

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

REDEFINITION OF WARUGA ORNAMENTS IN MINAHASA, INDONESIA: ACTUALISATION OF PATTERN AND MEANING TRANSFORMATION FROM MAKAM TO MUKIM

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Ronald M P Kolibu, Agus Sachari, Pindi Setiawan, Tjetjep Rohendi R. Redefinition of Waruga Ornaments in Minahasa, Indonesia: Actualisation of Pattern and Meaning Transformation from Makam to Mukim-- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 18(17), 259-276. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Redefinition, Ornament, Transformation, *Makam*, *Mukim*

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the process of redefining the *Waruga* ornaments associated with death (*makam*=tomb) into ornaments associated with life (*mukim*=living/settling/housing). The pattern and meaning redefinition is discussed using Spradley's ethnographic method to describe the structure and culture of the community as the basis of pattern and meaning analysis, especially the ornaments' place in the cognitive area of the Minahasa people. The visual form analysis used Cassirer's visual aesthetic theory which defines that symbolic aesthetics can create a separate cultural world. The redefinition means eliminating the meaning of death and accommodating the meaning of life in the *Waruga* ornaments.

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. Waruga (Source: author)

J.G.F. Riedel wrote about Minahasa (areas in North Sulawesi, Indonesia), in which the history of Minahasa, especially the old or ancient Minahasa, is covered and dark. Everything is based on estimates as the Minahasa ancestors conveyed the history orally and only based on memory. The delivery process was convoluted because it involved emotional factors such as revenge, conflict, and disputes between groups which then led to a distortion of facts because of the desire to elevate their own group and eliminate other groups. The blurry history of Minahasa was exacerbated by the Westerners with their Christianity which then eroded the original Minahasa culture. Hetty Palm wrote that in Indonesia, no area has lost its ancient culture such as in the case in Minahasa (Supit, 1986). This opinion is widely refuted by Minahasa culturalists because they see that Minahasa culture has not entirely disappeared, but has reincarnated into a culture that is has been combined with Christianity (Wenas, 2007).

The stone coffin or tomb called *Waruga* is part of the Minahasa cultural heritage. The Minahasa people did the burial rituals using the *Waruga* until the early 20th century.



Figure 2. Waruga and illustration of burial in it (Photo taken in 2019)

Burial rituals using *Waruga* were originally for all Minahasa people, but later it only applied to respectable community members, namely the *Tona'as* (community leaders) and *Walian* (religious leaders). As a tribute to these community members, the *Waruga* was then decorated with various ornamentals not only to beautify the *Waruga* but also to show the identity of the person buried in it. For the community at that time, the ornaments also contained philosophies that described the culture the life principals of the Minahasa people.

‘Redefinition’ in this article is important as a means to raise the potential of ornamentation culture existing in the Minahasa culture. The association of death attached to *Waruga* ornaments is a barrier to the development of ornamentation culture. Significant effort is needed in developing the ornamentation culture in Minahasa, especially in the cognitive area of the Minahasa community. Redefinition by way of transformation is one way out for the development of ornaments in Minahasa.

Waruga Transformation

Transforming *Waruga* ornaments’ pattern and meaning is the first step in this redefinition. The transformation is the initial process, in which the researchers intended to reduce community’s association of *Waruga* ornament as a grave or tomb ornament. This transformation process in Spradley’s ethnographic method is part of the process of translating culture and its cultural symbols. The

translation process as suggested by Spradley must provide space for disclosure in the context of how patterns and meanings exist and develop in society, and also disclosure as a result of the researcher's analysis (Spradley, 2007). The patterns and meanings translation in Spradley's ethnography, which is in the area of cognitive anthropology, also provides room for the expression of explicit and implied patterns and meanings. Research reveals these two phenomena as part of the process of redefining *Waruga* ornaments.




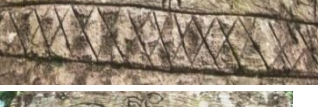



The next process is to apply the ornaments to other media, namely the Minahasa vernacular house. The ultimate goal is a new product with a new definition for the Minahasa culture. To achieve this goal, some elements determine the success or failure of the redefinition process. At this stage, several elements, both external and internal, are needed as part of the redefining process. The binding themes in this process are the elements of the power of financial capital, social capital, and the political capital. The financial capital power is represented by entrepreneurs and producers of Minahasa vernacular houses, the social capital power is with those who are community leaders, cultural practitioners, and academics, while the political capital power is with those who are in the government structure (executive, legislative, and judicial). All three are external factors from the redefinition process can ease the redefinition process. In this process, what is spoken is no longer idealism but a commodity.






