

SACRALITY AND SYMBOLISM OF THE BARIS KLEMAT DANCE AT PURA MENEGA, SESEH CEMAGI TRADITIONAL VILLAGE, BALI: AN ETHNOAESTHETIC STUDY

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Abstract

Baris Klemat Dance is an aesthetic expression imbued with sacred and symbolic values within the religious rituals of the customary community in Seseh Cemagi Village, Bali. This study aims to examine the presentation structure, symbolic meanings, and sacred dimensions of Baris Klemat Dance, as well as how the local community internalizes these meanings in ritual practice. A qualitative method with an ethnoaesthetic approach was employed, using participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and literature review. The analysis was guided by the theories of Dance Structure (Kaeppler, 2007), Ethnoaesthetics (Merriam, 1964), and Symbolic Meaning (Turner, 1967). The findings reveal that Baris Klemat Dance is presented in a non-narrative form (without storyline), using "klemat" (miniature boats) as its main property. The performance consists of five structural segments: pepeson, ngelembar, pengawak, pecet, and mendak tirta to the sea. The dance is performed in pairs by male dancers, accompanied by Gamelan ... (to be completed), following a sacredly organized formation and movement pattern during the piodalan ritual at Pura Menega. Its sacred symbolism is reflected in the relationship between movements, costumes, and the klemat property, representing the coastal community's cosmology: the interconnectedness of humans, nature, and ancestors. For the people of Seseh Cemagi, Baris Klemat Dance is not merely an artistic performance but a form of devotional service (ngayah), a medium of spiritual communication with divine forces, as well as a means of cultural preservation and reinforcement of communal identity rooted in their spiritual and social value system. This study underscores the importance of preserving sacred performance arts in maintaining cultural continuity and cosmic harmony in Balinese society.

Keywords: *Klemat Dance Line; Sacredness; Symbolism; Ngayah (Devotional Service); Ethnoaesthetics.*

INTRODUCTION

The Baris Klemat dance is a sacred dance form that plays a central role in the belief system and religious practices of the Seseh Cemagi Traditional Village, Mengwi, Badung. Performed during the piodalan ceremony at the Menega Temple, this dance represents not only artistic expression but also spiritual values, local history, and communal identity. Rooted in the Baris Dance tradition, which generally symbolizes the courage and preparedness of warriors in devotion to the gods, Baris Klemat displays unique movement structures, ritual properties, and distinctive symbolic narratives, distinguishing it from other Baris Dance variants in Bali.

Although the Baris Dance has long been a subject of study in Balinese performing arts (Bandem, 1983; Bandem & deBoer, 1995), the focus of studies on the Baris Klemat Dance in the context of the Menega Temple ritual is still very limited. In fact, this dance represents a form of performing art that is not only aesthetic but also full of religious and cosmological meaning, especially for coastal communities who are closely related to the maritime world. Dance properties such as klemat (oar), kancuh (ladle), and pancer (boat rudder), illustrate the community's spiritual attachment to the sea as a source of life, while also demonstrating the integration of traditional values and the environment.

Amidst the rapid flow of globalization, modernization, and cultural tourism, many sacred Balinese art forms have undergone transformations in function and presentation. Most ceremonial dances have been modified to meet the needs of tourist entertainment or promote regional culture (Pitana & Gayatri, 2005). This phenomenon also occurred in the Baris Klemat Dance, which in 2018 was revitalized as a profane performance at the Cemagi Festival. The choreography, number of dancers, and musical accompaniment were changed to make it more attractive in public

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spaces. However, these changes have raised cultural concerns due to the blurring of sacred meanings and the separation of the dance from its original ritual context.

In an interview on September 29, 2023, I Putu Hendra Sastrawan, a prominent figure in the Seseh Traditional Village, stated that the Baris Klemat Dance underwent a revitalization by the Badung Cultural Office in 2023. This was also confirmed by choreographer Putu Anggradana Suka, who explained that the revitalization was a reflection of the community's appreciation, which was then welcomed by the Cultural Office. This effort aims to encourage the younger generation in the Seseh Traditional Village to become interested in performing this ceremonial dance. Previously performed improvisationally, the Baris Klemat Dance now has a defined performance structure to facilitate community replication of the choreography. This action reflects the dynamic of the push and pull between preserving tradition and the demands of adapting to the times, while also opening up space for reflection on the meaning of the sustainability of sacred arts in Bali.

