

The Aesthetic Construction of Sundanese Classical Dance: From Dancer Aesthetics to Dance Aesthetics

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Abstract

Studies of dance aesthetics in Indonesia have so far been more oriented towards the performative qualities of dancers, thus failing to comprehensively explain the mechanisms of aesthetic formation of dance works. This study aims to formulate the aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance through an analysis of the relationship between artistic structure and the Sundanese aristocratic cultural value system. This study uses a qualitative paradigm with an ethnochoreological approach. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and literature studies of dance maestros, choreographers, academics, cultural figures, and practitioners of Sundanese Classical Dance in West Java. The analysis was carried out iteratively through the identification of artistic structures, identification of cultural values, relational analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The results of the study indicate that the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are not formed solely by the individual abilities of the dancers, but are the result of a construction born from the dynamic interaction between artistic structures including movement, music, makeup, costume, spatial patterns, and presentation with the Sundanese aristocratic cultural value system such as refinement, harmony, politeness, self-control, and honor. This study produces a Sundanese Classical Dance Aesthetic Construction Model that explains the process of transforming cultural values into artistic structures, thereby producing aesthetic experiences and shaping the aesthetic identity of dance works. These findings expand the study of dance aesthetics from a dancer-centered paradigm to one that positions dance works as artistic and cultural constructions and offers a conceptual framework that can be applied to research on various Indonesian dance traditions.

Keywords

Artistic Structure; Cultural Values; Dance Aesthetics; Ethnochoreology Sundanese Classical Dance.



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INTRODUCTION

In development, aesthetics is no longer understood solely as a study of beauty, but develops into a study of how meaning, experience, and value are constructed through the relationship between the artistic form, the subject that is appreciated, and the socio-cultural context that surrounds it. This shift in perspective shows that beauty is not a fixed quality of

an art object, but a result of construction formed through the interaction between artistic elements and cultural systems. Thus, aesthetics is essentially a process of forming meaning that is always related to the cultural environment in which works of art are created, staged, and inherited. Langer, 1953 Beardsley, 1981 Berleant, 1991)

In dance, aesthetic issues have a higher complexity than other branches of art because dance combines body, movement, space, time, rhythm, expression, costume, makeup, and interaction with the audience into one artistic unity. Therefore, the aesthetic experience in dance is not only determined by the precision of a dancer's movement technique, but also by the integration of all the performance elements that make up the identity of a work. Dance is not just a beautiful series of movements, but a representation of a value system that is embodied through body language, artistic structures, and cultural conventions that develop in the supporting society. Thus, the discussion of dance aesthetics should not stop at the performative quality of dancers, but also explain how the beauty of dance works is constructed as an artistic and cultural system.

The study of dance aesthetics in the last two decades has evolved from an approach that emphasizes the quality of form to an approach that sees dance as a cultural practice that produces meaning through the relationship between the body, space, experience, and social context. This perspective shows that aesthetic experience is not only shaped by the quality of movement, but also by the relationship between artistic structure, cultural identity, and the process of appreciation. Foster, 2011 Lepecki, 2006 Reason & Reynolds (2010).

However, the development of dance studies in Indonesia shows a different trend. Various aesthetic concepts that have long been the basis of dance practice, such as wiraga, wirama, and wirasa, the concept of biwawisalus in the Sundanese tradition, hasta sawanda in Surakarta, as well as sawiji, greget, sengguh, and ora mingkuh in Yogyakarta, it is basically a guideline to assess the quality of dance. These concepts are very important in the formation of dancers' competencies because they explain the harmony of technique, rhythm, appreciation, and character of the presentation. However, conceptually, these concepts answer more questions about how a dancer performs dance well, rather than how the beauty of a dance work is constructed.

These differences raise important conceptual issues. If aesthetics are understood primarily as a measure of the quality of dancers, then how exactly is the beauty of a dance work formed? This question becomes relevant because a dance work not only consists of the dancers' gestures, but is also the result of the integration of various artistic elements, such as movement composition, music, makeup, costumes, spatial patterns, presentation dynamics, and symbol systems that develop in the supporting society. In other words, the beauty of dance is the result of the mutually influential relationship between artistic structure and cultural value systems. Until now, the conceptual framework that explains this relationship has not been widely developed in the study of Indonesian dance.

This issue becomes even more important when it is associated with the Sundanese Classical Dance that grew up in the aristocratic cultural environment (menak) in West Java.