The context of commodities intersects with mass culture and popular culture, but has differences in its capacity as a cultural product and how to produce or obtain these cultural products which are carried out with idealism. In the context of idealism, there is standardisation and it is homogeneous and made for the benefit of the masses or many people from one population (Kaunang, 2010). Meanwhile, commodities are related to the economic use of cultural products. Commodities are produced through industrialisation and are oriented towards economic profit. At the consumer level, the idealism of the supporting community tends to be passive, while the commodity of the supporting community is more active.

Commodities that take on the role provide a positive side that can add value to the uniqueness of the region. The added value of the distinctive ornaments aims to form the collective memory of the community. In the context of commodities, it is known that trend is only temporary, but it can introduce the revitalisation of the ornament to the community. Commodity parameters depend on appreciation and considered as the first step towards a cultural image formation (Kaunang, 2010).

The redefinition of *Waruga* ornaments begins with an inventory of visual forms of the ornaments with inherent meanings. In this process, visual forms that are cognitively sacred and closely associated with death are eliminated or, if accommodated, their forms are transformed so that the initial visual impression can be eliminated. This transformation process is an important point because redefinition can occur by collaborating visual forms so that new visual forms are present that can cognitively give a new impression and definition of the ornament (see Table 1).

Table 1. Ornaments dan Meaning Transformation (Turang, 1997)

Waruga Ornament	Visual Meaning	Transformational Meaning
<p>(A) </p> <p>(B) </p>	<p>These two images are visualisations of ornamental flora and fauna patterns. Figure A is a Snake ornament pattern with additional plant patterns on its body. Figure B is an ornamental pattern of vines.</p>	<p>These two patterns by the Minahasa people are believed to symbolize coolness, fertility, and skilfulness</p>
<p>(A) </p> <p>(B) </p> <p>(C) </p>	<p>The ornamental patterns in these three images describe geometric shapes. However, based on an interview with the source person who is a humanist, in the Minahasa culture, geometric patterns are not known. These patterns are representations of flora and fauna patterns or symbols of nature. Picture A and C are depictions of plants. While picture B is a depiction of a mountain as a place where the ancestors of the Minahasa people reside.</p>	<p>These patterns are also believed to symbolize serenity, joy, passion, trust, and hope</p>
	<p>This ornament pattern, from the identification results, is a fauna pattern that depicts birds. Birds in Minahasa culture have a fairly important position because they are considered to be the medium of messengers from the Almighty.</p>	<p>The ornamental pattern symbolizes growth, development, and fertility</p>
	<p>This pattern is an anthropomorphic (human-like) pattern which is a depiction of <i>Waranei</i> (commander/knight) and</p>	<p>This ornament symbolizes strength, efficacy, and sturdiness.</p>

	is a respected figure in Minahasa society.	
	This ornament is an illustration of how cultural acculturation occurs in Minahasa society. For the Minahasa community this is a depiction of a snake (fauna ornament) but visually this is a picture of a snake with the appearance of a dragon.	Symbolizes skilfulness, agility, fertility, and ingenuity
	The ornament, which was identified through interviews with sources, is referred to as a depiction of a bird which in Minahasa culture is one of the animals that is believed to be a messenger of <i>Opo Wananatas</i> (God) who was sent to convey a message to the Minahasa community.	Symbolizes agility and attitude to try to prepare for a good future
	For the Minahasa community, this is a depiction of a snake that is displayed in the form of a dragon. An interesting fact is that in many ornamental visualisations, they are always displayed in pairs	Symbolizes agility and fertility
	This ornament is a type of flora (plant) ornament and is a depiction of sunflowers	Symbolizes wisdom, peace, and a bright and glorious future
	This ornament is a type of flora (plant) ornament and is a description of the type of vines made in pairs	Symbolizes fertility and productivity

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Transformation of Waruga Ornaments

An idea which is packaged in the form of a product and properly socialised has the possibility to form a new image. An image basically plays an important role because it can lead to the formation of an identity. In this process, the use of media as a means of forming an image has an important position, because basically the media as a means allows it to be present in a variety of products. The advertising/promotional system that is the strength of a media, in this case the mass media in which concepts, ideas, themes and ideas, are implanted, then presented, and used as shared memory or of the general public memory (Kaunang, 2010). Piliang stated that the 20th century was a century of imagery, in which the face of culture, especially contemporary culture, was formed and marked by how an image could come and go quickly. These images then formed a new reality and influence the mindset of the people in their daily lives (Piliang, 2010).

