

RELIGIOUS AND JAVANESE COSMOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS IN THE “*HOMPIMPA ALAIUM GAMBRENG*” CHANT: AN ETHNOPEDAGOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the religious and cosmological dimensions embedded in the Javanese children's traditional chant “*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*,” which is commonly used to determine turns in children's games. Although widely practiced across Indonesia, this expression is often perceived merely as a playful formula without deeper cultural significance. This research aims to uncover the symbolic meanings, religious values, and cosmological concepts reflected in the chant and to interpret its pedagogical relevance within the framework of ethnopedagogy. Employing a qualitative cultural analysis, the study draws on ethnographic data, linguistic interpretation, and symbolic analysis of traditional Javanese cultural narratives. The findings reveal that the phrase “*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*” functions not only as a mechanism for decision-making in children’s play but also as a symbolic representation of harmony, balance, and collective acceptance of outcomes, which resonate with core principles of Javanese cosmology and spiritual worldview. Furthermore, the chant serves as an informal pedagogical medium through which children internalize values such as fairness, social cohesion, humility, and acceptance of fate. The study contributes to cultural and linguistic scholarship by demonstrating that traditional children’s games can operate as indigenous educational systems that transmit cosmological knowledge and ethical values across generations. By proposing an ethnopedagogical interpretation of the chant, this research highlights the role of traditional oral expressions in preserving cultural wisdom and shaping character education in contemporary society.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional children's games constitute an important component of cultural heritage that functions not only as recreational activity but also as a medium for transmitting values, social norms, and cultural knowledge across generations. Within international scholarship, traditional games have frequently been examined in relation to children's physical development,

social interaction, and cultural learning processes. Studies in educational and developmental research indicate that traditional play contributes significantly to children's motor skills, cooperation, and social communication abilities (Ginsburg, 2007; Pellegrini, 2009). In addition, several scholars have highlighted the role of traditional games in maintaining cultural identity and strengthening community bonds amid the rapid expansion of digital entertainment and global popular culture (Sutton-Smith, 2001; UNESCO, 2017).

Beyond their developmental and social functions, traditional games also operate as cultural practices embedded within broader symbolic systems. Folklore scholars argue that children's games often contain linguistic expressions, chants, and ritualized actions that reflect the worldview of the communities in which they emerge (Opie & Opie, 1997). These oral expressions are not merely playful language but may encode cultural meanings, moral norms, and collective beliefs transmitted informally through everyday play. However, despite growing attention to traditional games as cultural heritage, most existing studies continue to emphasize their pedagogical or social benefits rather than exploring their deeper symbolic and cosmological dimensions.

In the context of Javanese culture, many everyday practices are closely connected to a cosmological worldview that emphasizes harmony, balance, and the interconnected relationship between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. Javanese cosmology reflects a philosophical orientation toward equilibrium and acceptance of life outcomes as part of a larger cosmic order (Geertz, 1960; Mulder, 2005). Cultural expressions such as rituals, proverbs, and traditional performances often embody these cosmological principles. Nevertheless, the presence of such cosmological meanings within children's cultural practices, particularly traditional games, has rarely been systematically examined in academic research.

One intriguing example is the well-known chant "Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng," commonly used by children in Indonesia to determine turns or select players before a game begins. In practice, children recite the chant collectively while revealing either the palm or the back of their hand, and the resulting pattern determines the outcome of the selection process. At first glance, the chant appears to function merely as a playful mechanism for random decision-making. Yet the collective recitation and shared acceptance of the outcome may also reflect deeper symbolic meanings related to fairness, harmony, and collective acceptance, which resonate with broader elements of Javanese cultural philosophy.

Furthermore, the linguistic form of the chant itself raises interesting questions regarding its symbolic and religious significance. In many oral traditions, rhythmic expressions

used in children's play function similarly to ritual language, serving to legitimize social decisions and create a sense of communal participation (Sutton-Smith, 2001). From this perspective, the chant "Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng" may represent a form of symbolic speech that reinforces collective agreement and social cohesion among children. However, scholarly investigation into the religio-symbolic meaning of this particular expression remains limited.

