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Ethnomathematics Mencak at Traditional Wedding Ceremonies in Seluma Regency

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ABSTRACT

Mathematics not only developed as an abstract science, but it was also present and rooted in the cultural practices of society. One form of this linkage can be studied through an ethnomathematical approach, which plays an important role in the preservation of local culture as well as the development of cultural-context-based mathematics learning. This research aims to identify and describe the ethnomathematical concepts contained in the mencak tradition as the cultural heritage of the community. This research uses a qualitative method with research subjects consisting of traditional leaders and practitioners of the mencak tradition who understand the process and meaning of the implementation of the tradition. Data was obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that in the movements and formations in the mencak tradition there are mathematical concepts in the form of taper angles, right angles, blunt angles, straight angles, and reflex angles. These concepts arise from the position of the body, the direction of movement, and the patterns of interaction between traditional actors, which reflect mathematical understanding that is naturally integrated in cultural practice. These findings show that the mencak tradition has potential as a source of ethnomathematics-based mathematics learning.



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Introduction

Mathematics is a very important science for life (Prasetyowati et al., 2024). In life, many activities are related to mathematics, one of which is culture (Palayukan & Lasarus, 2023).

Intentionally or unintentionally, the habits that are carried out are in harmony with mathematical concepts (Khadijah & Sutamrin, 2022). Culture can be integrated in classroom learning as an effort to introduce culture from an early age to students (Fitriani, 2022). In addition, culture can be used as a medium that connects learning materials so that it is easier for students to understand (Jumri & Murdiana, 2019). Therefore, integrating culture into mathematics learning becomes a relevant approach to relate abstract concepts to students' real experiences. Especially in mathematics learning that is abstract, it is very possible to use culture in concretizing learning materials (Miznurida et al., 2024). Mathematics has a very close bond with the culture of society because culture is a complete and comprehensive unit, applicable in society. Mathematics will be easier for students to understand when it is associated with the culture and circumstances around the students (Mendrofa et al., 2024). The concept of mathematics is embedded in cultural practices called ethnomathematics (Khadijah & Sutamrin, 2022). Ethnomathematics is mathematics practiced by a cultural group such as society, either urban or rural communities. Ethnomathematics can be used as a mathematics learning (Lontaan et al., 2024) and at the same time introduce the culture of the younger generation (Kristia et al., 2021).

Indonesia as a multicultural megara has great potential to be studied from an ethnomathematical perspective (Maulida et al., 2025). Bengkulu Province is one of the regions that has a diversity of customs, including traditions in wedding ceremonies that are still carried out by its people (Lusiana et al., 2019). One of the areas in Bengkulu is Seluma Regency. In Seluma Regency there is a tradition called the Mencak tradition, which is carried out during traditional wedding ceremonies. Mencak is an activity carried out by two people in a traditional wedding ceremony to welcome the mendakulo. Usually the mencak is opened with the rajo who mencak first or the groom who mencak with the mendakulo. Then it is continued with the father of the groom opposite the bride, then continued with the mendakulo from both parties. The movement and position of the body in the mencak tradition not only contain traditional and social values, but also have the potential to contain mathematical concepts that can be explored.

The mencak tradition has existed for a long time in Seluma Regency which over time this tradition began to fade because not many people know how to do the correct mencak movement according to tradition. So it needs to be preserved and developed so that it does not fade due to the progress of the times. The importance of teaching the culture that is the basis of the nation's character to children from an early age. Because early teaching can help children better understand, appreciate, and realize the importance of culture in the life of the community (Sholihah et al., 2024).

Some previous ethnomathematical research has explored mathematical concepts in various cultural contexts, such as the Andun Dance movement which contains the concepts of right angles, pointed angles, and blunt angles (Agustina et al., 2025) as well as the study of flat geometry and space on the traditional clothing of the Dayak Kenyah Tribe which contains the concept of parallel, square, and rectangular lines (Abbas et al., 2024). Lattice studies also show that the exploration of local culture as a source of mathematics learning is able to increase the relevance of learning and enrich the study of ethnomathematics (Lontaan et al., 2024; Mendrofa et al., 2024). However, until now there has been no research that specifically examines the mencak tradition from an ethnomathematical perspective, especially related to the concept of lines and angles.