Heidegger tried to present the reality of real human life through his writing *Age the World Picture* which calls the world of images as imagery ontology of self-image, which sees how humans view themselves and how humans understand their world. Departing from this definition, the meaning of imaging is basically obtained through a process that is constructed by all components. This means that if a process is driven together by all the components involved, the image will become stronger as a people's memory. Internal and external factors undeniably have significant influence in the process of forming the image. This internal factor is seen as a motivation in this imaging process, which is constructed to the maximum extent possible by all components. Meanwhile, the external factors are seen as the implications of the hard work (Kaunang, 2010).

In the context of the *Waruga* ornament, it must be admitted that the internal factors are still the authors' personal aspiration, and it is hoped that this can be a shared motivation for every component that related in the production of this Minahasa cultural product. There are indeed many things that must be reconstructed in relation to the understanding and mindset of the *Waruga* ornament—a work that is admittedly not easy because it is closely related to the image that has already developed. The bright side in this transformation process is the understanding of several cultural experts and the academic community who see this work as basically a process of returning meaning. Once again, it has to start from the understanding that the *Waruga* ornament is not actually an ornament of death (tomb), but rather a depiction of the views and philosophy of the Minahasa people towards life. *Waruga*, which functions as a burial, is only one of the media used to transfer this philosophy—a philosophy that basically describes how the Minahasa people view life and death. The process of transition from the life of the human world to the world of spirits as a place of eternal life that takes place in the event of death makes *Waruga* the appropriate medium to transfer this view.

Viewing the *Waruga* ornaments, each of the visual pattern and the meaning contains a message about life: life on earth and in heaven as the ultimate goal

of a life. It is apparent that every ritual and ceremony related to the event of death is an attempt to bring the deceased's spirit to enjoy a second life in a peaceful place, namely in heaven (*kasendukan*). It is not surprising that almost all various references obtained interpret the *Waruga* ornaments as prayers such as for prosperity, fertility, strength, wisdom, and glory.

In the context of art product, the symbols that appear in *Waruga* are personal expressions that represent the logic of the maker's imagination. This can be understood as a form of human expression, especially the Minahasa people in art. Various forms, realistic and often abstract forms, appear in line with what Cassirer said that art is not a completed reality, but is a way towards an objective view of objects and the surrounding environment (Sachari, 2002). The reality that appears in the *Waruga* ornaments is actually images of objects and the environment, including as a form of expression of personal existence.

Waruga becomes a memorial for people who are still alive to be able to give the best in their lives as illustrated by these ornaments. It is a tribute to the hard work and the life principles of the deceased so that it is expected to have a good influence on those who are still alive. The living people are taught to respect the good values of the deceased by trying to equip the dead so that their 'second' lives can be passed peacefully and they can be accepted by God.

The transformation of *Waruga* ornaments in terms of pattern and meaning has actually occurred for a long time, although the movement is not obvious. However, in the last 10 years, the transformation process is becoming more evident. Transformation also means a change of form, alteration, conversion, modification, permutation, and renovation. In terms of fine arts, transformation is understood as the depiction of form by emphasizing the achievement of character by means of transferring (*trans*=moving) forms or figures from one object to another (Dharsono, 2004). This transformation of meaning is marked by the revival of Minahasa's distinctive cloth, namely the *Bentenan* which is developed as a new cultural product by a foundation in Minahasa that seeks to explore the cultural potentials of Minahasa. This transformation further hints at how the ornament basically does not represent the meaning of death, but rather the Minahasa people's view of life. The media may change as time passes, but the most important thing is that its philosophical meaning should survive these developments.



Figure 3. Photographs of bentenan cloth displayed in the Leiden Museum and Bentenan cloth made by Karema Foundation (Photo source: www.theminahasa.com)

Table 1 provides an illustration of how the meaning transformation of the *Waruga* ornaments has taken place, which is currently understood as having various meanings that symbolise the life and philosophy of the Minahasa people. Even if these meanings are not widely known, the problem is more about socialisation. The breakdown of communication between generations so that the process of cultural transfer is seemingly slow resulted in a chance that the next generation loses appreciation of Minahasa culture in general. Recognition of culture is then only at the level of being known without being understood.

