong cultural heritage, evident in their many traditional art forms passed down through generations, such as dance performances, funeral rituals, musical instruments, "laklak" (pustaha on tree bark), games, and martial arts (dihar), as well as their traditional house forms. Simalungun people take great care to preserve their cultural traditions. An example is the "Tortor Ilah Majetter," a traditional dance introduced by Taralamsyah Saragih during the Rondang Bittang event in 1983, which continues to be performed at Rondang Bittang events in the region[8].

The kinship system of the Simalungun people is based on clans, which represent descendants of a common ancestor. These clans are divided into four main groups: Damanik, Purba, Saragih, and Sinaga, with each clan further divided into several branches. The Simalungun clans are essential in preserving ethnic identity, as seen in the efforts of the Partuha

Maujana Simalungun (PMS) institution, which was established to strengthen and maintain Simalungun culture and identity through the regulation of customary laws and clan formulation [9].

The Simalungun kinship system also includes the concept of "tolu sahundulan" (three sitting together), consisting of Sanina (people from the same clan), Tondong (the bride's family), and Anak Boru (the groom's family). These three elements are essential and inseparable in Simalungun customs, and no ritual or adat ceremony can be performed without them. The Simalungun people believe in the existence of natural forces inhabited by spirits that can influence their lives, such as Tondi (the spirit of deceased ancestors), Simogot (spirits of the deceased who can assist their descendants), and Sahala (the life force or spirit that humans possess while alive).

Today, the majority of Simalungun people follow Christianity and Protestantism, while Islam was introduced in 1292. Many Simalungun people are farmers, cultivating rice and corn, which makes them closely connected to nature. As a result, their traditional arts are closely related to nature, with dances like Tor-tor Manduda, Tor-tor Sitalasari, and others reflecting their agricultural lifestyle. In the past, Simalungun people did not have fixed agricultural lands; they cleared forests to create farmland, moving from one forest to another, practicing shifting cultivation to maintain soil fertility.

The Simalungun community has a strong tradition of mutual cooperation, which is reflected in their customs, such as in weddings, funerals, and other cultural events. They often work together in groups, known as "horja harangan," as part of their agricultural activities. The farming system is deeply embedded in the Simalungun people's identity, influencing their traditional arts and dance forms, such as the dance Horja Harangan, which symbolizes this agricultural life.

The Rondang Bittang festival is an annual cultural celebration that embodies the spirit of cooperation in Simalungun society. It originated from community meetings (marharoan) where elders would provide advice to the younger generation, fostering unity and cultural exchange through dance and song. Rondang Bittang has evolved into a major event where young people participate in dances, such as Tortor Ilah Majetter, as a form of tradition, and to learn from their elders about cultural values and social conduct.

Tortor Ilah Majetter is a traditional dance performed by young people to express joy, accompanied by singing and playful banter during the full moon. It is a pair dance, but the number of couples can vary. The movements of this dance are simple but carry deep ethical values, which are passed down as part of character education. These values include respect for God, self-awareness, empathy for others, and reverence for nature—all of which are embodied in the dance. This rich cultural heritage of Simalungun, including its dance traditions and cooperative way of life, continues to be an important part of the community's identity, fostering a strong sense of belonging and continuity.

Movement Motifs in Tortor Ilah Majetter The movement motifs in Tortor Ilah Majetter consist of Mambere Hormat Pembuka (giving opening respect), Martopak tangan dan paha (clapping hands and thighs), Malakkah Siamun Siambilou (stepping to the right and left), Mangonjab-onjab, and Mambere Hormat Panutup (giving closing respect). All these movement motifs carry ethical values, including beliefs, social ethics, aesthetics, and moral values.

Although today most of the Simalungun people have embraced religions such as Islam, Christianity, and others, they still honor their traditional beliefs. This respect is expressed through their use of songs, which are sung as an accompaniment to the tortor they perform. The religious values are generally related to belief and expressions of gratitude. Each person has different ways of conveying or expressing their faith. These expressions can take various forms,

which they believe or trust when the desired request is made. Every person has desires in their life. To achieve those desires, people often pray or perform rituals to have their wishes granted. This can be seen in the lyrics of the songs that express requests or desires to Siharjurle, the supernatural spirit they believe can grant their wishes. The song lyrics include "O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab."