This study aims to explore and analyze the concept of lines and angles contained in the mencak tradition at traditional wedding ceremonies in Seluma Regency. This researcher is expected to make a scientific contribution to the development of ethnomathematical studies through the addition of local cultural contexts that have not been widely studied, as well as practical contributions in the development of local culture-based mathematics teaching materials that are contextual and oriented towards character education.

Method

Types of Research

This research is a descriptive qualitative research that aims to explore and describe the mathematical concepts contained in the mencak tradition at traditional wedding ceremonies in Seluma Regency. A qualitative approach is used to gain a deep understanding of the cultural significance and movement activities in the mencak tradition, as well as relate them to mathematical concepts, especially lines and angles. Descriptive research is used to systematically describe cultural phenomena and mathematical concepts found based on field data.

Subject

The research subjects consist of the main subject and the supporting subject. The main subjects include traditional leaders and community leaders who understand the history, meaning, and procedures for implementing the mencak tradition. The supporting subjects consisted of a mathematics teacher, a sports teacher, and one junior high school grade VII student. The involvement of mathematics teachers and sports teachers aims to help validate the findings of mathematical concepts in the mencak movement, while students are involved to see the potential use of research findings in the context of mathematics learning in schools.

Instruments

The main instrument in this study is the researcher himself, who plays a direct role in the process of data collection, data analysis, and conclusion drawn. To support the data collection process, the researcher used observation sheets and interview guidelines. The observation sheet is used as a reference in observing the implementation of the mencak tradition at the traditional wedding ceremony in Seluma Regency, while the interview guidelines are used to dig up information in depth from informants involved in the tradition.

Table 1. Aspects Observed in the Mencak Tradition

No	Observation Aspect	Observation Description
1	Historical aspects	A brief overview of the origin and meaning of the mencak tradition in wedding ceremonies
2	Property aspects	Types and forms of propellants used in the implementation of mencak
3	Participant aspects	Parties involved in the implementation of the mencak
4	Movement aspect	Patterns and shapes Hand and foot movements in the mencak tradition

Table 2. Aspects of Interviewed in the informant

No	Interview Aspects Aspek Wawancara	Description of Information
1	History of the Mencak tradition	Information about the origins and development of the mencak tradition
2	Implementation time	The time and stages of the implementation of mencak in a series of wedding ceremonies
3	Properties used	Types, functions, and meanings of property in the mencak tradition
4	Parties involved	The role of each participant in the implementation of the mencak tradition
5	Mencak movement	Description Hand and foot movements and their meanings

Data Collection

The data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out directly by the researcher by observing the implementation of the mencak tradition in traditional wedding ceremonies and related activities in the school environment. Interviews are conducted in depth to predetermined informants using validated interview guidelines. Documentation was carried out by taking photos and videos using mobile phones to record the movements of the mencak, properties, and situations of implementing traditions that are relevant to the purpose of the research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model which included data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. At the data collection stage, researchers collect data through direct observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation and documentation data in the form of photos and videos of mencak movements were analyzed by identifying body positions, the direction of hand and foot movements, and interaction patterns between actors that have the potential to contain the concept of lines and angles. Next, the researchers performed the initial coding by labeling parts of the movement that indicated lines and angles, such as taper angles, right angles, blunt angles, straight angles, and reflection angles.