Another perspective that offers valuable insight into this issue is ethnopedagogy, which emphasizes the role of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices as sources of learning and value transmission. Ethnopedagogical approaches view local traditions as informal educational systems that shape moral understanding, social attitudes, and cultural identity (Alwasilah et al., 2009). Within this framework, traditional games can be interpreted as pedagogical tools through which children internalize cultural norms, ethical principles, and communal values. Nevertheless, research connecting traditional games with ethnopedagogical models rooted in local cosmology remains relatively scarce, particularly in studies focusing on Javanese cultural contexts.

Based on this background, a significant research gap exists in the study of traditional children's games. While previous studies have largely focused on children's motor development, social interaction, and cultural preservation, limited attention has been given to the exploration of Javanese cosmological dimensions embedded in children's games, the religio-symbolic meanings of chants such as "Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng," and the potential of traditional play as an ethnopedagogical model grounded in local cosmology. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to investigate the religious and cosmological dimensions contained in the chant "Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng" and to interpret its pedagogical significance within the context of traditional children's games. Specifically, the study seeks to reveal how the chant reflects elements of Javanese cosmology and how the practice of the game functions as an informal mechanism for transmitting cultural values and ethical principles among children.

By offering a cultural and symbolic interpretation of the chant, this study contributes to the broader field of language, cultural, and folklore studies by demonstrating that traditional children's games can serve as indigenous pedagogical systems through which cosmological knowledge and social ethics are transmitted across generations. Furthermore, the study proposes an ethnopedagogical perspective that highlights the role of traditional play as a cultural medium for preserving local wisdom while shaping character formation in contemporary society.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative cultural analysis to explore the religious and cosmological dimensions embedded in the traditional children's chant "*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*" and to interpret its pedagogical significance within the framework of ethnopedagogy. The research design is interpretative and interdisciplinary, combining approaches from folklore studies, cultural linguistics, and ethnopedagogical analysis. Such an approach is appropriate because the object of the study is a traditional oral expression used in children's games, which requires contextual interpretation of linguistic symbols, cultural meanings, and social practices.

The primary data source of this study consists of the chant "*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*" as used in traditional children's games within Javanese cultural contexts. The corpus includes variations of the chant documented through observations of children's play practices, cultural documentation of traditional games, and descriptions found in folklore and cultural studies literature. These sources allow the researcher to examine both the linguistic form of the chant and the social context in which it is performed. Supporting data were obtained from scholarly literature related to traditional games, Javanese cosmology, oral traditions, and ethnopedagogy in order to situate the analysis within broader academic discussions.

Data collection was conducted through three main procedures. First, textual documentation was used to compile linguistic variations and descriptions of the chant from cultural literature, folklore archives, and previous academic studies on traditional children's games. Second, contextual observation of children's play practices was employed to understand how the chant is performed and how the outcome of the chant is collectively accepted by participants in the game. Third, literature review was conducted to gather theoretical perspectives on traditional games, symbolic language, Javanese cosmology, and ethnopedagogical frameworks.

The analytical process follows an interpretative cultural analysis. The first stage involves linguistic and semiotic examination of the chant to identify symbolic elements and structural patterns in the expression. The second stage interprets these symbolic elements using a cultural framework that draws on concepts of harmony, balance, and acceptance commonly associated with Javanese cosmological thought. The third stage applies an ethnopedagogical perspective to analyze how the chant functions as an informal pedagogical mechanism that transmits cultural values such as fairness, collective agreement, humility, and acceptance of outcomes among children.