Transformation, seen from Cassirer's perspective, is the process of understanding the ornaments in *Waruga*, not only in understanding them as a transcendent symbol, but they can be transformed into various immanent symbolisms that are obtained personally. It is this transformation in the immanent scope that this the appointed process in this research. The process is displayed in media and meaning outside the *Waruga*. The *Waruga* which in the past was associated with the interpretation of death, in this study is transformed into symbols of life with similar visual aesthetics. The aesthetics of the *Waruga*'s ornaments move to a richer and more lively meaning and visualisation. So as Cassirer said that it is in line with human nature which is not fixated on a certain static reality and thought, but can wander to find new realities in a new perspective (Sachari, 2002). *Waruga* ornaments in this study are engaged in the transformation of both media and new meanings in new contexts

Symbols that can be understood as personal aesthetic expressions then move into symbols of communal aesthetic expression, in this case the Minahasa community. Aesthetics which is the result of absorption of the five senses is then transformed into a meaningful value. The meaning of each symbol can be the same or different for each person at first, but when interpreted in a cultural context where communities exchange information, meanings and symbols that are initially personal are accepted as communal meanings and symbols. It was at that point that the position of the *Waruga* ornament in this study began.

Redefinition of the Visual Patterns of Waruga Ornaments

After the ornament transformation, the next step was the process of applying ornaments to the Minahasa vernacular house (*mukim*) with the final goal of making a product with a new definition for Minahasa culture. To arrive at this final goal, there are several elements that are seen as determining factors for the success or failure of this redefinition process. These elements are the power of financial capital, the power of social capital, and the power of political capital. In this process, objectivity in viewing the product as idealism can be said to be inferior to subjectivity in viewing a redefined product.

Transforming the pattern and meaning of the *Waruga* ornament was the first step in this redefinition process. The transformation itself was the initial process when the authors intended to reduce the associations existed in the community who view the *Waruga* ornaments as a grave or tomb ornament. The term *makam* (tomb) is used to refer to grave in this study because it has more philosophical

meaning and is in the cognitive area, which is in line with Spradley's ethnographic method. This transformation process in Spradley's ethnographic method is part of the process of translating culture and its cultural symbols. The translation process as suggested by Spradley must provide space for two things, namely disclosure in the context of how patterns and meanings exist and develop in society, and disclosure as a result of the researcher's analysis (Spradley, 2007). The translation of the patterns and meanings of the *Waruga* ornaments in Spradley's ethnography which is in the realm of cognitive anthropology also clearly provides space for the expression of explicit and implied patterns and meanings. Research reveals these two phenomena as part of the process of redefining *Waruga* ornaments.

The next process is to apply the *Waruga* ornament to another media which in this study is the Minahasa vernacular house. The ultimate goal is to produce a new product with a new definition for Minahasa culture. The term vernacular house is parallel to the term *mukim* in this study, which is philosophically a reference for the cognitive area of living and settling in a house. Once again, to arrive at the final goal, some elements are seen as determining factors for the success or failure of the redefinition process. In the stages as mentioned earlier, several elements, both external and internal, are needed as part of the process of redefining the *Waruga* ornament. External factors, from the redefinition process, can ease the redefinition process. In this process, what is spoken is no longer idealism, but rather a commodity.

The context of commodities intersects with the definition of mass culture. But it also has a difference where mass culture is oriented towards cultural products and ways of producing them with idealism. In the context of idealism, every process is standardised and homogeneous and made for the benefit of the masses or people from one population. Meanwhile, commodities are related to how to use the cultural products economically. Commodities are produced through the process of industrialisation and are oriented towards economic profit. At the consumer level, the society's idealism tends to be passive, while for commodities, the society is more active.

In commodities, orientation plays an important role and provides a positive side, and can be used as a value that gives regional uniqueness. The added value of distinctive ornaments aims to form the collective memory of the community in the context of commodities that are temporary trends, but are also an opportunity to introduce the revitalisation of this ornament to the community. Commodity parameters are highly dependent on people's appreciation and can be seen as the first step towards the formation of a new ornamental culture.