At the data reduction stage, the encoded data is selected and grouped based on the similarity of the mathematical concepts found. This process produces thematic categories, such as the type of angle based on hand movements, the type of angle based on the position of the foot, and the relationship between movements in the mencak tradition. The interview data was used to strengthen the interpretation of observational findings, especially related to the cultural meaning of each movement. At the data presentation stage, the data that has been reduced is presented in the form of descriptive descriptions, tables, and images of documentation results to clarify the relationship between the movement of the mencak and the mathematical concepts contained in it. The presentation of this data aims to make it easier for readers to understand the relationship between cultural elements and mathematical concepts. At the conclusion stage, the researcher concluded the mathematical concepts found in the mencak tradition based on the results of data analysis. Validation of findings is carried out through triangulation of data sources, namely by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, as well as through discussions with mathematics teachers to ensure the suitability of the interpretation of the identified mathematical concepts.

This research method is designed to ensure that the goal of exploring mathematical concepts in the mencak tradition can be validly achieved. The use of various data collection techniques and source triangulation allows researchers to obtain rich and in-depth data. In addition, the involvement of mathematics teachers in the process of validating findings helps to ensure that the interpretation of the concepts of lines and angles is in accordance with mathematical principles, so that the results of the research can be scientifically accounted for and relevant to the development of culture-based mathematics learning.

Research Results

Based on observations on November 30, 2023, March 03 and 10, 2024, observations were obtained from three different places, namely :

History of mencak

Mencak is an art activity that is carried out during a traditional wedding ceremony. Mencak has existed for a long time in Seluma Regency as a tradition that is carried out during traditional wedding ceremonies. This activity is carried out to honor guests who come from the bride or groom's side.

The results of the interview stated that the beginning of mencak was first because of ancestors who used to do mencak to welcome guests who came to the village, but now it has become a tradition carried out at every traditional wedding ceremony. In accordance with the informant's statement 2. The following is a snippet of informant interview 2:

Researcher : What is the history of mencak in Seluma Regency?
Reported : The ancestors of ancient times when the kings came to Pasira they did not know what to offer, therefore, according to experts in the village, a welcome should be held, namely mencak.

Mencak is an artistic activity carried out at traditional wedding ceremonies, when the marriage process there is a mencak which aims to respect and appreciate the experts of the house and preserve the arts. This is what informants 5 and 6 said. The following is a snippet of informant interviews 5 and 6.

Researcher : What is the history of mencak in Seluma Regency?
Reported : If I heard the story of Jemo Tuo, there used to be a warrior who came to the martial arts party that was called Namoyo Mencak. Mencak is a culture and art that is carried out when there is a wedding party and aims to preserve the arts in Seluma Regency.
Reported : Mencak is an activity carried out during a traditional wedding ceremony.

Mencak properties

The properties used are mats, betel holders, and two swords. The mat property is placed in the middle between the people who will perform the mencak. On top of the tikat is placed the betel nut place which is located in the middle. In addition, there were also two swords on the mat. There are three properties used in the mencak, namely mats, betel holders, and two swords. However, the sword cannot be used to injure the opponent. The clothes used are Bengkulu traditional clothes according to the opinion of informant 1. The following is a snippet of informant interview 1:

Researcher : What are the properties used in mencak?
Reported : lengguwai, mats, swords, Bengkulu traditional clothes. The sword is to support the b, not to attack each other.

Stretched mats are used for placing betel nuts. The betel nut container contains betel leaves and other materials that are often used for weddings. The location of the betel nut must be in the middle of the mat. The two swords were also placed on the mat.

Participants mencak

The person who performs Mencak is two people who are opposite each other. The person who mencak must be a man, not a woman. Usually when the traditional wedding ceremony mencak is preceded by the groom fighting with the host caregiver, then continued by the bride's parents. After that, the person appointed by the house expert. The person who mencak must be a man and must not be a woman according to informant 3. The following is a snippet of the informant interview 3:

Researcher : *Who is a participant in mencak?*
Reported : *This man must be a man of Idol Bulia Tino.*

Usually, the mencak at the traditional wedding ceremony is preceded by the groom fighting with the host caregiver. Then continued with the father of the parents of the bride. This is in accordance with the opinion of informant 5 who stated the same thing. Here is a snippet of informant interview 5:

Researcher : *Who is a participant in mencak?*
Reported : *Biasoyo groom with the host o,udim tu father of the groom versus the father of the bride tino, and from the groom to the groom with the father of the tino bride.*

Mencak movement

Mencak uses musical accompaniment called serinai. So that the movements carried out must be in accordance with the accompaniment of serinai music. The movements made in mencak are the movements of the hands and feet that are opposite to each other, when one person attacks the other receives an attack, the movements of the hands and feet should not be careless during mencak. The mencak movement began with an opening greeting by the mencak participants to traditional leaders and others, then continued with a movement to attack the opponent and repelled with others, and ended with a closing greeting by the mencak participants. In attacking motions form pointed, straight, right angles. While the fending movement forms reflex angles, blunt and cross-lined.

The first movement is carried out in the mencak, which is the opening greeting movement carried out by two people who perform the mencak. The opening greeting movement, the position of the legs should be closed and the hands placed in front of the chest. After the opening greeting, the two people opened the movement with their hands patting in front of their chests simultaneously. The attacking movement is carried out by one of the people who squirms with his right hand in front forming a pointed angle.

According to informant 1, the movement in the mencak when attacking the opponent forms a sharp and straight angle. A taper corner is formed from the movement of the right hand placed in front of the chest. While the left hand is straight down to form a straight angle. The following is a snippet of the interview by informant 1:

Researcher: *How are the movements performed in mencak?*

Reported : *The hand movement is attacking, the right hand in front of the face is slightly wrinkled and pressed in a pointed shape, the left hand is straight down*

Statement from informant 4 stating that the movement of fending off the opponent on the mencak with the right hand in front of the face forms a right angle. The following is an excerpt of the interview with informant 4:

Researcher : *How are the movements performed in mencak?*
Reported : *The movement of parrying is that the right hand is facing the upright muko and the arms are straight with the right elbows at the elbows, the right kettle is straight to the side while the left kettle is tilted to the side.*

The movement of deflecting with the position of the hands in front of the chest forms a blunt angle. The hand forms a blunt angle that can be noticed, then the outer corner is in the form of a reflex angle. While the other person fends off with a left hand position straight down.

According to the informant, 2 argued that the movement of fending off the opponent formed a blunt angle. Because the right hand on the movement attacks the opponent in front is more of a right angle and not straight. The following is a snippet of informant interview 2:

Researcher : *How are the movements performed in mencak?*
2 reported : *Movement of deflecting / closing the right hand of the chest tightness of tapio is more like the right elbow of the blunt iluak and the left hand is straight down, the right foot is straight forward, the left foot is tilted*

Mencak activities in traditional wedding ceremonies can be found cultural elements that are physical in nature and each movement can describe mathematical concepts in the form of angles.

Accute Angle

Hand movements on the mencak are like forming a taper angle (Andika & Purba, 2024) When the participants made a movement of the feet forward, the seam and the right hand in front of the face formed a pointed angle can be seen in Figure 1. A slight bump in my hand. Geographically, this angle is formed when two intersecting lines form an angle smaller than 90° (Kusumayanti et al., 2025; Sitanggang & Syahputra, 2024).

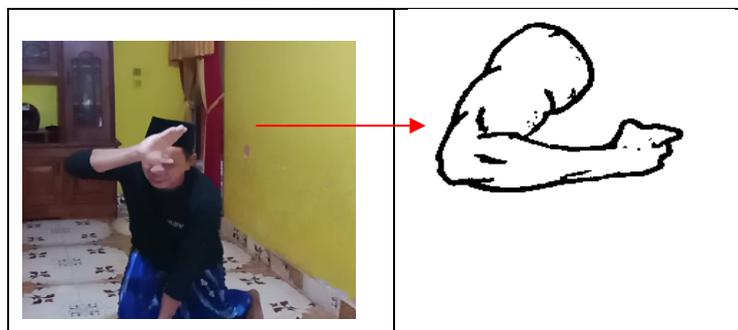


Figure 1. Deflecting motion forms a taper angle

Right angle

Seen in [Figure 2](#). From the participant's hand movements when the right leg is forward, the body is tilted to the side with the left hand forward next to the face. Which forms a right on the elbow of the hand. Right angles are right angles that have a large angle of 90° ([Dhajo et al., 2023](#); [Handayani et al., 2023](#)).



