

# Maena nias Dance as a Contextual Medium in Christian Religious Education

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## Abstract

*This study aims to determine how Maena Nias dance is used as a contextual medium in Christian religious education (CRE). In order for Christian values to be understood comprehensively and practically, the background of this study is the importance of providing a learning approach that is relevant to the lives and culture of students. As a cultural heritage of the Nias people, Maena dance has Christian values such as togetherness, love, joy, and collaboration in addition to aesthetic values. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Research data was obtained through observation, interviews, and literature study. The results of the study show that Maena dance can be used effectively as part of PAK learning to instill Christian values contextually. In addition to improving understanding of biblical teachings, the use of Maena dance also increases active participation and a sense of belonging to the local culture among students. Thus, local culture can become a bridge between the proclamation of faith and the real lives of students, as well as strengthening a Christian identity rooted in their respective cultural contexts.*

**Keywords:** Maena Dance, Christian Religious Education, Contextual Learning.

## Introduction

Christian Religious Education (CRE) currently faces difficulties in making learning a real and relevant faith experience in the cultural context of students rather than just spreading doctrine. [1] Many studies show that a contextual approach can increase students' desire, understanding, and involvement in religious learning. [2] However, in many cases, this approach has not been fully implemented, especially in areas with rich local cultures, such as Nias, where traditional dances such as the Maena Dance have not been widely used as a medium for CRE learning. The Maena Dance has unique social, aesthetic, and spiritual characteristics and is an important component of Nias culture [3].

As a collective dance that is often performed in traditional and social ceremonies, the Maena Dance combines tradition, togetherness, and solidarity, which have the potential to align with Christian principles such as fellowship and love. As shown in a recent study, the Maena Dance serves as a traditional element inherent in the traditional wedding procession in Hiliduho District, Nias Island. It is a social and spiritual symbol of the community. [4] Similarly, the study "The Values of Maena Dance in the Nias Islands and the Meaning of David's Dance in the Context

of the Ark of the Covenant" presents how local cultural symbols can interact and resonate with Biblical narratives. [5] The use of Maena dance as a contextual medium in PAK learning can open up space for the internalization of Christian values that are stronger and more alive in the daily lives of students. Furthermore, the integration of local culture in religious education has been identified as an effective strategy by various studies, such as the study on the contextualization of Christian Religious Education for Teenagers, which shows that contextual learning strategies increase relevance and concrete faith experiences among teenagers [6].

This indicates that there is a gap in research that specifically examines Maena Dance as a medium for Christian Religious Education, especially in relation to how students can actively experience faith through their own local culture. Based on the preliminary studies that inform this research, this study aims to examine how the Maena Dance of Nias functions as a contextual medium in Christian Religious Education learning, and how this medium can help students internalize Christian values through their cultural experiences.

## Methods

The main objective of this study is to explore the meaning, values, and contextual potential of Maena Dance as a medium in Christian Religious Education (CRE), especially in the context of the local culture of Nias. The study method used is literature review. In this approach, the author researched books, articles, and other documents related to Christian Religious Education, Nias Maena dance, and contextual learning. Furthermore, the Miles and Huberman analysis method was used to analyze all information and data obtained from the literature. Ahmad Rijali said that this analysis method consists of three steps: data reduction, distribution, and conclusion drawing [7].

## Results and Discussion

### Maena Dance

One of the traditional dances of the Nias community, the Maena dance is performed whenever there is a joyful and festive gathering, such as a wedding party, owasa, etc. If there is a meeting or party that involves Maena dancing, it indicates that everyone involved will enjoy excitement, tranquility, a friendly atmosphere, and happiness. Maena is a type of song performed in groups by men and women who perform dance movements. One individual acts as a musician and three individuals act as composers. Batak and Karo melodies are the main sources of maena, and even Poco-poco and Malay songs are used. The movements performed do not change. The dance is used as a way to raise money for weddings and other events.

### Maena Dance as a Representation of Nias Cultural Values and Spirituality

Maena dance has high social, spiritual, and moral values and is one of the intangible cultural heritages of the Nias people. This dance is generally performed at traditional events such as weddings, welcoming guests, or folk festivals, with the aim of strengthening relationships between community members. The movements and songs performed together reflect the spirit of brotherhood, cooperation, and togetherness that are characteristic of the Nias people.[8] From a theological perspective, the values contained in the Maena Dance are consistent with Christian principles, especially in terms of koinonia (fellowship) which emphasizes togetherness in the love of Christ (Acts 2:42–47). Through these values, the Maena Dance can be understood not only as a form of cultural expression, but also as a symbol of life to be imbued with the spirit of love and true brotherhood.

### Implementation of Maena Dance as a Medium for PAK Learning

In the context of education, maena dance embodies the value of kinship, which can be implemented to create an inclusive, cooperative learning environment that focuses on character building among students. The value of kinship can be realized through the creation of a warm classroom atmosphere, mutual respect, and a sense of security for students. Teachers play a role as figures who are able to provide emotional support so that students feel valued as part of the school community. By developing cooperation and collaboration in learning activities, students can learn to work together like family members. These interactions foster a sense of responsibility, solidarity, and effective communication skills among group members. Fostering Empathy and Social Awareness Through activities that encourage personal interaction, such as discussions, social projects, and extracurricular

activities, students are taught how to empathize with others, help friends in need, and prioritize the common good. Establishing Positive Partnerships between Schools and Families, so that family values are also reflected in the relationships between teachers, parents, and schools. Open communication, parental participation, and community involvement in school activities strengthen a supportive educational ecosystem that is oriented towards the holistic development of students. Consistently instilling these values helps students internalize positive social norms that are relevant to community life.[9] The value of kinship in education can be implemented by creating a friendly and safe learning atmosphere so that every student feels valued as part of the school community.