According to I Wayan Bawa, the Seseh Traditional Village Head, the Baris Klemat Dance is also interesting because it represents the long history of the fishing community in the Seseh area. According to oral testimonies from local traditional figures such as I Putu Agastya Gunawan and I Nyoman Suada, this dance is believed to have existed since the 17th century and is an offering of gratitude for marine produce and a request for safety from the forces of nature. This information was obtained through an interview conducted on September 29, 2023, which confirmed that in the local cultural context, this dance functions as a medium of spiritual communication between humans and the Creator and as a bond of social solidarity within coastal communities.

Despite its high historical, aesthetic, and symbolic value, few academic studies have yet to fully examine the structure, symbolic meaning, and socio-spiritual relevance of the Baris Klemat Dance within indigenous communities. As a UNESCO-recognized Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2023, documentation and critical analysis of its form, function, and meaning are becoming increasingly important, particularly to ensure the preservation of Bali's authentic and contextual cultural heritage. With this background, this study aims not only to document the Baris Klemat Dance as an aesthetic object but also to unravel the symbolic narrative and sacred dimensions it contains. This study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of ethnoaesthetic studies and serve as a strategic reference in efforts to revitalize Balinese indigenous community-based culture.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method that aims to describe in depth the phenomenon of the Baris Klemat Dance in the cultural and ritual context of Balinese coastal communities. The research location is in the Seseh Traditional Village, Mengwi, Badung, which is the center of this dance performance in the piodalan ceremony at the Menega Temple. Primary data were obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews with key informants such as traditional leaders, dancers, priests, and villagers who understand the history and meaning of the dance. Secondary data were collected from archival documents, literature, and relevant visual recordings. Data collection was carried out through participatory observation during the ceremonial procession, semi-structured interviews with purposively selected informants, and documentation in the form of photos, videos, and field notes. The researcher acted as the main instrument in this process, assisted by observation guidelines and interview guides to maintain the focus of the study. All data were analyzed thematically through stages of reduction, categorization, and interpretation to discover the presentation patterns, spiritual values, and symbolic meanings in the Baris Klemat Dance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research result

Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that the people of Seseh Village present the Baris Klemat Dance as a free dance. This is evident in the way it is presented, makeup and costumes, choreography, and accompanying music. The Baris Klemat Dance performance begins with a prayer procession at the Menega Temple, which is attended by the entire community and dancers as a form of respect for Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa. After the prayer, the procession moves eastward, passing a large rock known as Batu Tumpeng. At this place, the community spontaneously dances in the form of memendet, accompanied by Baleganjur drums, as a symbol of devotion (ngayah) and gratitude to nature. After the procession in the east is complete, participants continue their journey westward towards Batu Nunggul. At this point, the memendet procession is again performed in an atmosphere rich in spiritual values.

Next, the community performs a sea offering ceremony involving two jukung (traditional boats). One jukung is used for the mulang pekelem ceremony, an offering to the sea, and the other for the nunas tirta ceremony,

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a procession to ask for holy water. Both boats sail together out to sea, marking a crucial phase in the entire sacred procession.



Figure 1 Baris Klemat Mendak Tirta Dance to the Sea
(Documentation: Putri Laksmi Dewi, 2023)

After the procession is completed, the Baris Klemat Dance is presented to welcome the holy water carried by residents from the sea to the Menega Temple accompanied by the Gong Kebyar Gamelan. In the perspective of the Dance Structure theory developed by Adrienne Kaeppler (2007), it is stated that the form of dance presentation is not only understood as a technical arrangement of movements, but as a cultural system that reflects the social, spiritual, and ecological values of the supporting community. As the Baris Klemat Dance which grew and developed in the cultural landscape of the coastal community in the Seseh Cemagi Traditional Village.

B. Form of Baris Klemat Dance Performance

Conceptually, this dance is not only understood as an artistic form, but also as a spiritual and symbolic manifestation integrated into the belief system, cultural ecology, and social structure of the local community. Its presence as an important part of the piodalan ritual at the Menega Temple marks its role as a "offering dance" (wali dance), performed solely for spiritual purposes, not for public viewing. The Baris Klemat dance is rooted in the principle of ngayah, namely selfless sacred devotion to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa, which is a fundamental value in the religious practices of the people of the Cemagi Traditional Village.

Structurally, the Baris Klemat Dance displays repetitive yet varied movement patterns, such as Ngarud Yeh, Ngipuk, Ngancuk, and Mendayung, which represent readiness for war, as symbols of transcendence, devotion, and cosmic harmony. The Mendak and Agem movements, for example, imply an attitude of spiritual acceptance. Meanwhile, movements such as Nyagjagin and Saeb-saeb reflect steadfastness and concentration against the "enemy" of a mystical nature, namely negative energy that threatens the balance of the traditional village.