Figure 2. Hand movements form Elbow angle – elbow

Dull Angle

Seen in [Figure 3](#). From the participant's hand movements squeaky when the right hand in front of the chest and the right foot in front of the left leg form a dull angle. Supported by the notion of blunt angle is an angle whose magnitude is more than 90° and less than 180° ([Amri & Santia, 2023](#)).

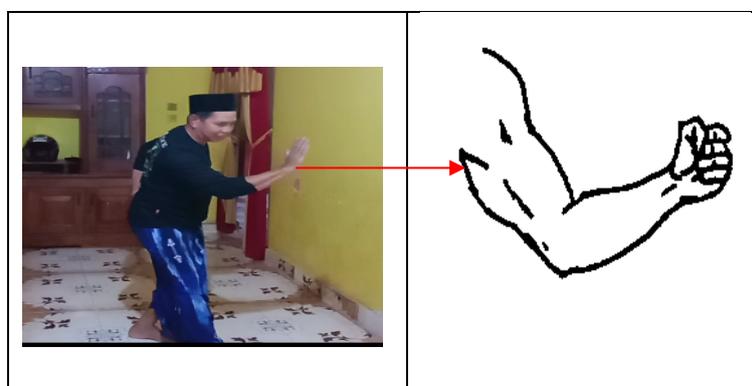


Figure 3. Hand movement forming Dull Angle

Right Angle

Seen in [Figure 4](#). From the movements of the participants' hands when the feet form horses with their left hands straight down. The left hand is straight down to form a straight angle that is 180° ([Widyanarto et al., 2019](#)).

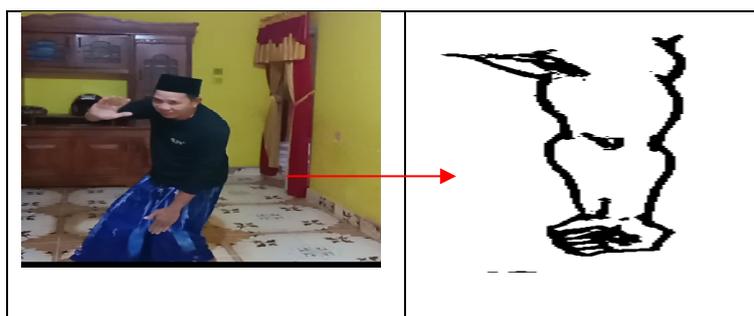


Figure 4. Hand movement forms Right angle

Reflection angle

Seen in Figure 5. From the hand movement that fends off the opponent, the right hand in front of the face at the outer corner of the elbow forms a reflex angle. Because the angle of reflection is an angle that is more than 180° (Dhajo et al., 2023; Keminanda et al., 2025; Widiyanto & Afghohani, 2025).