As a product of the culture of the palace and the menak, Sundanese Classical Dance is built by the values of harmony, subtlety, self-control, honor, and manners which are then embodied into the artistic structure of the performance. These values are not only reflected in the dancer's body posture, but also shape the character of movements, floor patterns, musical accompaniment, makeup, clothing, and the overall presentation of dance. Therefore, understanding the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance is not enough to be done through the analysis of dance techniques, but must be directed to understanding the process of how cultural values are constructed into artistic forms that produce distinctive aesthetic experiences. With this perspective, aesthetics is understood as a cultural construction that is manifested through dance works.

Various studies on Sundanese Dance have made significant contributions to the development of science. These studies discuss the history of the development of Sundanese dance, choreographer's creativity, choreographic renewal by Raden Tjetje Somantri, dance education, cultural diplomacy, women's representation, and the social function of dance in society. These studies have succeeded in enriching the understanding of the identity, history, and role of Sundanese Dance in cultural life. However, most research still places aesthetics as part of the description of the form, function, or quality of the performance, so it has not explicitly explained the conceptual mechanisms that shape the aesthetics of a work of dance. Thus, the study of Sundanese Dance still leaves a conceptual space to explain how the relationship between artistic elements and cultural values gives birth to the aesthetic identity of Sundanese Classical Dance.

Based on this study, this study identified a conceptual gap in the study of dance aesthetics. Previous studies have focused more on the quality of dance, the history of dance development, social function, or cultural representation, while discussions about the process of forming the aesthetics of dance works as artistic and cultural constructions are still very limited. In other words, there is no conceptual framework that systematically explains the shift in focus from the aesthetics of dancers to the aesthetics of dance as a cultural work.

Previous research, including studies examining the representation of aristocratic aesthetic and cultural values in Sundanese Classical Dance, has shown that movement, makeup, clothing, musical accompaniment, and dance presentation are manifestations of Sundanese cultural values. However, the study still focuses on identifying the representation of aesthetic and cultural values so that it has not explained the conceptual mechanism that connects the cultural value system with the formation of the aesthetics of dance works. Thus, the main contribution of this research lies in the development of a conceptual framework regarding the process of aesthetic construction, not just the identification of the aesthetic elements of Sundanese Classical Dance.

Departing from these gaps, this research offers an aesthetic construction perspective as a conceptual framework to understand Sundanese Classical Dance. In this study, aesthetic construction is understood as the process of forming the beauty of dance works through a dynamic relationship between artistic structures—including movement, music, makeup,

fashion, spatial patterns, and presentation—and the Sundanese aristocratic cultural value system that underlies its creation, performance, and heritage. Thus, this study not only describes the aesthetic elements contained in Sundanese Classical Dance, but also explains the conceptual mechanisms that build the beauty of dance works as a result of cultural construction. This perspective is the main contribution of this research as well as shifting the focus of the study from the aesthetics of dancers to dance aesthetics.

Based on this description, this study aims to formulate the aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance through the analysis of the relationship between artistic structure and Sundanese aristocratic cultural value system. The results of the research are expected to contribute to the development of dance aesthetic theory in Indonesia by presenting a perspective that places dance works as artistic and cultural constructions. In addition to enriching the treasures of the aesthetic study of performing arts, this research is also expected to be a conceptual foundation for the development of subsequent theories regarding the aesthetics of Sundanese Dance.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative paradigm with an ethnochoreographical approach to examine the aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance. The qualitative paradigm was chosen because this research aims to understand and interpret the process of forming dance aesthetics through the relationship between artistic structure and cultural value systems, rather than measuring phenomena quantitatively. The ethnochoreographical approach is used because it views dance as a cultural phenomenon that is not only analyzed from the aspect of the form of movement, but also from the historical, social, philosophical, and cultural context behind its creation, presentation, and legacy. Thus, aesthetics is understood as a cultural construction that is realized through the practice of dance performances.

The research was carried out in West Java Province with a focus on the Sundanese Classical Dance tradition that developed through the thoughts and works of Raden Tjetje Somantri. The research location was chosen because it represents the dance tradition formed by the aristocratic Sundanese cultural environment and has a distinctive aesthetic character. The research informants were determined purposively based on their competence, experience, and involvement in the development of Sundanese Classical Dance. The informants consist of dance maestros, choreographers, academics, cultural experts, and dance practitioners who understand the aesthetic development of Sundanese Classical Dance. In addition to field data, the research also utilizes various documents, archives, photographs, performance recordings, and scientific literature as supporting data sources.

