

Legong Keraton in the Perspective of Balinese Artists

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Legong Keraton, one of the most influential Balinese dance genres in the growth of dance in Bali, has existed since the end of the nineteenth century. This dance has undergone three eras in Balinese culture, starting from the reign of kings, Dutch colonialism, and post-independence of Indonesia. The objective of this study is to find out how Balinese artists construe the existence of Legong Keraton. As a performing art, Legong appears in multiple layers and requires a multidisciplinary approach. The ethnochoreological approach, considered as a multidisciplinary approach, was implemented to examine objects from various aspects to obtain a complete and comprehensive understanding. The author carried out this qualitative study in procedural systematic manner including literature review, informant determination and interview, field observation, data sorting, and analysis. The results of the study indicate that Legong Keraton acts as a milestone in changing form of Balinese dance as a source of inspiration for the creation of works of art as well as a means of education. Furthermore, as a learning material, Legong Keraton has unique form and transmission method. Balinese artists consider Legong Keraton as a traditional art carrying the identity of Balinese dance that make it deserve to be appreciated and preserved.

Keywords: legong keraton, palegongan, balinese artists' perception

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INTRODUCTION

Many experts conduct research about Balinese art, but the research is still limited to the introduction of general objects. [Zoete and Spies \(1973\)](#) admitted that Bali has so many varied art materials that no one can describe it completely and perfectly.

One of the interesting topics to explore and still requires further study is Legong Keraton. As a performing art, Legong Keraton presents visual beauty as well as expresses Balinese cultural values through the aspects of its dance form. Legong Keraton (which is often called Legong) is one of the traditional Balinese dance genres that has become a classic because it has transcended space and time for quite a long time. Legong Keraton is believed to have existed in Balinese society since the end of the nineteenth century ([Jacobs, 1883:69](#)). As it offers renewal, the concept and form of this dance presentation is different from the previous genres in Bali.

The term “Legong” for Balinese people does not automatically refer to Legong Keraton. Legong Keraton is used as a learning material which is best-known and definitely mastered, tends to refer to Legong Lasem. Meanwhile, the other Legong styles less prevalent. The technical questions that arise become more complex when faced with the problems related to the community acting as owners, actors, and the ones attaining benefits from the existence of Legong Keraton. Few people realize that Legong Keraton is a dance that plays a highly essential role in the growth of Balinese art and culture.

The form and structure of the choreography of Legong Keraton as a whole is referred to as *palegongan* art. Legong Keraton is a female-character dance form in which two female dancers dance with the same outfits. The structure of the choreography of Legong generally includes five parts – *pangawit*, *pangawak*, *pangècèt*, and *lampahan*. What called *lampahan* is a part describing the story episodically and symbolically, then it ends with a *pakaad* which presents a series of artistic movements as the first three parts. Three dance genres from pre-Legong period – Sanghyang (Sanghyang Dedari and Legong Topeng Sanghyang), Nandir, and Gambuh are assumed to be the source of inspiration for the creativity process of Legong Keraton ([Bandem, 1996:43-46](#)).

[Jacobs \(1883\)](#), in several parts of his writings, explained that Legong is part of the wealth of the king presented at every banquet by the royal party.

The performances of Legong are always side by side or precede the performances of Joged Tongkohan, Gandrung, and all of these dances are accompanied by the same *gamelan* – traditional musical instruments, called Semar Pagulingan. However, Joged and Legong have different treatment. In Legong, when dancing, Legong dancers are always escorted by two men carrying spear weapons, while in Joged, Joged dancers who are boys aged about 10-12 years are allowed to serve guests after dancing.

[Bandem and deBoer \(1981\)](#) assumed that Legong is associated with the concept of spatial space called *luan-teben* or *kaja-kelod* which are understood as sacred space and secular space. Based on this concept, it is stated that Legong transformed from sacred to secular, from Sanghyang Legong to Nandir, then it becomes classical Legong named Legong Keraton.