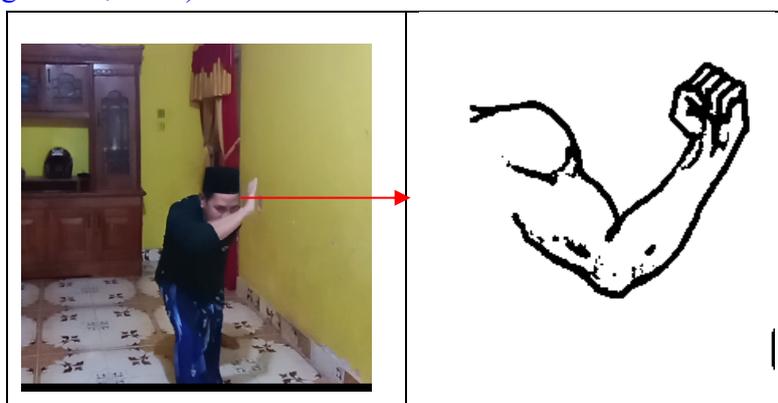


Figure 5. Hand movement forming Angle of reflection

Discussion

The results of the study show that the mencak tradition at traditional wedding ceremonies in Seluma Regency not only has cultural and social value, but also contains ethnomathematical elements. The movements in the mencak indirectly represent geometric concepts, especially the concept of angles, which can be used as a learning resource for contextual mathematics. The concept of a taper angle is seen in attacking movements when the participant's right hand is in front of the face forming an angle of less than 90° . Right angle appears in a parrying motion with the position of the arm forming a 90° angle at the elbow. Meanwhile, the dull angle is seen in the movement of the hand in front of the chest that forms an angle of more than 90° but less than 180° . The straight-down movement of the hand forms a straight angle of 180° , and the angle of reflex is seen at the outer corner of the hand when the movement is more than 180° in magnitude. These findings are in line with previous research that suggests that cultural activities can implicitly represent mathematical concepts (Allah et al., 2025; Kusumayanti et al., 2025). Thus, the mencak tradition can be used as a meaningful mathematics learning context because it relates abstract concepts to cultural activities that are close to students' lives. In addition, the integration of ethnomathematics in learning is expected to increase understanding of mathematical concepts while fostering an appreciative attitude towards local culture. This

supports the view that ethnomathematics acts as a bridge between culture and formal education, so that learning becomes more contextual and meaningful for students..

Conclusion

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, the mencak tradition at the traditional wedding ceremony in Seluma Regency contains cultural elements and mathematical concepts that are integrated with each other. The mencak tradition not only serves as part of the welcoming ritual in wedding ceremonies, but also represents the value of respect for guests through movement aesthetics that are full of cultural meaning. Historically, the mencak tradition originated as a martial practice that later evolved into a traditional art, reflecting the balance between strength, agility, and politeness in the culture of the Seluma people. From an ethnomathematical perspective, the mathematical concepts found in the mencak tradition include the concepts of lines and angles. The concept of lines appears in the direction of hand and foot movements, the body position of the perpetrator, and the formation pattern of the mencak participants who form straight lines and parallel lines in the movement space. Meanwhile, the concept of angle is identified in different types of movements, such as greeting gestures that form taper corners, attacking or opening gestures that form blunt corners and reflex angles, and deflecting or closing gestures that form right angles and straight angles. The relationship between the type of movement and the angular shape reflects the balance, order, and harmony in the movement aesthetics of the mencak tradition.

The findings of this study show that the mencak tradition has great potential to be developed as a source of culture-based mathematics learning, especially in line and angle geometry materials at the junior high school level. The integration of the mencak tradition into mathematics learning can help students understand geometric concepts contextually, while instilling cultural values and character through local wisdom. This research has limitations, including the relatively limited number of subjects and the focus of the study which is only on the concept of lines and angles. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve more diverse subjects, expand the study of other mathematical concepts such as flat shapes, symmetry, or patterns, and develop and test mathematics learning tools based on the mencak tradition empirically in the classroom.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

L.P.S. contributed to understanding the proposed research idea and collecting the data. The other two authors (N.M.A. and K.) actively contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, methodology design, data organization and analysis, discussion of the findings, and approval of the final version of the manuscript. All authors confirm that they have read and

approved the final version of this paper. The contribution proportions to the conceptualization, drafting, and revision of this manuscript are as follows: L.P.S.: 40%; N.M.A.: 30%; and K.: 30%.

Data Availability Statement

The author declares that data supporting the results of this study will be made available by the corresponding author, [L.P.S.], upon reasonable request.

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