Research data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and literature studies. Observations are made in the process of rehearsals and performances to gain an understanding of the relationship between artistic elements in dance practice. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner

to explore the informants' views on the aesthetic concepts, artistic characteristics, and cultural values that make up Sundanese Classical Dance. Documentation studies were carried out on archives, manuscripts, photographs, performance videos, and historical documents related to the development of Sundanese Classical Dance. Meanwhile, literature studies are used to strengthen the conceptual foundation and compare the results of the research with previous studies.

Data analysis was carried out iteratively through four interrelated stages. The first stage is the identification of artistic structure, namely inventorying and classifying the elements that form Sundanese Classical Dance which includes movement, music, makeup, clothing, spatial patterns, and forms of presentation. The second stage is the identification of cultural values, namely interpreting the Sundanese aristocratic cultural values that are manifested in each artistic element based on the results of observations, interviews, documentation, and literature studies. The third stage is a relational analysis, which is to analyze the relationship between artistic structure and cultural values to find the patterns that form the aesthetic character of Sundanese Classical Dance. The last stage is conceptual synthesis, which is integrating all research findings into the formulation of the aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance. Through these stages, the analysis does not stop at the description of artistic elements or cultural values separately, but is directed at the formulation of a conceptual mechanism that explains how the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are built as a result of the interaction between artistic structure and cultural value systems.

The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation, technical triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation is carried out by comparing information obtained through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature studies so that the consistency of the findings is obtained. Furthermore, the results of the interpretation were confirmed to key informants through *member checking* to ensure the suitability of the meaning with their experiences, while *peer debriefing* was carried out through discussions with Sundanese dance and culture experts to increase the credibility of the research results.

In contrast to research that focuses on the identification of artistic elements or the assessment of the quality of dance, this study places the analysis process as a means to build a conceptual construction regarding the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance. Therefore, the entire stage of analysis is directed to explain how artistic structures and cultural values interact to form the aesthetic identity of dance. This approach allows this research not only to produce an empirical description, but also to offer a conceptual framework regarding the aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance as a contribution to the development of aesthetic studies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Historical Context after the Prophet's Death

Perspective Shift: From Dancer Aesthetics to Dance Aesthetics

Studies on dance aesthetics in Indonesia have been more oriented towards the quality of dance (*dancer-centered aesthetics*) than on the aesthetics of dance works (*dance-centered aesthetics*). Various concepts that develop in the archipelago dance tradition, such as *wiraga*, *wirama*, and *wirasa*, are basically used as a benchmark for dancers' ability to master movement techniques, rhythmic accuracy, and appreciation of expression. Similarly, the concept of *Hasta Sawanda* and the principles of *sawiji*, *greget*, *sungguh*, and *ora mingkuh* are more directed to build the performative quality of a dancer than to explain how a dance work builds an aesthetic experience for its audience. This condition shows that the discussion of dance aesthetics is still dominated by the perspective of dance, so it has not fully explained the mechanism of the formation of aesthetics as the intrinsic character of dance works.

These findings are also seen in various studies on Sundanese Classical Dance. Most of the previous research discussed the history of dance development, character biographies, creative processes, choreographic structures, social functions, and educational values contained in Raden Tjetje Somantri's works. Although they make important contributions to the documentation and preservation of Sundanese Classical Dance, these studies have not specifically explained how dance aesthetics are constructed through the relationship between artistic structure and Sundanese cultural value systems. Thus, there is still conceptual space to develop an analytical framework that is able to explain the process of forming dance aesthetics more comprehensively.