To ensure analytical rigor, the study integrates multiple theoretical perspectives and relies on comparative interpretation between linguistic expressions, cultural practices, and cosmological concepts found in Javanese cultural scholarship. By combining textual interpretation with contextual cultural analysis, this methodological approach enables a deeper understanding of how a seemingly simple children's chant operates as a symbolic medium that reflects local cosmological beliefs and pedagogical values. This interpretative framework provides a systematic basis for examining the relationship between language, culture, and traditional play practices within the broader field of cultural and linguistic studies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings And Discussion Of Research Question 1

What Religious And Cosmological Meanings Are Embedded In The Chant “*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*”?

The analysis shows that the chant “*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*” contains symbolic elements that reflect cultural meanings beyond its apparent function as a simple tool for determining turns in children's games. In practice, the chant is recited collectively by children while simultaneously revealing either the palm or the back of their hands. The resulting configuration determines which player is selected. Although the process appears random, the outcome is typically accepted without dispute, suggesting an implicit norm of collective acceptance embedded in the game structure.

From a symbolic perspective, this practice reflects the Javanese cultural emphasis on harmony, balance, and acceptance of outcomes within the broader cosmic order. In many aspects of Javanese worldview, life events are interpreted within a cosmological framework that stresses equilibrium between human action and cosmic forces. The collective recitation of the chant can therefore be interpreted as a symbolic ritual that legitimizes the result of the selection process, reinforcing the social value of fairness and communal agreement.

The linguistic structure of the phrase itself also invites interpretation. Although the literal meaning of “*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*” remains ambiguous, its rhythmic and formulaic structure resembles ritualized speech commonly found in oral traditions. Such expressions often function not primarily for semantic clarity but for performative effectiveness, creating a shared symbolic moment among participants. In this context, the chant functions as a performative utterance that establishes legitimacy for the outcome of the game.

This finding contributes to cultural and linguistic studies by demonstrating that children's game chants may contain symbolic structures reflecting broader cosmological values. Rather than being purely playful language, the chant can be interpreted as a cultural artifact that encodes elements of local worldview and social ethics.

Findings And Discussion Of Research Question 2

How Does The Chant Function As A Form Of Religio-Symbolic Language In Children's Play?

The findings indicate that the chant functions as a form of symbolic language that regulates social interaction among children. During gameplay, the recitation of the chant serves as a shared ritual that precedes the decision-making process. Once the chant is completed, the resulting configuration of hands determines the selected player, and the outcome is accepted collectively.

This process reveals a pattern similar to ritualized decision-making practices found in many cultural contexts, where symbolic language is used to legitimize outcomes and prevent conflict. By framing the decision through a chant rather than through negotiation or competition, the game establishes an impartial mechanism that all participants perceive as fair.

The collective recitation of the chant also creates a temporary sense of unity among players. The rhythmic structure synchronizes participants' actions and speech, reinforcing group cohesion and mutual recognition. In this sense, the chant functions not only as a linguistic device but also as a social ritual that strengthens interpersonal relationships among children.

The religio-symbolic dimension of the chant can also be interpreted through its implicit acceptance of the outcome. In Javanese cultural philosophy, acceptance of life events is often associated with the concept of surrender to a larger cosmic order. While children may not consciously interpret the chant in theological terms, the structure of the game subtly introduces them to the idea that outcomes should be accepted gracefully and collectively.

These findings expand previous scholarship on children's play by highlighting the importance of symbolic language in shaping social behavior. They demonstrate that chants used in traditional games can function as cultural mechanisms that regulate fairness, reinforce social harmony, and introduce ethical values within informal learning environments.

Findings And Discussion Of Research Question 3

How Can The Game Be Interpreted As An Ethnopedagogical Model Based On Local Cosmology?

The findings indicate that the traditional chant “*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*” operates not only as a procedural mechanism for determining turns but also as an informal educational medium through which children internalize cultural values. Through repeated participation in the game, children learn to accept collective decisions, respect rules, and maintain social harmony. These values reflect broader principles embedded in Javanese cultural philosophy that emphasize balance, fairness, and acceptance of outcomes.