Legong Keraton which has been going through a relatively long span of time, in fact, cannot avoid dynamics of change as a result of efforts to be in harmony with the supporting situations and conditions. Balinese people, as the owners and main supporters of the existence of Legong, are also not static. The fundamental problem concerned in this study is about the growth and development of Legong in the dynamics of aesthetic changes in dance forms in Bali, which of course relates to the context of Balinese life. [Hauser \(1982:92\)](#) explained that in developing themselves, art and society are continuously in a relationship of mutual dependence and benefit like a chain reaction. Thus, tracing the development of Legong cannot be separated from its relationship with the community.

The presentation of Legong has shifted from a specific performance for the internal benefit of the castle and the surrounding community, to a performance for the wider community, including tourists. This change cannot be separated from the creativity of the artists who base their works on particular era ([Seramasara, 2017](#)). In line with this, Legong text also experiences change. The development of Legong correlated with occurring issues (political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions) of Balinese people is a subject matter that has a very broad scope of problems. To limit the scope of the discussion, this study focuses on what the community’s perspective, in this case Balinese artists, of the existence of Legong Keraton in the midst of the dynamics of Balinese dance development.

According to [Olsen \(1975:96\)](#), society is the most inclusive, complex, and dominant type of social

organization in this world. Society includes the entire order of human social life which generally depends on two factors – interaction and communication (Olsen, 1975:3). In their daily life, humans interact each other and this social process ultimately has positive impact on the community. The state of complementarity among them will give birth to agreements that bring social order to common life. For example, there is a general standard of the concepts of social values, beliefs, norms, and technology (Olsen, 1975:57-60). Legong as a social product of Balinese society, the process of its creation is certainly based on various Balinese values, norms, beliefs, and knowledge that refer to the technical aspects of society. The first Legong dance immediately provided space for the presence of female dancers. In contrast to the previous dance forms such as Gambuh, the female character was performed by male dancers. Providing 'space' for female dancers to appear equally to male dancers, of course based on various considerations of political, social, and cultural conditions in developing community. Changes in various aspects of life, including art, cannot be avoided but are anticipated with various agreements.

The community in this study, specifically are those who directly or indirectly have contributed to the sustainability of Legong's existence. According to Brandon (2003:232), the existence of a genre is affected by the existence of the players like a soul that needs a body to manifest itself. The analogy is that the genre is the soul of the performance and the artist is the body which is then the integration of both is called performance. The performance can be categorized as a social organization. In sustaining its survival, a social organization must think about the relationship among people in the group and the most important thing is how to relate with other organizations for getting support. Brandon (2003:251) also suggested that the concept of a social contract is one way to regulate the relationship of a group with its supporters. The intended supporters are the artists who are members of a group. In addition, there are also three forms of support – the government (the owner of authority and power), commercial support (based on the agreed results of the commercialization of art), and communal support (a form of service for the common interest of a community) (2003: 251-263).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative study, which means that an understanding of a phenomenon is obtained from observing objects in the field. In relation to the specifics of this research topic, the qualitative value

is to find a relationship between the attitudes or responses of the community in facing challenges from outside and the presence of Legong genre as an expression of their culture.

To find a comprehensive and in-depth study, the main research areas were limited to Denpasar City and Gianyar Regency. The Gianyar region, since the reign of traditional customary, has been known as a center for the arts, including the villages of Peliatan and Saba which consistently 'guard' Legong dance. Meanwhile, Denpasar City has art education institutions which of course do not ignore the development of traditional arts, including Legong.

In this study the author applied ethnochoreological approach and also implemented several theories and concepts from other disciplines. As the author used different concepts of other disciplines, this study can also be categorized as a multidisciplinary approach. De Marinis (1993:1-9) explained that texts in performing arts appear in multiple layers and almost every layer in the text requires a multidisciplinary approach. Ethnochoreological approach means that methodologically it directs researchers to analyze the object as a complex phenomenon, which requires study from various sides (multidimensional) and theoretical support from various disciplines. Soedarsono (2001:15-16) preferred to call it ethnochoreology, not dance choreology or ethnology. Several concepts in the disciplines of dance, sociology, and anthropology were borrowed to be able to explain the problems in this study. The author intensely carried out observations in those three areas in September 2008 to observe the development of Legong and obtain information from several sources related to the topic of discussion. However, random observations about Legong Keraton actually started in 1990 during repeated visits in Bali. The data needed were obtained through watching Legong performances, learning to dance Legong, and interviewing teachers as well as Legong trainer artists.