The Baris Klemat dance bridges the gap between the body as a means of expression and the body as a spiritual medium. This dance form demonstrates how the dancer's body is not merely an aesthetic instrument, but rather a sacred vessel for a power greater than itself. In this context, dance is not merely a form of artistic expression, but also a ritual instrument, a means of communication with the spiritual world, and even a collective mechanism for maintaining identity and communal solidarity. Humardani (1979: 13) states that form in dance is a concrete manifestation used as a medium to convey content, in this case spiritual values, collective beliefs, and symbolic meanings that exist within the community that supports it.

The Baris Klemat dance form is not only understood as a visual or technical aspect, but also as a representation of sacred values integrated into the body of the performance. One important aspect of the dance form is the structure or arrangement of the performance, which serves as the main framework in conveying its ritual and symbolic messages. Djelantik (in Sariada, 2020: 127), states that the overall structure of the dance work consists of

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parts that support each other and form a complete unity. The Baris Klemat dance depicts a spiritual journey and symbolizes the cooperation of fishing communities in carrying out the ritual of collecting tirta or holy water.

Different from the general structure which follows the tri angga pattern (beginning, content, and end), the Baris Klemat Dance has four structural parts including: pepeson (ngelembar), crew, printer (mendak tirta), and pekaad.

These four sections not only depict a dramatic plot, but also represent the spiritual journey and symbolize the cooperation of the fishing community in the tirta (holy water) collection ceremony. The pepeson section is divided into two phases: pepeson adeng and pepeson becat. Pepeson adeng depicts the fishermen's preparations before going to sea, where the dancers visualize the process of preparing a jukung (traditional Balinese boat). This section is slow and solemn, reflecting the careful and pure intentions in carrying out the ritual.

1. Pepeson/Ngelembar

Ngelembar is the initial part of the Baris Klemat Dance performance structure, depicting the prowess of the fishermen. This part consists of two stages, namely pepeson adeng and pepeson becat. According to Sariada (2010: 20), the word pepeson comes from the word pesu, which means to come out, with the prefix "pe" and the suffix "an" becoming pepeson, which means the protruding part. In this part, the dancers are depicted preparing the jukung (traditional Balinese boat) as the main means of collecting tirta (holy water). This scene illustrates the initial moment before the fishermen go to sea, which is part of the series of ceremonies, as seen in the following image.



Figure 2. Klemat Line Dance Pepeson
(Documentation: Putri Laksmi Dewi, 2023)

Variety of Movements
- The dancers begin by holding their hands to their chests, then move their hands to the nayog position, then move their hands to the nayog position, then move their hands to the nayog position again. The nayog movement is repeated according to the length of the music. - Agewith the chest covered position while doing the saeb-saeb (peeking) movement to the right and left - The movement of nyagjagin to the left, piles, cegut, lift the left leg, put the foot down, tanjek, right kipek The movement of nyagjagin to the right piles, cegut, lift the right leg, put the foot down, tanjek. The movement is repeated 3 times.

Pepeson becat is the pepeson section of the dance, with a faster tempo than pepeson adeng, which tends to be slower or calmer. In this section, the dancers are depicted on the water, performing rowing and ngindang movements. This section represents their journey through the ocean, which is a crucial stage in the dance's sacred ritual.

Variety of Movements
- Ngunda movement, followed by saeb-saeb, nangsel 2 times, milpil while playing the klemat property, angsel 2 times, ngunda movement, saeb-saeb, nyagjagin left and right repeated 2 times. Angsel 2 times, piles.

- The 2-angle movement, piles, left and right jets are repeated 2 times. The 2-angle, malpal, agem movement is positioned horizontally at the bottom.

2.Pengawak

Pengawak is the dance movement section presented after Pepeson. The word "pengawak" comes from "awak," which means main part. If analogized to human anatomy, Pepeson is likened to the head, Pengawak to the body (the main part of the body), and Pengecet/Penyuwud to the feet. In the structure of the dance composition, Pengawak plays a role as the core of the dance movement arrangement because it contains the longest series of movements, consisting of several movement sentences. This section is repeated several times before moving on to the next movement stage, as shown in the following image.



Figure 3. Baris Klemat Dance Crew
(Documentation: Putri Laksmi Dewi, 2023)

Variety of Movements
- Ngunda movement, right agem with diagonal klemat property, left agem with diagonal klemat property, right and left nyogok with horizontal klemat property, right tanjek, cegut, malpal, right tanjek. Repeat 2 times. - Ngipuk movement (body up and down while playing with the scarf while sitting kneeling, legs crossed like the sitting kebyar dance).