Theoretically, aesthetics in art are not only concerned with the beauty of form, but also with the experience born through the relationship between artistic elements, symbolic meaning, and cultural context. These findings are in line with those that show that the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are a representation of Sundanese aristocratic cultural values through movement, makeup, clothing, and presentation. However, the research focuses more on the representation of aesthetic values, while this study shows that the beauty of dance works is the result of construction formed through the relationship between artistic structure and cultural value systems. Sabaria et al. (2025)

Monroe C. Beardsley's view places *unity*, *complexity*, and *intensity* as the main characters of aesthetic experience. Viewing artwork as a symbolic form that expresses the structure of feelings (Beardsley, 1981 Langer (1953) *presentational symbol*), this view is also in line with those who explain that the meaning of dance is built through the relationship between the body, choreography, and the experience of the audience. In the context of dance, these three views show that aesthetics are not solely the attributes of the dancer, but qualities born from the integration of artistic forms, meanings, and cultural experiences. Foster (2011) Berleant (1991)

The results of this study show that in Sundanese Classical Dance, aesthetics are not built by mastering movement techniques alone. Beauty emerges through the connection between movement, accompaniment, makeup, fashion, spatial patterns, presentation dynamics, and Sundanese aristocratic cultural values that unite all these elements into one artistic unity. Therefore, the aesthetic quality of Sundanese Classical Dance cannot be understood only through the individual abilities of the dancer, but must be seen as the result of a construction that takes place at the level of a dance work. In other words, aesthetic experience is born because artistic structures represent a cultural value system that lives in the society that supports it.

These findings broaden the perspective of dance aesthetics. If the previous paradigm placed dancers as the center of aesthetic formation, this study shows that dancers are one of the components in a broader artistic system. The aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are constructed through a dynamic relationship between artistic structure and cultural values, so that the beauty of dance is the character of works that are formed collectively through the process of creation, presentation, and cultural meaning. This shift in perspective becomes the conceptual basis for the discussion in the next subchapter about artistic structure as the aesthetic shaping of Sundanese Classical Dance.

Artistic Structure as an Aesthetic Shaping of Sundanese Classical Dance

Artistic Structure as the Foundation of Aesthetic Experience

Research on dance in various traditions shows that artistic structure is a system composed of relationships between performance elements, not just a collection of stand-alone visual elements. In this perspective, artistic meaning emerges through the interconnection between movement, music, space, and cultural symbols. Adshead-Lansdale & Layson, 1994 Kaeppler, 2000.

The results of the study show that the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are built through the integration of various interconnected artistic elements, namely movement, musical accompaniment, makeup, clothing, spatial patterns, and forms of presentation. These elements do not stand alone as visual or technical elements, but rather form an artistic unity that presents an aesthetic experience for the audience. Thus, the beauty of Sundanese Classical Dance cannot be understood through one particular element, but is born from the harmonious relationship between the elements that make up the performance. This finding is in line with the results of dissertation research which shows that the aesthetic character of the Sulintang Dance is built by five interrelated aesthetic principles in shaping the identity of the dance work.

Movement is the main element that organizes the entire artistic structure of Sundanese Classical Dance. However, movement is not interpreted only as a series of beautiful body techniques, but as a medium of expression that represents the character, ethics, and outlook of life of the Sundanese people. Every quality of movement—whether in the use of energy, tempo, rhythm, or dynamics—becomes part of an artistic system that is connected to musical accompaniment, makeup, fashion, and presentation patterns. Therefore, the aesthetics of

motion are not born independently, but acquire their meaning through relationships with other artistic elements.

These findings show that the artistic structure of Sundanese Classical Dance has an integrative character. A change to any of the elements will affect the overall aesthetic quality of the show. For example, changes in the character of musical accompaniment will change the quality of movement, dramatic atmosphere, and even the audience's perception of the meaning of dance. Similarly, makeup and fashion not only serve as visual complements, but become part of a symbolic system that reinforces the identity of the characters as well as the cultural context represented in the performance.

This perspective reinforces Monroe C. Beardsley's view that aesthetic experience is formed through the unity of various elements in a work of art. Such unity does not mean uniformity, but a harmonious relationship between the different elements resulting in a complete aesthetic experience. In the context of Sundanese Classical Dance, the unity is seen in the relationship between movement, music, artistic arrangement, and presentation that together form the aesthetic character of the dance work.

The results of this study expand this view because it shows that artistic unity not only produces aesthetic experiences, but also becomes a medium for transforming Sundanese cultural values. This view is also related to Susanne K. Langer's theory which views artwork as a symbolic form (*presentational symbol*). In Sundanese Classical Dance, artistic structure not only produces beautiful visual forms, but also communicates cultural meanings through artistic symbols that are manifested in movements, accompaniment, costumes, and presentation patterns. Thus, the aesthetic experience that the audience receives is not just a response to the beauty of the form, but the result of the interpretation of the entire symbolic system present in the performance.