The author arranged several activities in a systematic procedural manner including literature review, determining and interviewing informants, field observations, data sorting based on specifications, and analysis. In addition to the use of private collections, library observation in several libraries in Yogyakarta and Bali was also carried out. The selection of the informants was based on the intensity of their involvement with the object of study and their ability to provide critical arguments including evaluating the accuracy of the data or information presented by the author. The main objectives of this interview were (a) to explore an

informants' constructive thoughts about events, concerns, and others related to cultural activities; (b) to reconstruct thoughts about various things in cultural activities experienced by informants in the past; and (c) to reveal the informants' thoughts about the possibility of their own culture in the future (Endraswara, 2003: 212). Besides, the author used unstructured interview technique to collect as much data as possible from each informant.

Furthermore, the author classified the data based on specifications, then analyzed and interpreted the data to answer the research problem. The two main informants who contributed significantly to this study were I Wayan Dibia (academic, cultural practitioner, and performing art artist) who used to discuss or confirm the data in the field, and Ni Ketut Arini (dancer, teacher, and Legong dance coach) who was willing to guide and point out the right direction in understanding technical issues of Legong. Those informants live in Denpasar. Other artists who also contributed to this study regarding Legong were I Made Bandem (Denpasar), I Gusti Gede Raka Saba (Gianyar), Sang Ayu Muklen (Gianyar), Anak Agung Oka Dalem (Gianyar).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Balinese people, especially dancers and cultural observers agree that to explain the background of Legong Keraton as a term, concept, or dance genre, it is highly necessary to refer to several written sources. It is reasonable to pay attention to the stories that develop in the community through generations. (Bali Cultural Tourism Facilities Development Project, 1975). The expression '*mabalih legong*', which means watching dance performances, is commonly used by Balinese people to explain the activity of watching dance performances, and in fact, the dances that are presented are various loose dance repertoires or several types of characterless dances, either female or male dancers. Nowadays, if you pay attention to the discussion and scientific writing about performing arts (Bali in particular), the term "Legong" is definitely Legong Keraton dance. On the other hand, in everyday conversation in Balinese society in general, the term Legong still has multiple meanings such as the name of the dance (Legong Keraton); watching dance performances (*mabalih legong*); and female dancers who dance Legong. The terms Legong Keraton and Palegongan in Balinese traditional dance are recognized as rooted in a more popular term – Legong. These three terms (*legong*, *legong keraton*, and *palegongan*) will always appear as a barrier when describing each dance in this group. For Balinese people, an artistic event

(including dance) having a close relationship with their religious tradition has the 'power' to raise awareness of the importance of life, and plays a role in improving the quality of life of artists and their communities (Zoete and Spies, 1973:7). In the twentieth century, Balinese life ran on a dynamic social foundation. Changes in the situation experienced certainly have an impact on the perspective, meaning, and utilization of the performing arts. Legong performances are no longer only for a limited group (in the beginning it was only for the nobel family) but it has expanded to meet various interests from various circles. This fact eventually triggered the desire of the Balinese people to stage the Legong Keraton in another form. Now we can see that traditional Legong coexists with its variants – Legong creations and other dance genres that come later.

The community, especially the performing artists, is always serious about carrying out the dual role in maintaining the continuity of traditional arts. The artist community absorbs and then expresses it, takes it, and then distributes it back to the wider community. The continuity of Legong Keraton preservation process in Peliatan, for example, was recognized primarily because of the role of Anak Agung Gde Mandera (1905-1986), a musical artist from Puri Kaleran in Peliatan village, Gianyar who was assisted by a dance coach, Gusti Made Sengog (died 1970) (Interview with Anak Agung Oka Dalem in Peliatan, January 2009). Character and idealism of Mandera were continued later especially by his son, Anak Agung Gde Oka Dalem, with the support of all the relatives of Puri Kaleran, so that the continuity of the preservation process was maintained. In contrast, Ruspawati (2016) showed that with the decreasing number of dancer artists, the dance was threatened with extinction. Anticipating this, many artists including Oka Dalem in Peliatan Gianyar, I Gusti Seramasemadi in Saba Gianyar, Ni Ketut Arini in Denpasar, opened or continued the traditional Legong training 'space' while providing creative 'space', especially for the younger generation to create works of art. (interview of those informants in Bali, different times and places in September 2008).