2. Pengecet (Mendak Tirta)

In the Baris Klemat Dance, the mendak tirta (watering water) is an important part of the ceremonial procession, symbolized by the pengecet section, which is the section with the tempo change from gending pengawak to gending pengecet. This section displays agile and dynamic movements, creating a more cheerful atmosphere in the dance (Dibia, 2013: 103). At this stage, the dancers leave the performance area and move towards the coast of Seseh Beach. This journey symbolizes their efforts to obtain or welcome the tirta that comes from the sea. This section is a crucial moment in the ceremonial procession, reflecting the sacrifice and dedication of the dancers in carrying out their sacred duties. The following shows the floor pattern and various movements of the pengecet section of the Baris Klemat Dance.



Figure 4. Baris Klemat Dance Painter
(Documentation: Putri Laksmi Dewi, 2023)

Variety of Movements
- Standing movement with open hands holding a scarf while ngenjet. Kipek, nyogroh left (hands open) kipek, nyogroh right (hands on chest) repeated 4 times in the front, left, back, and right positions. - The dancer takes the props, turns twice, nyogroh right and left, malpal, then does a mendak movement (heading to the coast to collect tirta/holy water). - The dancer performs ngancuk movements while mesuryak.

3. Pekaad

Pekaad (penyuud) comes from the word "suwud," meaning the end of a dance. In this stage, the dancers bring the holy water they have obtained back to the Menega Temple or the location where the ceremony took place. This stage marks the end of the journey in the holy water collection procession. The following shows the floor plan and movement variations of the Pekaad section of the Baris Klemat Dance.



Figure 5. Klemat Line Dance Performance
(Documentation: Putri Laksmi Dewi, 2023)

Variety of Movements
- The dancers perform a mendak movement towards the front of the Menega Temple, a ngancuk movement while mesuryak. - Dancers perform movements such as rowing right and left, ngupek loudly 2 times. Malpal.

The Baris Klemat Dance in the Seseh Cemagi Traditional Village is a blend of spiritual values, ritual functions, and cosmological symbolism manifested through sacred structures of movement, space, and time. This dance represents the life narrative of Balinese coastal communities in performative form, which not only connects humans with God but also maintains the continuity between nature, culture, and local wisdom. The Seseh Traditional Village community strictly maintains the sacredness of this dance by not performing it outside of a ritual context. This indicates a high cultural awareness of the function and value of their ancestral heritage. For them, the Baris Klemat Dance does not belong to an individual or a studio, but rather belongs to the collective village, passed down from generation to generation.

C. Symbolism of the Baris Klemat Dance

The symbolism of the Baris Klemat Dance is highly complex and reflects the relationship between humans, nature, and supernatural powers. Within Victor Turner's (1967) theoretical framework, ritual symbols are multivocal, meaning they can convey multiple meanings simultaneously depending on the context.

Sacred symbolism is embodied through the interrelationship between the movements, attire, and props of the klemat with the coastal community's value system, reflecting Balinese cosmology: a harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and ancestors. The symbolism of movement is evident in the saeb-saeb gesture, which resembles a sea-watching movement. This movement represents the fishermen's vigilance and caution regarding natural phenomena. Nglemat (rowing) reflects perseverance and devotion. Ngancuk, with its upward thrusting of the klemat, signifies direct communication with sacred powers. The ngarud yeh movement, throwing water from the boat, is interpreted as an effort to cleanse oneself of negative energy and spiritual obstacles. The rowing (nglemat) and ngindang movements depict the fishermen's journey across the sea to obtain holy water. This dynamic shift marks the transition from preparation to spiritual action. The pengawak section forms the core of the dance structure. In this section, the dancers perform a more complex and lengthy series of movements. These movements depict the process of searching for holy water at sea, a search that is not only physical but also symbolic.

The pengawak movement also demonstrates the fishermen's spiritual strength and resilience, a manifestation of the spirit of ngayah. The pengecet section is marked by a faster musical tempo and more dynamic movements. At this moment, the dancers move towards the coastal area of Seseh Beach, as if welcoming the arrival of water from the sea. Symbolically, this section reflects the effort and sacrifice in obtaining natural blessings as a form of gratitude and humility before the supernatural forces. The final section is the pekaad (penyuwud), which marks the end of the performance. The dancers return to the temple carrying the water they have obtained. This section symbolizes the surrender of the results of devotion to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa, concluding the spiritual cycle of the ceremony.