The results of this study show a difference with the tendency of dance studies to place artistic elements as components that are analyzed separately. This research shows that every artistic element acquires aesthetic meaning precisely because it is in an interconnected system. Therefore, the aesthetic analysis of Sundanese Classical Dance needs to be carried out holistically by placing the artistic structure as a unit that builds an aesthetic experience.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the artistic structure is not just a performance device, but is the **main foundation of the aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance**. The beauty of dance arises when all artistic elements form a harmonious relationship and are able to represent the cultural values behind it. This synthesis became the basis for the next discussion of how Sundanese aristocratic cultural values work within artistic structures to produce distinctive aesthetic characters.

Aristocratic Cultural Values as the Basis for the Formation of the Artistic Structure of Sundanese Classical Dance

In the perspective of dance anthropology, culture is understood not as a background of performance, but as a system of meaning embodied through the practice of the body and artistic symbols (Kaeppeler, 2000). Therefore, the form of movement, costumes,

accompaniment, and presentation system are representations of the social values that live in the supporting society. Hanna, 1987

The results of the study show that the artistic structure of Sundanese Classical Dance was not built solely on formal aesthetic considerations, but is a manifestation of the cultural value system that developed in the Sundanese aristocratic environment. Movement, musical accompaniment, makeup, clothing, floor patterns, and presentation are symbolic representations of the cultural values that live in the communities that support them. Thus, the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance cannot be separated from the cultural context that gave birth to and developed it. This finding strengthens the results of the research that the aesthetics of the Sundanese classical dance where the Sulintang Dance as a sample is built through the integration of five aesthetic principles which at the same time represent the five symbolism of Sundanese cultural values.

One of the main characters that forms the artistic structure of Sundanese Classical Dance is **subtlety** (*lemes*). This value is reflected in the quality of movement that prioritizes continuity, energy control, flexibility, and rhythmic balance. Movement is not directed to show excessive physical strength, but rather to display self-mastery, calmness, and inner maturity. Therefore, the quality of movement is a representation of Sundanese cultural ethics that places politeness as part of beauty. In this context, aesthetics are born not only because the form of movement is beautiful, but because it contains cultural meaning that is shared by the community of its supporters.

The next value is harmony. The results of observations show that the relationship between movement, music, makeup, clothing, and presentation patterns is always directed at creating visual and auditory balance. There is no artistic element that dominates the other elements. The musical accompaniment serves to bring the characters to life, while the costumes and makeup reinforce the identity of the characters without reducing the focus on dance expression. This harmony shows that aesthetic experience is built through complementary relationships between artistic elements, not through the superiority of one element separately.

In addition to subtlety and harmony, this study also found that politeness is a cultural value that greatly influences the formation of the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance. Politeness is not only reflected in the dancers' body posture and facial expressions, but also in the way the performance space is used, the way dancers enter and leave the stage, to the patterns of symbolic interaction built during the performance. This shows that the aesthetics in Sundanese Classical Dance are a reflection of cultural ethics. In other words, beauty and ethics are not two concepts that stand alone, but rather form each other in artistic practice.

This interpretation is in line with Susanne K. Langer's view that artwork is a symbolic form that reveals the structure of human experience. In Sundanese Classical Dance, the symbolization is not realized through verbal language, but through an artistic system that connects movement, music, costume, space, and expression into a single unit of meaning. Thus, artistic structures serve as a medium that transforms cultural values into aesthetic experiences that can be felt by the audience. These findings reinforce the research results of

Sabaria et al. (2025), but expand on them through an explanation of the mechanism of transforming cultural values into artistic structures.

The findings of this study also show that the relationship between culture and aesthetics is **dialectical**. Cultural values not only affect the formation of artistic structures, but artistic structures are also a medium to reproduce and transmit cultural values to the next generation. Therefore, the performance of Sundanese Classical Dance not only functions as an artistic expression, but also as a mechanism of cultural inheritance that takes place through aesthetic experiences.

When compared to previous studies that explained more elements of movement, form of presentation, or history of the development of Sundanese Classical Dance, this study shows that all of these artistic elements are actually a manifestation of a cultural value system that works in an integrated manner. This perspective broadens the understanding of dance aesthetics because it places culture not as the background of performance, but as a force that shapes artistic structures directly.