From an ethnopedagogical perspective, traditional games can function as cultural learning environments where children develop social competence and moral understanding through practical experience rather than formal instruction. In the case of the “*Hompimpa*” chant, the pedagogical process occurs through three main stages: collective participation in the chant, symbolic decision-making through hand gestures, and acceptance of the result by all participants.

The cultural meanings and pedagogical values embedded in the chant can be summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Ethnopedagogical Values Embedded in the “*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*” Game

	 Game Element	 Cultural Meaning	 Educational Value
1	Collective recitation of chant 	Symbolic unity among participants	Strengthening social cohesion 
2	Simultaneous hand gesture 	Equality and fairness in participation	Learning democratic decision-making 
3	Determination of selected player 	Acceptance of collective result	Developing emotional maturity 
4	Repetition of the game process 	Transmission of cultural norms	Internalization of social ethics 

This table maps the symbolic meaning of each phase in the *Hompimpa* game to its direct educational and social impacts on children, forming a foundation for character development within a cultural context.

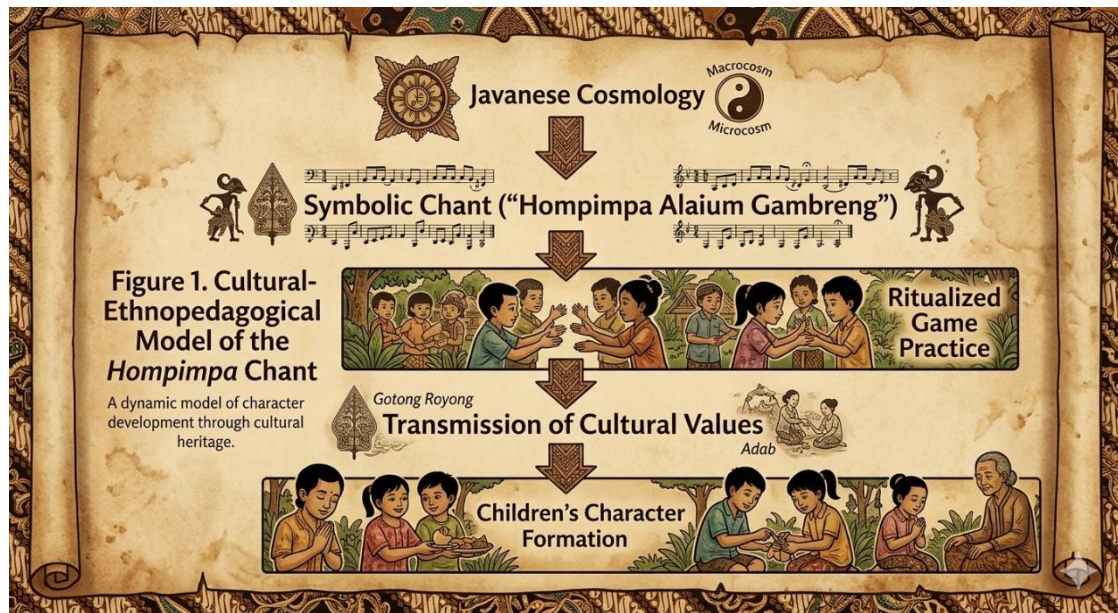
Source: Field study on Indonesian traditional games, 2024

The findings suggest that the game operates as a microcosm of cultural learning in which children practice social ethics within a playful context. By participating in the chant and its

accompanying actions, children are indirectly introduced to cultural concepts of harmony, fairness, and collective responsibility.

To illustrate the analytical framework used in this study, the relationship between cosmology, symbolic language, and ethnopedagogical learning can be conceptualized as follows.

Figure 1. Cultural-Ethnopedagogical Model of the Hompimpa Chant



This conceptual model demonstrates that traditional children's games may function as informal cultural institutions that transmit worldview and ethical principles across generations. The study therefore contributes to the broader field of cultural studies and educational research by proposing an ethnopedagogical interpretation of traditional play practices. Through this perspective, children's games are not merely recreational activities but also cultural mechanisms that preserve local wisdom and support the formation of social values in younger generations.