The Baris Klemat Dance is performed by 13 male dancers from fishing families in the Seseh Traditional Village. This figure not only reflects unity and collective work but also has symbolic meaning in the spirituality of the local community. The choreography of this dance is based on the principles of Tri Dasa Aksara, a series of sacred Balinese scripts used as guidelines for direction and spatial arrangement in the performance, so that all dance movements blend harmoniously with the sacred dimension of the Menega Temple. The makeup used is simple yet full of meaning. Colek pamor, a white powder smeared on the face (forehead, temples, cheeks, chin, and nose), symbolizes purity and spiritual self-purification. The dancers' attire consists of a white shirt, trousers, kamen (a traditional Javanese robe), belt, semayut (a traditional Javanese dagger), saput (a traditional Javanese sarong), simping (a traditional Javanese sarong), long cloth, badong (a traditional Javanese ladle), and gelungan (a traditional Javanese sash). The three main props: klemat (oar), kancuh (a dipper), and pancer (a boat rudder) not only serve as visual props but are also rich in meaning as symbols of the struggle for life at sea and devotion to the Creator. The performance took place in the nista mandala, the outer courtyard of the Menega Temple. This location reflects spiritual openness and the symbolic starting point for the journey in search of holy water. The dance movements were synchronized with the gamelan gong kebyar accompaniment, which supported the ritual's dynamics and reinforced the sacred aura throughout the performance.

The Baris Klemat Dance is not only a form of aesthetic expression, but is also rich in symbolism that depicts the spiritual, social, and cosmological values of the Balinese people, particularly the fishing community in the Seseh Traditional Village. The symbolic elements in this dance are integrated through movement, makeup, costume, props, and accompanying music, each of which holds profound meaning in a religious and cultural context.

Sacred symbolism is evident in the various movements in the Baris Klemat Dance, which are not merely visual forms but also constitute a symbolic language reflecting the lived experiences and spirituality of its supporters. The "saeb-saeb" movement, for example, resembles the ulap-ulap movement, symbolizing the vigilance

and observation of fishermen in the marine environment. The rowing movement reflects the perseverance of living as fishermen, as well as the effort to reach holy water. The "ngancuk" movement, which involves stabbing upward with the klemat, symbolizes devotion to sacred power, while "ngarud yeh," or throwing water from the boat, represents the effort to purify oneself from all distractions on the spiritual journey. Each movement is rhythmically arranged in a structure that depicts the stages of life and the symbolic journey toward spiritual perfection.

Sacred symbolism is also evident in the makeup, which uses a simple yet meaningful style. The use of white powdered pamor (colek pamor) applied to the dancers' faces is not merely ornamental, but a symbol of self-purification. The application of the tapak dara (footprint) and gecek telu (telu) symbols through the pamor colek represents the concept of Sang Hyang Tiga Saksi (Three Witnesses) (Brahma, Vishnu, and Iswara), the spiritual guardian force in every ceremony. This makeup emphasizes the importance of physical and spiritual purity in carrying out sacred duties.

The sacred symbolism of the costumes is also evident in the spiritual identity, which represents the symbols of the fishermen's ancestors. The white shirt and trousers symbolize the purity of intention in ngayah. The purplish-red kamen symbolizes courage, while the belt and semayut indicate readiness and inner sincerity. The keris pinned behind the body symbolizes spiritual strength and ancestral heritage. The checkered and lamak motifs of the saput depict the balance between humans, nature, and God. The "gegunungan"-shaped coil decorated with gumitir and frangipani flowers symbolizes nobility, purity, and offerings to Hyang Widhi. Through the costumes, each dancer not only appears aesthetically pleasing but also carries symbolic value as an intermediary between the secular and non-scientific worlds. The props used in this dance reflect the maritime life of the Seseh people. The klemat, as an oar, symbolizes direction and strength to achieve spiritual goals. The kancuh (dipper) is used to throw water, symbolizing purification from obstacles. The pancer (boat rudder) represents life's direction and self-control. The colorful scarves tied to the klemat reflect the diverse thoughts and hopes of the community united in a collective goal of achieving harmony in life and blessings from the sea. All of these props not only support the visualization of the dance but also convey spiritual and social messages closely linked to the values of mutual cooperation and courage.