The existence of Legong Keraton as a traditional art in the long journey of its life in the midst of a wave of renewal or modernization, persists because: (1) choreographically it demonstrates high artistic quality (varied movements and harmonious interweaving with other artistic elements); (2) it is open to a change in terms of theme, form, and structure of the dance; (3) it carries theme containing cultural values that are still recognized by the

community. The change is related to the human element (artists and society), who always maintain the continuity of their traditional arts for various reasons and methods. The estuary is to realize mutual interests (human interests in art, or vice versa for the functioning of art in people's lives). Ni Ketut Arini started her dancing as a Legong dancer at a young age, mastering the skills of Legong dancing. Her commitment and dedication in 'maintaining' the growth and development of Legong were pursued by establishing a Balinese dance training center called "Warini Dance Studio" (1973). One of the dance materials taught is Legong Keraton. In the course of her career as a dancer and dance teacher, she also created dance works whose one of her inspirations was Legong. (interview with Ni Ketut Arini, September 2008).

A performing art is a work that is always marked by human touch (Palmer, 2003: 7). Thus, a work does not have to be treated as an object or something mute, but as a work that requires a more comprehensive form of understanding. Legong as a cultural expression (physical culture) which also means as a symbol, cannot be interpreted by ignoring the views of the individual or the community (creators, users, and connoisseurs or critics). A symbol is usually arbitrary (Hanna, 1979:40). If a sign does not have natural relationship between the signifier and the signified, the meaning of the sign will be determined by the conventions of the community (Pradopo, 1998:43).

Legong Keraton as a Milestone of The Form Change of Balinese Dance

As a cultural product of the past, Legong has contributed significantly to the growth of dance in Bali. Legong Keraton comes with an aesthetic principle that is different from the previous genre. Legong develops and continues to exist side by side with its new variants. Its existence is also seen as motivating the presence of new dance genres such as *kakebyaran* dance and ballet. Therefore, the existence of Legong Keraton can be positioned as a starting point of the form changes of Balinese dance.

Legong Keraton is positioned as a dance form that marks a change in the art of Balinese dance, especially because the aspects of the art which it carries show different tendencies from the dance genres of the previous period (this assumption was conveyed by I Wayan Dibia, interview, September 2008). Historically, it is known that there was a dance genre before Legong called Gambuh. Gambuh is the oldest form of dance drama in Bali, which is believed to be the source of reference for the creation of almost all dance forms in Bali.

Legong dances that appear later use Gambuh as a source of creation. Furthermore, after Legong, Kebyar and Ballet dances appeared, the manifestation of which can be said to have originated from Legong. Legong with its characteristics not only connects the genres before and after it –Gambuh and Kebyar, but also as a genre that grows bigger and continues to exist side by side with its new variants, other genres, both that preceded it and those that emerged later.

The position of Legong is between Gambuh and Kebyar which choreographically can be seen in the different presentations of each pattern. The form of storytelling that presents a play in a narrative manner is the characteristic of Gambuh, while using story only as a tool for searching for the motion to be presented in an abstract and symbolic way is the characteristic of Kebyar dances. In Legong, two forms of expression merge into different presentation styles. The story is still presented in Legong, but only concentrates on one episode of the whole story (episodic) by way of abstract-symbolic delivery. These different forms and ways of expressing are the specifications of each of these genres. In Gambuh, the form of narrative expression and visualization implies balance, order, and simplicity, as well as being formal and tends to be rigid. This seems to be in line with Martin's expression (1968: 120) that classical art is more involved in the issue of form and outward visualization. In Kebyar dance genre, the rules that follow still provide opportunities for creative acts that are improvised and spontaneous. With these possibilities, content and substance are more important than form and outward visualization. It is said to be one of the elements of the romantic style (Martin, 1968:120). Legong, which historically was born after Gambuh and before Kebyar, has the same form and way of expression as in Gambuh and Kebyar. Legong, which seems to be a transition between Gambuh and Kebyar, can be said to have a classic-romantic style, a style in between, or a mix of classic and romantic (Sudewi, 1993:6).