Figure 2. Semiotic Structure of the "Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng" Chant

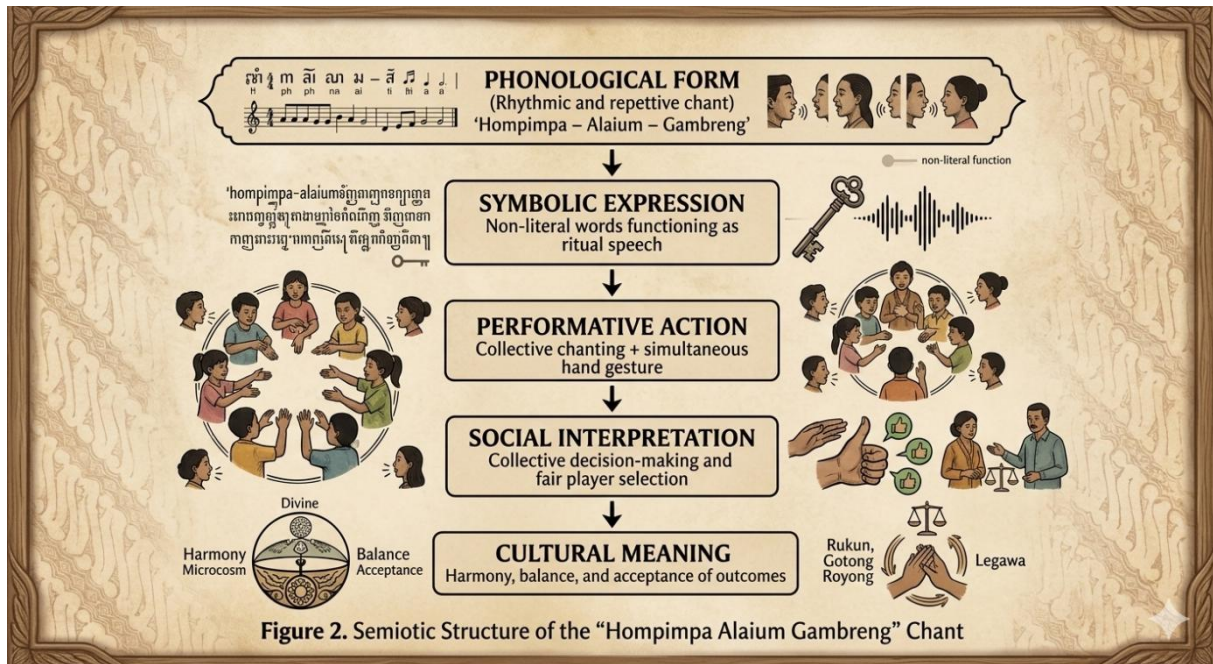


Figure 2 illustrates the semiotic structure of the chant "*Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng*." The chant begins as a phonological and rhythmic expression that does not necessarily carry a literal semantic meaning. However, through performative use in children's games, the chant functions as symbolic speech that legitimizes collective decisions. The semiotic process ultimately connects linguistic form with broader cultural meanings related to harmony, fairness, and acceptance.

Figure 3. Conceptual Framework of Ethnopedagogical Learning Through Traditional Play