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the cultural values of the Sundanese aristocracy are the conceptual basis that forms the artistic character of Sundanese Classical Dance. Subtlety, harmony, politeness, and self-control are not only moral values, but also artistic principles that direct the creation, presentation, and meaning of dance. Thus, the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are the result of the transformation of cultural values into an artistic structure that then produces an aesthetic experience for the audience.

Aesthetic Construction of Sundanese Classical Dance

The Relationship of Artistic Structure and Cultural Values in the Formation of Aesthetics

The results of the study show that the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are not a quality inherent in one of the elements of the performance or the individual abilities of the dancers. Aesthetics are formed through a construction process that takes place dynamically through the relationship between artistic structure and the cultural value system that is the basis for the creation of works. Thus, the beauty of Sundanese Classical Dance is the result of the integration of various artistic elements that work within the framework of Sundanese cultural values so as to produce a complete aesthetic experience. This finding strengthens the results of the dissertation research that the five aesthetic principles of the Sulintang Dance do not stand alone, but represent five symbolic cultural values that form the identity of dance works.

Analysis of the research data shows that the relationship between artistic structure and cultural value takes place through a process of symbolic transformation. Cultural values such as subtlety, harmony, politeness, self-control, and respect do not exist as abstract concepts, but are translated into artistic choices that are seen in the quality of movement, musical accompaniment, makeup, fashion, use of space, and presentation patterns. This transformation makes each artistic element not only functional aesthetically, but also contains cultural meaning that strengthens the identity of Sundanese Classical Dance.

The process of aesthetic construction shows that the relationship between culture and artistic forms is **dialectical**. Cultural values lead to the formation of artistic structures, while artistic structures become a medium that brings back cultural values through performance experiences. Thus, aesthetics is not understood as the end result of the creation of a work, but rather as a process that continues to be built through interaction between creators, dancers, works, and audiences in the same cultural context.

This view expands on aesthetic theories that place aesthetic experience as the result of the relationship between artistic forms and human experience. In the context of Sundanese Classical Dance, the aesthetic experience arises not only because of the visual quality of the performance, but also because the audience captures the cultural meaning embodied through the symbolic system of the performance. Therefore, aesthetics is the result of an integration between artistic forms, cultural symbols, and appreciation experiences that take place simultaneously.

Based on the results of this analysis, this study concludes that the aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance takes place through four interrelated stages.

First, the Sundanese cultural value system is a conceptual source that provides orientation to the creation of dance works. These values are the basis for determining the character of movement, expression, accompaniment, costume, makeup, and the overall form of presentation.

Second, cultural values are transformed into artistic structures so that they become observable forms in performances. At this stage, cultural values change into artistic symbols that are manifested through the quality of movement, musicality, visual arrangement, and organization of the performance space.

Third, the integration of all artistic elements forms an aesthetic experience for the audience. The experience comes not only from visual beauty, but also from the show's ability to communicate cultural meaning symbolically.

Fourth, the aesthetic experience produces the aesthetic identity of Sundanese Classical Dance, which is the character of beauty that distinguishes Sundanese Classical Dance from other dance traditions. The identity is not only recognized through the form of movement, but also through the cultural value system embodied in the entire artistic structure.

The results of this study show that the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are formed through the mutual relationship between cultural value systems and artistic structures. The findings expand on the results of research by Sabaria et al. (2025) which showed that Sundanese aristocratic values are represented in the artistic form of dance, but have not yet explained the mechanism of the relationship between the two. This research shows that cultural representation does not stop at the symbolization of values, but rather takes place through the process of cultural transformation into an artistic structure that further results in an aesthetic experience. Thus, this research develops the perspective of cultural representation into the perspective of aesthetic construction.

Various previous studies have explained the relationship between dance and culture as a representational relationship, namely how dance works reflect the cultural identity of the community (Kaeppler, 2000; Foster, 2011). This research expands this perspective by showing that cultural and dance relationships are constructive. Cultural values are not only represented, but transformed into artistic structures so as to form an aesthetic experience.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a conceptual model of the aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance as shown in Figure 1.