*Tortor Ilah Majetter Song Lyrics Marbunga ale birah O..... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
I talun juma robah O..... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab hon hita O..... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
Riap hita pajuppah O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
I Pamatang Purba O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab hon hita O.... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
Paris-paris ni udan O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Manektek hu bukkulan O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab hon hita O.... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
Riap hita pajuppah O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Naboru ge garama O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab hon hita O.... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
Sae bona ni doding O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Boras sabur-saburan O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab hon hita O.... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
Sae ma lobe doding O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Horas hita ganupan O.... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab hon hita O.... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
O simonjab onjab-onjab
Meaning of the Tortor Ilah Majetter Song Lyrics The flower blooms O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
In the field that is provided O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab we will meet O... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
Together we will meet O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
At Pamatang Purba O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab we will meet O... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
The rain drizzles O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
That falls to the ground O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab we will meet O... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
Together we will meet O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Both women and men O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab we will meet O... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab*

*This song is finished O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
May we all have a long life O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab we will meet O... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab
This song is finished O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
May we all be blessed O... Siharjurle o simonjab onjab-onjab
Onjab-onjab we will meet O... Siharjurle
O simonjab onjab-onjab*

In the performance of Tortor Ilah Majetter, the lyrics of the song may change depending on the event where the Tortor Ilah Majetter is performed. If it is presented at the Pesta Rondang Bittang, the lyrics sung will be about Rondang Bittang. The lyrics "O... Siharjurle o simonjab-onjab," which the Simalungun people themselves may not understand, indicate a belief in the supernatural spirits. These lyrics are always included as they are part of the distinctive feature of Tortor Ilah Majetter, also serving as a chant to summon the Siharjurle spirit.

Social Ethics in Tortor Ilah Majetter Social ethics in Tortor Ilah Majetter are manifested through the function of the dance in the Simalungun community during interactions between the dancers (panortor) and between the performers and the audience. All the movements in this dance express strong social ethics, with the dancers singing, clapping, and holding hands to show unity. This movement is met with similar joy by the audience, who sometimes join in singing or reciting the lyrics.

Apart from the movements, the floor pattern in Tortor Ilah Majetter also has aesthetic value. For example, during the opening, the dancers are arranged in parallel facing forward, allowing the audience to see them fully and clearly observe their coordinated movements. Afterward, the dancers form a circle, allowing them to interact with each other. This circle enhances the beauty of the performance. Another floor pattern forms the letter 'A', which gives the audience different viewing angles, making the performance more visually engaging. The closing pattern returns to a parallel formation, similar to the opening. Beauty in Tortor Ilah Majetter The beauty of this dance emphasizes ethics. The costume selection, such as the Ragi Cantik Rag Paneh and Suri-suri (traditional Simalungun fabrics), enhances the aesthetic value and carries ethical significance. Additionally, the movements in Tortor Ilah Majetter highlight ethics as the dancers perform in unison, demonstrating politeness and unity, which adds to the overall beauty of the performance in its orderliness and neatness.

All of the explanations above prove that Tortor Ilah Majetter contains ethical values. Every element of this performance is organized, and this orderliness should be applied in daily life by both the Simalungun people, the owners of this dance, and the wider community. Orderliness leads to positive impacts, making life more controlled. Several values are contained in Tortor Ilah Majetter, including religious values, seen in the lyrics that express requests to Siharjurle, the supernatural spirit. Aesthetic values in the dance are influenced by the aesthetics of the dancer's movements. Social values are seen as the dance still serves a function for the community, where the movements are performed in unison, symbolizing the close community of the Simalungun people. Moral or ethical values are reflected in the performance elements, such as the accompaniment, dance movements, floor patterns, makeup, and costumes, all of which follow rules that should be applied in human life, like always being grateful for the blessings given by God, respecting one another, and demonstrating politeness in actions and behavior. In Simalungun society, the arts are an essential part of daily life, including music, dance, and visual arts. Today, the Simalungun people have embraced Christianity, introduced around 1860, and Islam, which arrived around 1292. After the introduction of these religions,

the practice of worshipping simagot (ancestor spirits worshipped by their descendants) was prohibited, as it conflicted with the teachings of these two religions. However, some Simalungun people still perform this ritual. If explored further, the Simalungun belief system involves various rituals involving mantras from "Datu" (shamans) along with offerings to simagot, the ancestor spirits, often preceded by calls to three deities symbolized by white, red, and black colors representing the deities above, in the middle, and below.

In addition, by using typical Simalungun clothing such as Ragi Paneh / Beautiful Ragi and Suri-suri for female dancers and for male dancers using Ragi Paneh and sarong cloth which makes Tortor Ilah Majetter more beautiful to look at. There are also rules in the use of clothing in Tortor Ilah Majetter where the suri-suri used covers the shoulders for women which makes the outfit beautiful. The makeup used in Tortor Ilah Majetter is also everyday makeup. In community life, humans need others to interact. The science that studies human interaction in relation to social life is commonly referred to as sociology. Through human interaction, individuals indirectly engage in a social process, and through various social processes, they carry out social activities that shape social values within society. Social values are those elements that play an important role for the community and influence the way of life of a social group.