The symbolism of the saral is also evident in the accompanying music for the performance, which uses the Gong Kebyar of the Menega Temple, which is sacred and only played during the piodalan (piodalan ceremony). This music serves to create a spiritual atmosphere and becomes a prayer that flows through the notes and rhythms. Each instrument has a symbolic meaning: the kendang as the rhythm leader symbolizes leadership and direction in life; the gangsa and ugal, through the playing of the kotekan, represent mutual cooperation and social harmony; the gong and kempur symbolize the cycle of time and spiritual awareness. The musical structure of pepeson, pengawak, pengecet, and pekaad reflects the journey of life: from birth, struggle, the peak of life, to the return to the origin as a form of purification and release. This accompaniment not only supports the dance technically, but also becomes a spiritual narrative that accompanies the inner transformation of the dancers and audience.

D. The Meaning of the Baris Klemat Dance for the Seseh Traditional Village Community

This dance is performed only during piodalan (anniversary ceremonies) at the Menega Temple, emphasizing its status as ritual art, not spectacle. The Baris Klemat Dance is not merely a cultural artifact, but a transcendent medium that represents the spiritual, social, and cosmological values of Balinese coastal communities. From an ethnoaesthetic perspective (Merriam, 1964), the aesthetic meaning of dance lies not only in the beauty of the movements, but in the cultural intentions that animate it. This dance exists as a form of ngayah, namely sincere devotion to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa without any ulterior motives, performed collectively and passed down through generations.

In the Seseh community's view, this dance embodies gratitude for the blessings of the sea and the protection of ancestors. It demonstrates the close relationship between spirituality, ecology, and communal identity. The elders view it as a sacred heritage that must be preserved. The youth interpret it as a space for character building, social solidarity, and local pride. This dance embodies the values of mutual cooperation, equality, and a balanced relationship between humans and nature. As Turner points out, this dance acts as a "community generator," generating social solidarity in a liminal space that strengthens community structures.

The rejection of the commercialization of this dance also serves as a strong statement of the desire to preserve the sacredness and authenticity of the culture. In this context, the Baris Klemat Dance can be seen as a living cultural organism, one that not only preserves spiritual values but also serves as a tool for cultural education, a medium for sacred communication, and a reinforcement of the Seseh community's identity.

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The Baris Klemat Dance is not merely an aesthetic performance, but rather a collective expression of the Seseh indigenous people, representing the spiritual, social, and cosmological values that live within their consciousness. This dance is understood as a medium of communication with Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa, nature, and ancestors, as well as a sacred form of *nyatur bhakti* (devotion to God) because it is only performed during *piodalan* (ceremony) at the Menega Temple. Through an ethnoaesthetic approach, the community interprets the aesthetics of this dance not only from its beauty but also from the values of struggle, devotion, and inner sincerity manifested through symbolic movements such as rowing, *nayog*, and *milpil*.

Menega Temple, as a performance space, is not only interpreted as a physical place, but also as a sacred space (hierophany), a meeting place between the physical and spiritual worlds, where the dancer's body becomes a spiritual medium and the dance becomes a prayer embodied. The dancer is not considered an ordinary individual, but rather a representation of a spiritual warrior who has undergone a purification process, wearing white clothing symbolizing purity, and carrying a *klemat* as a symbol of protection and direction in life. This symbolism is reinforced by the props and accompanying music, which also have spiritual meaning in the musical structure of the *gong kebyar*. The community rejects the commercialization of this dance in order to maintain its sacredness and cultural identity. For the older generation, this dance is an ancestral heritage that must be preserved, while for the younger generation, it becomes a space for expressing local identity and pride. Thus, the Baris Klemat Dance is a living and dynamic cultural organism, which not only maintains spiritual values but also functions as an educational tool, strengthens social solidarity, and marks the communal identity of the Seseh indigenous community.

DISCUSSION

This study dissects the complexity of meaning in the Baris Klemat Dance performance at Menega Temple, Seseh Cemagi Traditional Village, through an ethnoaesthetic approach, which focuses on the relationship between aesthetics, cultural context, and spiritual values in artistic expression. The results of the study indicate that the form, symbolism, and sacred meaning of the Baris Klemat Dance are not only artistic products, but are part of the religious and cosmological system of Balinese society, especially the Seseh community which still upholds the principles of *desa kala patra* and the *ngayah* tradition.

Referring to Kaeppeler's (2007) theory of Dance Structure, the presentation of the Baris Klemat Dance, which does not have a narrative plot (non-dramatic) but is full of repetitive and rhythmic structures, reflects the order of cultural values that are embodied through body movement patterns. Each movement has a symbolic construction that refers to a certain meaning, for example, the movement of looking sharply ahead as a symbol of spiritual readiness in facing supernatural powers, or the stamping of feet that symbolizes the confirmation of human existence in the real world. Kaeppeler emphasizes that in the context of non-Western cultures, dance forms are not only aesthetic, but also full of social and religious structures that live and develop within the community.