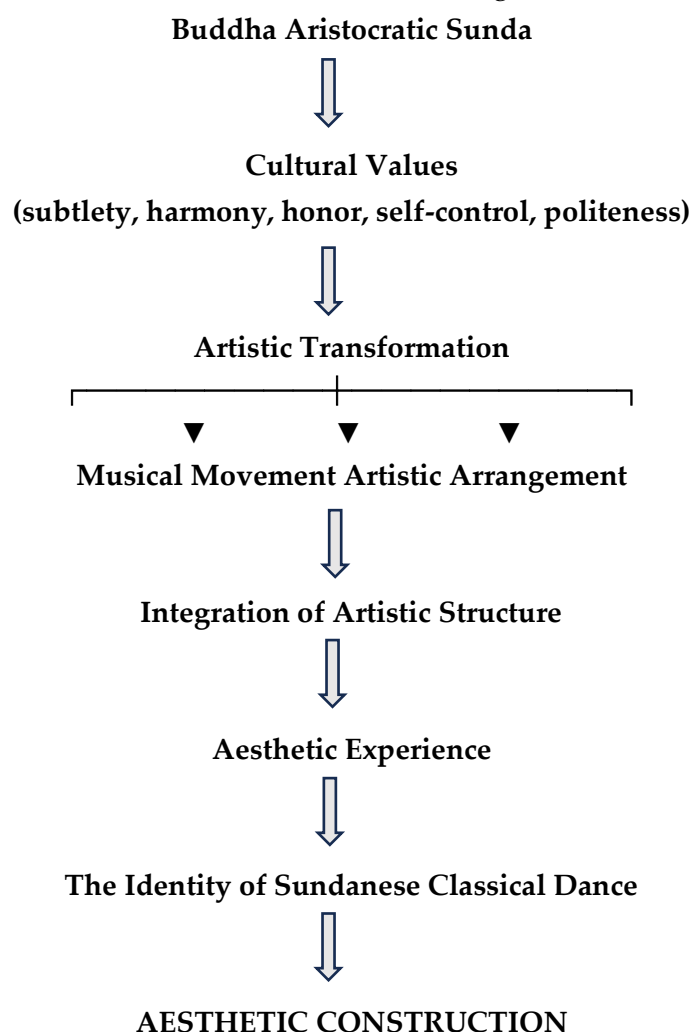


Figure 1. Aesthetic Construction Model of Sundanese Classical Dance

Figure 1 shows that aesthetics do not arise directly from the dancer's ability or from the beauty of the artistic form alone. Aesthetics is the result of the transformation of cultural value systems into artistic structures which then produce an aesthetic experience for the audience. This model emphasizes that the relationship between culture and artistic forms is integrative so that the two cannot be separated in understanding the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance.

The conceptual model also shows the difference between this research and various previous studies that generally place artistic elements as stand-alone objects of analysis. This

research shows that artistic elements acquire aesthetic meaning because they are in a network of relationships with the cultural value system that underlies their creation. Therefore, the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are understood as the result of cultural construction that is realized through the artistic system of performance, not as an individual attribute of the dancer or simply the formal quality of the work.

Thus, the main contribution of this research is not only to explain the elements that form Sundanese Classical Dance, but also to offer a **conceptual model of the aesthetic construction of dance** that can be used as an analytical framework to understand the relationship between culture, artistic structure, and aesthetic experience in dance studies.

Conceptual Implications: From Dancer Aesthetics to Dance Aesthetics

The results of this study show that understanding the aesthetics of dance requires a shift in perspective from assessing the individual abilities of dancers to understanding aesthetics as an intrinsic character of dance works. So far, aesthetic concepts that have developed in dance practice in Indonesia, such as *wiraga*, *wirama*, *wirasa*, *Hasta Sawanda*, as well as *sawiji*, *greget*, *sengguh*, and *ora mingkuh*, are more widely used to evaluate the performative quality of dancers. These concepts have a great contribution to the formation of dancers' competencies, but they do not fully explain how a work of dance constructs an aesthetic experience through the relationship between artistic forms and cultural value systems.

Conceptually, this research expands the aesthetic discourse of dance which has been more oriented towards the performativity of dancers towards an approach that places dance works as artistic and cultural systems. Thus, this research not only complements classical aesthetic theories (Beardsley, Langer, Berleant), but also provides an analytical framework that can be applied to other studies of traditional dance.

This research offers a different perspective by placing aesthetics as a result of construction that takes place through the interaction between cultural values, artistic structures, and aesthetic experiences. In this perspective, dancers are understood as part of the artistic system, not the only source of dance's beauty. The beauty of the work is born through the integration of all performance elements arranged based on a cultural value system so as to form a distinctive aesthetic identity. This shift in perspective expands the space for the study of dance aesthetics from an approach centered on individual performativity to a work-centered approach as an artistic and cultural system.