In Tortor Ilah Majetter, social values are formed because the dance still has a function for the supporting community. This function then gives rise to the social values embedded in Tortor Ilah Majetter, which is performed in Purba Tongah Village, Purba District, Simalungun Regency. The role and function of the dance become evident during a performance on a moonlit night. At that time, the entire Simalungun community, especially those from Purba Tongah, gathers to watch Tortor Ilah Majetter, and during the performance, interactions take place among the community members attending the event. Furthermore, the social values present in Tortor Ilah Majetter can also be found in the movements of the dance. In each movement, the performers move together in unison, which illustrates that the Simalungun community values strong unity and togetherness. Morality is the meaning contained in a work of art, conveyed through a story. Morality can be seen as a theme in its simplest form, but not all themes are moral. Morality refers to an individual's ability to distinguish between what is good and what is bad. The moral values embedded in a work of art aim to educate people to recognize ethical values, which are the standards for determining the goodness or badness of an action, what should be avoided, and what should be done. This creates a social order that is considered good, harmonious, and beneficial for individuals, society, the environment, and the surrounding nature.

In Tortor Ilah Majetter, the moral or ethical values conveyed through the dance are evident in its movements, such as the "Mambere Hormat" movement. This movement marks the beginning of the dance and carries an ethical message: before starting daily activities or any performance, one should begin with an expression of gratitude to God. Additionally, this movement symbolizes the respect humans should have for one another in the world. It also follows specific guidelines and rules, such as the position of the hands, which should not be too wide open. This indicates that the Simalungun community not only practices mutual respect but also adheres to the values of politeness and etiquette.

The Martopak hand and thigh movement is another important aspect of Tortor Ilah Majetter. In this movement, the hands must not pass beyond the boundaries of the face and ears for both women and men. Additionally, the foot movement should not step too widely or openly. This signifies that a woman, in addition to appearing polite and graceful, is expected to be cautious in every step and action she takes. It also reflects the Simalungun community's emphasis on carefulness and discipline in all their activities. The Malakkah Siamun Siambilou movement is

another important element in *Tortor Ilah Majetter*. In this movement, the feet should not be too widely spaced, and the hands must not extend beyond the boundary of the face and ears. Additionally, the hands should not be spread too wide. This movement symbolizes the politeness and courtesy of the Simalungun community. It also reflects their carefulness and precision in every step and action they take, demonstrating a deep respect for etiquette and discipline in their cultural practices.

The *Mangonjab-onjab* movement involves keeping the feet and hands from being spread too widely, with the head lowered. This movement signifies that the Simalungun community values etiquette, courtesy, and mutual respect. It also conveys an important moral lesson: humans should remain humble and never be arrogant, as the saying goes, "above the sky, there is still another sky." This reflects the belief that no matter one's position or achievements, there is always something greater, and humility should guide one's actions. The *Mambere Hormat Penutup* movement, or closing gesture of respect, is similar to the *Mambere Hormat Pembuka* (opening gesture of respect). This movement carries an ethical significance: it reminds participants to express gratitude to God after completing an activity. It also symbolizes the deep respect that the Simalungun community holds for one another, reinforcing the value of mutual respect among its members. This gesture underscores the importance of acknowledging both the divine and social relationships in everyday life. In addition to the movements, the floor pattern in *Tortor Ilah Majetter* also reflects ethics. One such floor pattern is the parallel formation. In this position, it signifies that, in the eyes of God, all humans are equal. There is no distinction between one person and another. This pattern emphasizes the values of equality and unity, reminding the community that, regardless of status, everyone is the same in the divine view. It reflects the Simalungun community's belief in fairness and mutual respect.

After the parallel pattern, it is followed by a circular pattern, which symbolizes the unity and togetherness of the Simalungun community, reflecting the philosophy that *"united we stand, divided we fall."* It is followed by a floor pattern shaped like the letter 'A,' which symbolizes that humans are reminded that God is above or at the peak, while humans are below, and God always watches over and protects every human being. Apart from movements, attire also has its own etiquette, where the clothing worn should not be too revealing. There are still certain boundaries in dressing, such as the shoulder area not being too exposed and the lower part not being allowed above the knees. This reflects the Simalungun community's values of modesty and politeness.

4 Conclusion

The explanation about ethics in *Tortor Ilah Majetter* above concludes that *Tortor Ilah Majetter*, which represents the joy of the youth of the Simalungun community, still upholds ethics in its practice. This is reflected in the use of poetry as a song accompanying the dance, which contains respect for the unseen in their traditional beliefs. Furthermore, the sense of togetherness in movement, as well as the interactions that arise between dancers and community members, demonstrate a high level of social ethics in the Simalungun community. In addition, the use of traditional Simalungun cloth as dance costumes shows the community's loyalty to their traditional attire, which is still believed to prove its beauty.

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