### Contextual Learning Based on Local Culture

Context-based learning is an idea that aims to give meaning to all learning activities by synthesizing new information with relevant prior knowledge that students have learned previously. Sanjaya (2008) states that there are five characteristics of contextual learning practices. The first is that there is a process to activate existing understanding during learning activities. When students are present in class, they are not considered blank slates. It is assumed that students have knowledge through Second, contextual learning means knowing deductively and expanding on prior knowledge. In their role as facilitators, the teacher's task is to use existing information and connect it to new skills. Third, understanding information. The essence of the knowledge gained lies in the level of understanding, not in the ability to memorize alone, and it must be reliable. Fourth, applying this information and experience to change students' attitudes. Fifth, considering strategies to improve knowledge. Context-based learning helps students acquire intellectual skills that grow in a social and cultural context, encouraging them to understand and shape their knowledge on their own. In addition, learning in context helps students become more self-aware and part of a society with a culture. (Harisatunisa 2023:213) Thus, contextual education is a learning method that helps students relate lessons to real-life experiences or environments. Teachers relate lesson ideas to real-world situations so that students better understand the meaning of learning.

### The Impact of Using Maena Dance on PAK Learning

The use of Maena dance in PAK learning results in learning that is more contextually relevant and meaningful. Community-based contextual learning provides a more meaningful learning experience because the material taught is relevant to students' daily routines, and regional cultural elements create a very strong emotional connection. Because of this method, students can understand Christian values through a language they have known since childhood. Maena dance activates various types of student intelligence, particularly kinesthetic, musical, and interpersonal intelligence. This method allows students to learn comprehensively through physical and cognitive experiences. This approach is in line with the idea of active learning, which emphasizes the comprehensive involvement of students. Christian Religious Education encourages the inclusion of religious and cultural values in its construction. Through Maena Dance, Nias students can express their Christian faith through their own cultural identity, creating a harmonious synthesis between faith and culture. This helps students understand that being a Christian does not mean abandoning their cultural identity.

Maena Dance serves as an effective tool for spreading the gospel message to the community, especially in places where local traditions are preserved. In the context of learning, this dance serves as a bridge between Christian teachings and the cultural reality of students. Local culture-based activities strengthen social interaction and cooperation, as well as foster pride in local culture. Thus, students become more motivated because they learn through something familiar and personally meaningful. Active participation increases because Maena Dance is inclusive and can be performed by everyone. Maena Dance has symbolic forms and meanings that convey moral messages for education, and the values of dance, such as togetherness, unity, and cooperation, can be combined with Christian values such as brotherly love and fellowship in the body of Christ [10].

### Implementation of Nias Maena Dance in PAK Learning

The implementation of Nias Maena Dance in Christian religious education (PAK) is a context-based learning model that combines local culture with Christian values. This approach aims to help students understand the Christian faith in a more meaningful way through cultural experiences that are close to their lives.

#### 1. Learning Planning

In the planning stage, PAK teachers review the basic competencies of lessons related to the values of Maena Dance. The values of togetherness, fellowship, obedience, and gratitude that are at the core of Maena Dance are consistent with the Bible's teachings about living in community and in relationship with God. Therefore, topics such as fellowship among believers, love, and thanksgiving became the main focus of the lesson plan. The teacher also prepared teaching materials in the form of documentation on Maena Dance, Bible texts, and cultural resources to strengthen the students' understanding of the philosophical meaning of the dance.

#### 2. Implementation of Learning

The learning process begins with preliminary activities in the form of an introduction to local culture and an opening prayer. The teacher then introduces the Maena Dance as a traditional dance of the Nias people that emphasizes togetherness and joy. In the main activity, students are invited to observe the Maena Dance through videos or direct practice. The teacher explains the symbolic meaning of the Maena Dance movements and relates them to Christian Religious Education values, such as fellowship (koinonia), love, and gratitude to God. Students then discuss in groups to relate these cultural values to the Bible text, then practice simple Maena Dance movements as a form of participatory learning. The closing activity was filled with faith reflection, where students expressed their understanding of how the principles of the Maena Dance can be applied in the daily lives of Christians.

#### 3. Learning Evaluation

Learning evaluation was conducted comprehensively, covering psychomotor, affective, and cognitive components. The cognitive component assessed students' understanding of PAK material and the values of Maena Dance. The affective aspect assessed their attitude of appreciating local culture and their understanding of Christian values. Meanwhile, the psychomotor aspect assessed students' participation and cooperation in practicing Maena Dance.

#### 4. Impact of Implementation

The implementation of Maena Dance in PAK learning has a positive impact in the form of an increase in the number of students involved in the learning process, an increase in a more contextual understanding of faith, and the growth of an attitude of appreciation for local culture as part of Christian identity. Learning is not only cognitive in nature, but also touches on the spiritual and social aspects of students [11].

#### Conclusion

According to the results of research and discussion, Maena Nias Dance has a strategic role as a contextual learning medium in Christian Religious Education (PAK). Maena Dance contains values of togetherness, fellowship, obedience, joy, and gratitude that are in line with Christian teachings. Integration of Maena Dance in The research and discussion results show that Maena Dance from Nias plays a strategic role. The use of Maena Dance in the CAR learning process improves students' cognitive abilities and contributes to the formation of spiritual and social attitudes. Learning becomes more engaging, relevant, and meaningful, encouraging active participation from students and fostering an attitude of appreciation for local culture as a component of Christian identity. Therefore, Maena Dance from Nias can be viewed not only as a cultural heritage but also as an effective pedagogical tool in Christian Religious Education. For this reason, Christian teachers and educational institutions are advised to develop a model of Christian Religious Education based on local wisdom to produce sustainable, contextual, and continuous faith learning.

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