The redefinition of the ornament patterns in this study is basically providing alternatives of designs, which is an offer for the formation of a new definition of ornamental culture that is more meaningful and distinctive. This step was taken as a concern for the fading uniqueness of the Minahasa identity that must compete with the desires and tastes of consumers (the market). In the phrase Minahasa vernacular house, the label 'vernacular' as a substitute for the words traditional or customary between the words Minahasa and house is actually an irony in a cultural product. But in this research area, this choice must be made


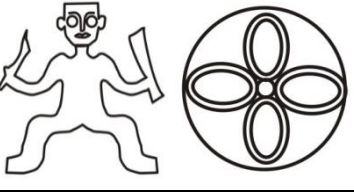
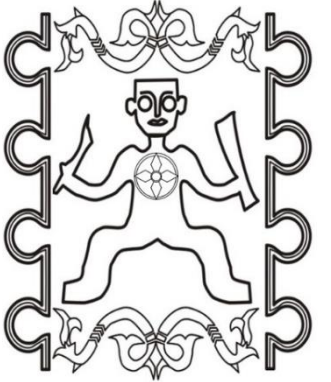




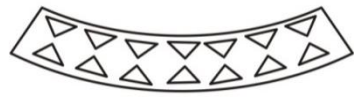


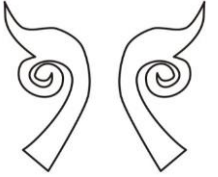


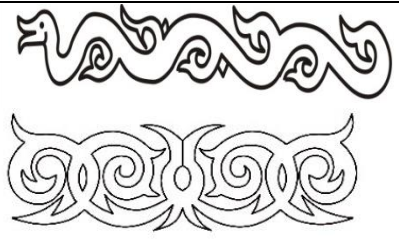
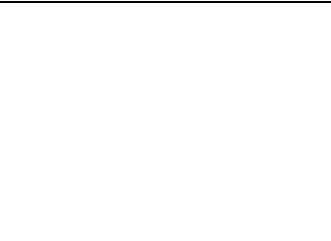
because that is the reality currently happening, where the Minahasa home industry has been penetrated by a strong commercialism that pushes the practical side as the main consideration—in this case, practical in manufacturing and mobility considering that the Minahasa house development area has entered the context of commodity which have crossed various populations and across regions.


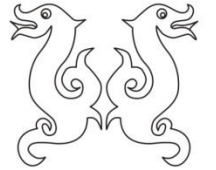
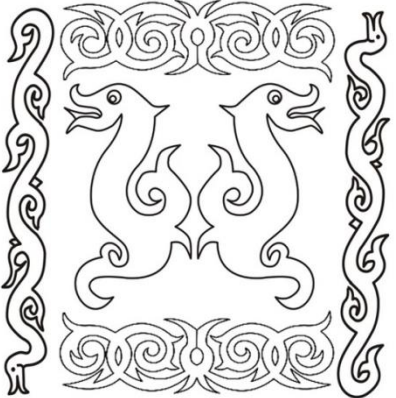





After the transformation of meaning and deformation of the ornaments have been carried out, the next step was the process of applying ornaments to the Minahasa vernacular house with the ultimate goal of producing a product with a new definition for Minahasa culture. To arrive at this final goal, there are several elements that are seen as determining factors for the success or failure of this redefinition process, namely the power of financial capital, the power of social capital, and the power of political capital. In this process, objectivity in viewing the product as idealism can be said to be inferior to subjectivity in viewing a redefined product.


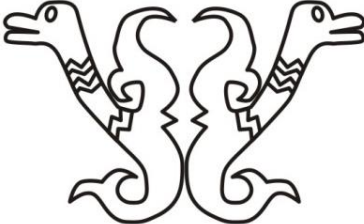


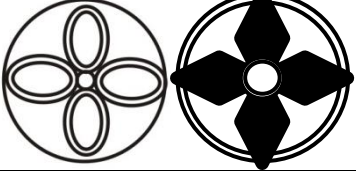
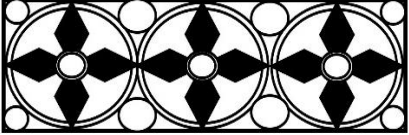