These conceptual implications have an important meaning for the development of dance aesthetic studies in Indonesia. So far, aesthetic analysis tends to be done by identifying artistic elements or assessing the dancers' skills separately. The results of this study show that this approach is not enough to explain the formation of aesthetic experiences as a whole. Therefore, aesthetic analysis needs to be carried out through an integrative approach by considering the relationship between artistic forms, symbolic meanings, cultural values, and appreciation experiences as a mutually forming unit.

The concept of aesthetic construction of Sundanese Classical Dance produced in this study also opens up opportunities for the development of dance analysis methodologies. The

proposed conceptual model allows researchers not only to inventory the elements of performance, but also to explain the mechanisms of the relationship between culture and artistic forms in building the aesthetic character of a dance work. Thus, this model has the potential to be applied as an analytical framework for various Nusantara dance traditions while still paying attention to the peculiarities of each culture.

In addition to contributing to the development of dance aesthetic theory, this research has practical implications for dance education, creation, and preservation. In dance education, aesthetic learning is not enough directed at mastering movement techniques, but also at understanding the cultural value system that underlies the formation of works. For choreographers, the results of this study show that the creation of dance works needs to consider the integration between artistic structure and cultural values so that the aesthetic identity of the work is maintained. Meanwhile, in an effort to preserve, an understanding of aesthetic construction allows the heritage of dance to be preserved not only in its outward form, but also in the cultural meaning that is the foundation of its creation.

Based on the overall results of the research, it can be emphasized that the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance are not individual attributes of dancers or just formal qualities of performance, but the result of construction formed through the transformation of cultural value systems into artistic structures so as to produce aesthetic experiences and identity of dance works. This formulation is the main conceptual contribution of the research as well as expanding the aesthetic discourse of dance in Indonesia from the aesthetic paradigm of dancers to the aesthetic paradigm of dance.

Theoretically, this study offers the Aesthetic Construction of Sundanese Classical Dance as a new conceptual framework to understand the relationship between culture and dance works. This framework places the cultural value system as the source of the formation of artistic structure, artistic structure as a medium of cultural representation, and aesthetic experience as the result of the interaction of the two. Thus, this research not only enriches the study of Sundanese Classical Dance, but also provides a conceptual basis for the development of an aesthetic theory of Indonesian dance rooted in the richness of local culture.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the aesthetics of Sundanese Classical Dance cannot be understood only as a result of the dancers' performative abilities, but are constructed formed through the dynamic relationship between the artistic structure and the Sundanese aristocratic cultural value system. The shift in perspective from the aesthetics of dancers to dance aesthetics is the main finding of this study. The beauty of dance is no longer seen as an individual attribute of the dancer, but rather as an intrinsic character of the work born from the integration of movements, musical accompaniment, makeup, fashion, spatial patterns, and forms of presentation based on cultural values such as subtlety, harmony, politeness, self-control, and honor.

This research also formulates a Model of Aesthetic Construction of Sundanese Classical Dance which explains that the cultural value system functions as a conceptual source for the formation of artistic structures. These cultural values are transformed into various artistic elements that are integrated with each other so as to produce an aesthetic experience for the audience and form the aesthetic identity of Sundanese Classical Dance. This model shows that the relationship between culture and aesthetics is constructive, not merely representational. Thus, aesthetics is understood as the result of the process of transforming cultural values into a performing artistic system.

The main contribution of this research lies in the development of a conceptual framework regarding the Aesthetic Construction of Sundanese Classical Dance, which expands the study of dance aesthetics from a paradigm centered on the quality of dancers to a paradigm that places dance works as an artistic and cultural system. This conceptual framework not only enriches the development of dance aesthetic theory in Indonesia, but also offers an analytical approach that can be applied in the study of various dance traditions of the archipelago while still paying attention to the peculiarities of each culture.

This research still focuses on Sundanese Classical Dance which developed through the thoughts and works of Raden Tjetje Somantri so that the resulting model needs to be tested on other dance traditions to see the level of adaptability and generalization. Therefore, further research can develop this aesthetic construction model on various dance traditions in Indonesia, conduct comparative studies between regions, or integrate it with contemporary aesthetic perspectives and the study of the audience's aesthetic experience. The development is expected to enrich the building of Indonesian dance aesthetic theory that is rooted in the cultural richness of the archipelago.

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