Furthermore, Merriam's (1964) theory of ethnoaesthetics emphasizes the importance of understanding works of art within the framework of the aesthetic values of the supporting community. In the context of the Baris Klemat Dance, ethnoaesthetics are manifested through various visual and auditory elements such as the white costume signifying purity, the spear prop as a symbol of spiritual power, and the accompanying gamelan music that supports a transcendental atmosphere. Aesthetics is not only seen from the formal elements of the dance such as harmony, dynamics, and tempo, but also from the aspects of feeling (*taksu*) and sincerity of intention (*ketutusan-ikhlasan*) inherent in its ritual practice. These values cannot be measured by Western aesthetic standards, but instead have a philosophical depth that is integrated within the framework of Balinese culture.

In terms of symbolism, the meaning of the Baris Klemat Dance is often associated with cosmic symbols and the relationship between humans and the forces of the universe. This is where Victor Turner's (1967) theory of symbolic meaning becomes relevant. Turner views symbols in ritual as "the smallest units of a system of meaning" that carry ideological, affective, and operational dimensions. The Baris Klemat Dance, with all its attributes, is a transformative symbol that marks the transition from the profane to the sacred. This dance practice not only conveys a religious message but also creates a liminal experience, a state between the ordinary and the sacred, which allows for spiritual renewal for its supporters.

Another symbolism is reflected in the way the community positions this dance as a medium for *ngayah*, a selfless spiritual devotion. This practice reinforces the view that Balinese performance aesthetics are not merely for visual consumption, but are part of everyday religious life. The Baris Klemat dance is not to be "enjoyed" in the general sense, but to be internalized as a form of offering, respect for ancestors, and preservation of harmony between the *sekala* (real world) and *niskala* (unseen world).

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Furthermore, this research shows that the survival of the Baris Klemat Dance is highly dependent on the existence of a community that still upholds traditional and religious values. In the context of modernity and tourism pressures, the Seseh community demonstrates cultural resilience by maintaining this ritual as a form of resistance against the commodification of sacred art. This reinforces the notion that Balinese traditional dance has a living dimension (living tradition) that continues to transform without losing its sacred essence.

Thus, the results of this study demonstrate that the sacredness and symbolism of the Baris Klemat Dance are manifestations of the value structure, belief system, and aesthetic ethics unique to Balinese culture. This study contributes to academic understanding of how local aesthetics construct religious meanings and communal identity in performing arts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the Baris Klemat Dance is an aesthetic expression that is integrated with the belief system and traditional rites. The community in the Cemagi Traditional Village presents this Baris Klemat Dance in the form of a free dance (without a play). This can be seen from the way it is presented, the make-up, choreography, and the accompanying music. This dance is presented with a performance structure: pepeson, ngelembar, pengawak, pengecet, mendak tirta, pekaad. This ceremonial dance is built from a variety of movements: milpil (foot stamping), ngipuk (bowing), rowing movements, ngarud yeh, and circular formations that follow the rhythm of the gamelan. Each element of movement has a strong symbolic correlation to the cosmological values of the local community.

In terms of props and attire, the dancers wear a mountain-style coil, a rembang shawl, and carry a klemat (double-edged paddle) as their main instrument. These elements serve not only as visual complements but also as markers of religious values such as purity, duality (rwa bhineda), and devotion to the guardian spiritual power of the sea. The aesthetics of the Baris Klemat Dance are inseparable from the context of place (temple space), time (ritual calendar), and bodily purification (melukat ceremony), which holistically constitute both form and content, between visual form and spiritual meaning that reinforce each other.

The symbolism in the Baris Klemat Dance is multivocal, meaning that a single symbol carries multiple layers of meaning. The back-and-forth movements represent the dynamics of human life in confronting two worlds: the physical and the spiritual. The stamping of the feet (milpil) symbolizes strengthening the connection with the earth (mother earth), while the ngipuk signifies submission to supernatural forces. The dancer's body, after undergoing a purification process, is no longer merely an artistic medium but becomes a spiritual intermediary. Props such as the klemat serve a dual function as a representation of a fisherman's tools and a symbol of sacred guardianship, protecting the area from the threat of destructive energy from the sea. The cloth worn not only enhances the appearance but also represents the philosophy of Rwa Bhineda, namely the awareness of duality and the importance of balance in life. This combination of symbols makes the Baris Klemat Dance a cultural text that communicates Balinese Hindu cosmology performatively.