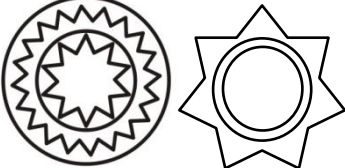


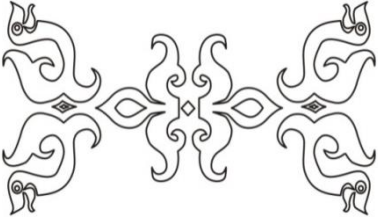



Redefinition as a process in the perspective of this study is the stage to build a new cognitive area which sees that *Waruga* ornaments can be transformed into ornaments on other media which in the context of this discussion is the Minahasa vernacular house. The process begins with visualising the pattern of the original form on the *Waruga* tomb. The ornamental elements in this discussion are mapped using an ethnographic method which, on the one hand, accommodates the cognitive area that developed in the past Minahasa culture but also opens up space for new definitions in the current and future Minahasa culture. Cognitive space that is ethnographically developed within the layers of Minahasa cultural development gives place to dynamics and change. The evolution of the accommodative Minahasa culture has been proven ethnographically from the findings of this study. Table 2 is an illustration of how the redefinition process took place both in pattern and meaning.



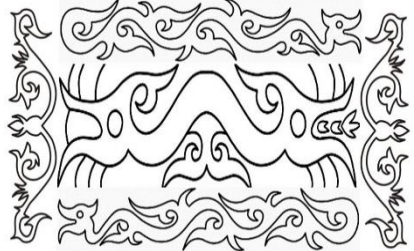





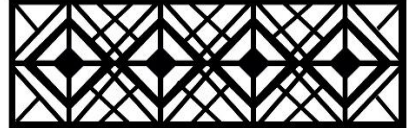


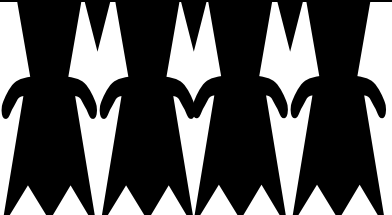

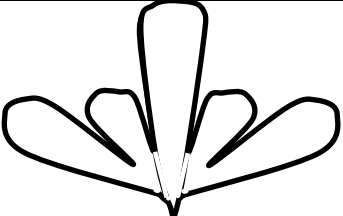
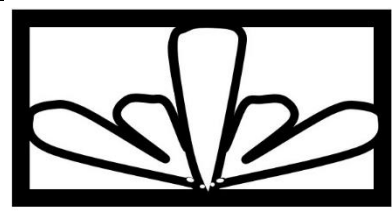
The existence of two cultural products (*Waruga*) is part of Minahasa cultural products which currently exist in Minahasa. Its existence is a part of the process of forming Minahasa cultural identity. Currently, these artifacts are still part of cultural products. *Waruga* is a cultural art object that is part of the life and beliefs of the Minahasa people in the past that serves as a medium for the burial of bodies that is linked to various rituals and ceremonies. As a cultural artifact, *Waruga* carries symbols of philosophy and life guidelines for the Minahasa people as depicted in the ornaments on the *Waruga*. In addition to aesthetic purposes, the *Waruga* ornaments are a description of the Minahasa people's belief in eternal life after death. As the afterlife is for eternity, then various efforts are made to obtain that eternity.


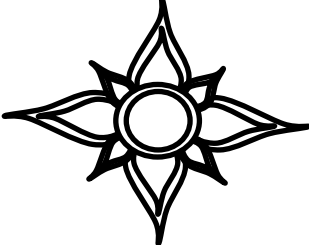
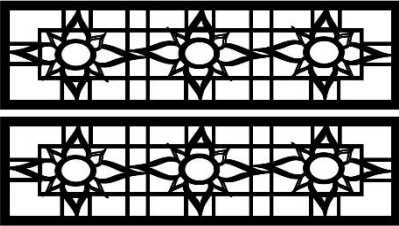
Table 2. Ornaments on Waruga, Transformation of pattern and meaning

Ornaments on <i>Waruga</i>	Transformation of Meaning	Transformation of Pattern	
		Basic figure	Pattern Transformation Design
	<p>This pattern is believed to symbolize tranquility, joy, passion, trust, and hope.</p>		
	<p>This ornament pattern is believed to symbolize coolness, fertility, and skilfulness.</p>		
	<p>The ornament pattern symbolizes purity and nobility.</p>		
	<p>This ornament symbolizes growth and development.</p>		
	<p>The ornamental pattern symbolizes growth, development and fertility.</p>		

Ornaments on <i>Waruga</i>	Transformation of Meaning	Transformation of Pattern	
		Basic figure	Pattern Transformation Design
	<p>It symbolizes agility and fertility.</p>		
	<p>It symbolizes hard work and leadership.</p>		
	<p>It symbolizes wisdom, peace, and a bright future.</p>		

Ornaments on <i>Waruga</i>	Transformation of Meaning	Transformation of Pattern	
		Basic figure	Pattern Transformation Design
	It symbolizes fertility and productivity		
	Both ornamental patterns are believed to symbolize coolness, fertility, and skillfulness.		
	These patterns are also believed to symbolize the future, trust, and hope.		
	The ornamental pattern symbolizes growth, development, and fertility.		
	This ornament symbolizes strength, efficacy, and sturdiness.		