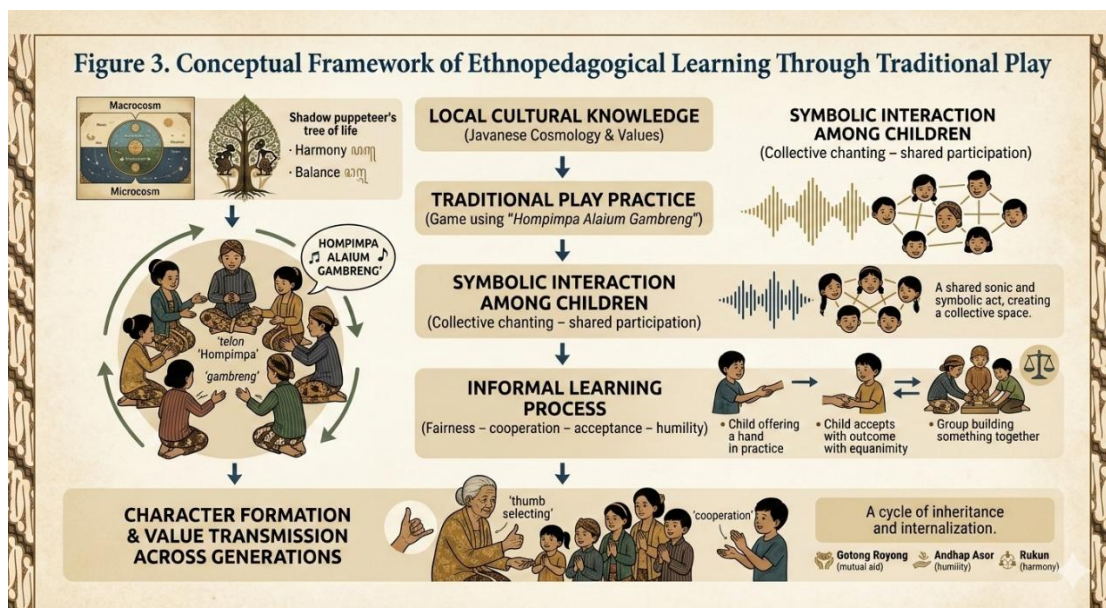


Figure 3 presents the conceptual framework of ethnopedagogical learning through traditional play. The framework demonstrates how local cosmological values embedded in cultural

traditions are transmitted through symbolic practices in children's games. Through repeated participation in the chant and gameplay, children gradually internalize social norms and ethical values that contribute to character formation and cultural continuity.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the religious and cosmological dimensions embedded in the traditional children's chant "Hompimpa Alaium Gambreng" and interpreted its significance through an ethnopedagogical perspective. The findings demonstrate that the chant functions not merely as a playful mechanism for determining turns in children's games but also as a symbolic cultural expression that reflects broader elements of Javanese worldview. Through its collective recitation and ritualized performance, the chant creates a shared moment of decision-making in which participants accept the outcome collectively, reinforcing values of fairness, harmony, and social cohesion.

From a cultural perspective, the study reveals that the structure and practice of the chant embody implicit cosmological principles commonly associated with Javanese cultural philosophy, particularly the emphasis on balance, collective agreement, and acceptance of life outcomes. These symbolic meanings are embedded within the performative aspects of the game, allowing children to encounter cultural values through everyday play practices. In this sense, the chant operates as a form of symbolic language that mediates social interaction and legitimizes decisions within a playful social environment.

The study also contributes to the field of ethnopedagogy by demonstrating that traditional children's games can function as informal educational systems through which cultural knowledge and ethical values are transmitted across generations. By participating in the game, children learn social norms such as cooperation, respect for collective rules, emotional acceptance, and fairness in decision-making. This highlights the pedagogical potential of traditional play as a culturally grounded mechanism for character formation.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The analysis primarily relies on interpretative cultural and linguistic approaches based on textual and contextual examination of the chant within Javanese cultural traditions. Empirical investigation involving broader ethnographic fieldwork or direct observation of children's play practices in diverse regional contexts could provide deeper insights into the variations and contemporary relevance of the chant.

Future research may therefore explore comparative analyses of similar chants in other traditional games, investigate regional variations in the use of the "Hompimpa" chant, or

examine how traditional play practices can be integrated into contemporary educational settings as part of culturally responsive pedagogy. Such studies would further strengthen the understanding of how indigenous cultural expressions contribute to the preservation of local knowledge and the development of socially grounded educational practices in modern society..

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