Spiritually, the Baris Klemat Dance is interpreted by the local community as a ceremonial dance, a medium for communicating with sacred powers. Therefore, this dance is performed in a ritual space (Menega Temple) as it is considered an integral part of the piodalan, a purification and protection ceremony for the village. Through this dance, the community seeks balance and protection from cosmic elements, particularly those originating from the sea, which is considered a transitional space between the human world and the spirit world.

Socially, the people of Cemagi Village see this dance as a bond of solidarity between generations. They pass it on through collective dancer training, involving the active participation of traditional leaders, community leaders, and the dancers' families.

They pass on their values through direct community involvement to foster cultural awareness, strengthen local identity, and strengthen social ties. In this regard, the Baris Klemat Dance serves as a mechanism for regenerating traditional and spiritual values and strengthening the community's social fabric through participation in sacred and meaningful communal activities.

RESEARCH NOVELTY

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of an ethnoaesthetic approach with theories of ritual symbolism and cultural semiotics. This research not only discusses the structure of dance as an art form but also explores its transcendental and social functions within a specific local context. By combining aesthetic analysis, symbolic interpretation, and a reading of ritual space, this research presents a new interpretative model for sacred art

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in Bali, namely that aesthetics in traditional art cannot be separated from the spiritual relations and social practices of its supporting communities.

This interpretive model can serve as a reference for sustainable preservation efforts for the Baris Klemat Dance, not just through dance documentation but also through strengthening the surrounding social and spiritual context. This research also proposes a community-based approach to arts preservation based on a deep understanding of local values.

Suggestion

This research has examined in depth the Baris Klemat Dance at Menega Temple, Seseh Cemagi Traditional Village, as a sacred art expression that integrates aesthetics, symbolism, and socio-spiritual functions. Based on the findings obtained from the analysis of the dance structure, body symbolism, movement, properties, and its social and spiritual functions, the following are some suggestions that are in accordance with the researched problem formulation that the Baris Klemat Dance has a dance structure and aesthetic form that is very unique and contextual with the Balinese people's belief system.

The Department of Culture and academic institutions involved in preserving Balinese culture are advised to collaborate with the Seseh indigenous community to comprehensively document the movement structure, floor patterns, accompanying music, and dance attributes in the form of videos, books, or digital databases. This documentation is crucial not only for preservation purposes but also for the education of the younger generation.

The aesthetics of the Baris Klemat Dance can be integrated into the arts and culture curriculum in Balinese schools as part of a contextual education that introduces local sacred art, not just popular or modern art. Teaching that prioritizes the local spiritual and aesthetic context will foster a holistic understanding of its values. Training should be provided to dance instructors and local studio teachers so they not only teach the movement forms but also understand the sacred context and symbolic value of the dance.

The symbolism of the Baris Klemat Dance reveals a depth of cultural and spiritual meaning that has not been widely studied academically. Therefore, researchers and academics in the fields of performing arts and cultural anthropology are advised to expand this study by exploring the symbolism of the body, movement, and props in relation to indigenous knowledge systems, such as classical palm-leaf manuscripts or narratives of indigenous communities.

Currently, many dance training programs emphasize only memorizing movements without understanding their meaning. Therefore, indigenous communities and art studios are advised to include special sessions in dance training that explain the meaning of each movement, body position, and props such as klemat as part of spiritual and philosophical education. The village government and schools in Seseh Village can hold workshops or thematic seminars on the meaning of symbols in local arts as part of culture-based character education.

The Baris Klemat Dance serves as a bond of social solidarity, a means of regenerating traditional values, and a protector of village spiritual rituals. These functions need to be maintained and strengthened through several strategies, including the establishment of a Baris Klemat Dance preservation forum involving traditional leaders, temple officials, senior dancers, and community leaders. This forum plays a role in ensuring the continuity of tradition, selecting dancers based on spiritual criteria, and protecting against deviations from practices. Local governments and traditional institutions in Bali should issue regulations explicitly prohibiting the performance of the Baris Klemat Dance outside of sacred contexts, in order to maintain its sacred value. Recognition of the Baris Klemat Dance as an Intangible Cultural Heritage at the district or provincial level would also strengthen the legitimacy of its protection.

Preserving the Baris Klemat Dance requires more than documentation or festivalization. A community-based and ritual-based approach is needed, where preservation is carried out through community participation in ceremonies, intergenerational training, and the regeneration of spiritual values through local media, such as writing Balinese script, making offerings (banten), and understanding the function of temples as a reference for the indigenous community of Seseh Village, as well as for academics, local government, and cultural preservation institutions in maintaining the sustainability of Bali's sacred performing arts.

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