Ornaments on <i>Waruga</i>	Transformation of Meaning	Transformation of Pattern	
		Basic figure	Pattern Transformation Design
	It symbolizes skillfulness, agility, fertility, and ingenuity		
	It symbolizes agility and attitude of preparing for a good future		
	It symbolizes purity.		
	It symbolizes togetherness and mutual cooperation		
	It symbolizes growth and the future		

Ornaments on <i>Waruga</i>	Transformation of Meaning	Transformation of Pattern	
		Basic figure	Pattern Transformation Design
	<p>It symbolizes hope for the future.</p>		

Ornaments are also a product of past cultural arts whose existence is still evident today. Its function as a decoration developed towards industrialisation. In its position as part of a craft industry, packaging and display then become a major consideration. On the one hand, this makes the ornaments experience a blur of identity in terms of form and function. The consumer's desire then defeats the uniqueness of the ornament form that has been part of the identity for a long time. Day by day, there are fewer and fewer characteristic ornaments attached to industrial Minahasa products. It is an unavoidable irony.

Ornaments on *Waruga* as a representation of the philosophy and the way of life of the Minahasa people can be a medium for imaging the Minahasa culture. This imaging process requires media that can bring back this ornamental culture as part of the new Minahasa cultural product. The position of the *Waruga* ornament as a contemporary product makes it the appropriate medium for its application. The redefinition of the *Waruga* ornament is a solution for imaging past cultural products into today's cultural products and can make it a solution to the irony of the blurry Minahasa cultural products. The new cultural image is part of the process of forming the image of a community. The emage will lead to the presence of a new cultural identity as part of the cultural imaging process.

Ethnography is used to describe objects from a cultural point of view, in this case Minahasa culture. The description in the ethnographic framework provides space to understand both objects for both the researchers and the readers. In this stage, what is avoided is an absolute claim to a fact that is found. The researchers in this study are to accommodate all information by conveying it clearly and openly. Information obtained from both the literature and other sources is presented as is so that it can make the research process rich in data and information.

Symbolic aesthetics is an opening way in revealing the value of *Waruga* ornaments both from visual and meaning points of view. The visualisation process at this stage is the narrowing of various information and data encountered during the research process. At this stage the experimentation of form and meaning began to be carried out even though it was still within the limits of the information obtained. What is interesting is that when visualisation within the framework of symbolic aesthetics is started, the space for interpretation of ornaments in terms of both visual and meaning remains open.

The experimental process (creation) is carried out in a cultural cloning method guide where revitalisation is a part of it. This study then tries to formulate the process of revitalising the Minahasa *Waruga* ornaments into several stages, namely transformation and redefinition. These two stages are the new findings in this study. The formulation of these two stages is the result of the analysis of the experimental process carried out in this study. Transformation and redefinition are expected to complement the process of redefining *Waruga* ornaments.

In an effort to reaffirm the position of the *Waruga* ornament which has been transformed to produce a new definition, especially with the transition of media from the tomb to the mukim (tomb to house), the application of ornaments that refer to *Waruga* as an artifact that can still be enjoyed is an option for affirming the representation of the Minahasa identity. Ornaments represent Minahasan signs and symbols, which Hasanudin sees as a text, can convey messages both verbally and non-verbally about Minahasa (Kaunang, 2010). Moreover, Barker in *culture studies* stated that text does not only refer to the written word, but also the whole practice of meaning that can be interpreted as a cultural text. A cultural text can provide a new meaning (redefinition) for a cultural product that allows the presence of a new cultural image (Barker, 2000). The fairly even distribution of *Waruga* in every Minahasa region can actually be seen as a unified view of the meaning of life and the culmination of the acceptance process of various tribes and groups in Minahasa who see themselves as one part, and can become a shared identity. The distribution is the potential for the presence of ornaments with new definitions of patterns and meanings. New application media can be a means to form a new cognitive culture in the current existence of Minahasa culture.

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