Legong as a milestone or starting point for changes in Balinese performing arts can be shown through several elements. First, Legong Keraton for the first time provided an opportunity for female dancers to be present in public spaces. Legong is a form of female character dance danced by two female dancers. Second, Legong Keraton offers a form that is able to actualize various stories and themes (work on *palegongan*). Third, the presentation of the play is no longer narrative but episodic and symbolic whose presentation only requires a short duration. Fourth, the structural aspects of dance (which are

arranged as if separated between parts) have the opportunity to be developed, for example adding dance parts, extending certain parts, as well as compacting or cutting structures in dance. Borrowing Peterson's statement (1977: 183), it can be said that Legong is a creative choreography.

Legong Keraton as A Source of Inspiration for the Creation of Artwork

Legong Keraton has power to survive and the ability to influence or inspire the presence of new works. The society's mindset which tends to be open for coming new things in intercultural interactions, has also provided a 'space' for Legong Keraton to exist, as well as strengthened the sociocultural identity of Balinese people. Through Legong, people can 'greet' each other and with Legong together they show their Balinese identity. Legong Keraton not only inspires the birth of new dances but also inspires painters and photographers to produce their works of art.

Legong Keraton dance has long been immortalized in photo art and published in the form of postcards,

distributed, or sold as souvenirs. Legong, as one of Bali's icons, became internationally famous after Pentas Colonial Exhibition in Paris in 1931. There are many pictures of Legong dancers that are installed or used as a tool for spreading information about Bali, product packaging from Bali, and various other purposes such as the work of photographers, painters, and sculptors.

In the life of performing arts in Bali and outside Bali, Legong has been used as a source of dance creation. The reinterpretation of the overall form and structure of Legong gives rise to *palegongan* creations with new nuances, while some dance creations utilize the development of only certain elements of Legong to find novelty in their work. The presence of Legong influences the development of other forms of art or dance, both those that have existed before and even more for the existence of new dances. In this topic, it is assumed that Legong Keraton has been able to replace Gambuh as a dance that inspires the creation of new dances in Bali (Dibia interview, September 2008).



Figure 1. Statue of a Legong Keraton dancer, in front of Kurung Temple, the main entrance to the Balerung Mandera Srinertya Waditra building, in Peliatan. Balerung is a center for coaching, training, and performing Legong Keraton Peliatan style as well as other arts in Peliatan.



Figure 2. Painting “Legong”

Oil paint on canvas, 145 X 145 cm, by Nyoman Gunarsa.



Figure 3. Photographic Artwork “Together Dancing-2009”.

Related to the emergence of Kebyar dance genre in Bali which is estimated to have emerged in the early twentieth century period, Kebyar Legong dance in Buleleng and Kebyar Sit dance in Tabanan can be used as examples of cases in positioning the Legong Keraton as a source of creating new dances. Kebyar Legong dance is a solo dance with a male character, which was originally created around 1919 by I Wayan Wandres. This dance is danced by two male dancers – I Gede Manik and his friend, Cakra. It was further informed that this dance is better known as Legong Negak (*negak* in Balinese language means sitting) because the dance movements are mostly done in a sitting position. In subsequent developments, this dance is danced by two female dancers. Zoete and Spies (1973:236-241) explained that Kebyar Legong dance has the characteristics of dance movements such as Legong, Jauk, Topeng, and Baris; both dancers in the same costume, perform the same movements and dance always in side by side formation. It is possible that I Mario, a

well-known Jauk dancer from Tabanan at that time, had witnessed a Kebyar dance performance danced by two male dancers from North Bali, then later got the idea of making a solo dance with a different style (Zoete and Spies, 1973:233). Kebyar Sitting dance was created by I Mario in 1925. This dance movement is mostly done in a sitting position with crossed legs, describing the skills and agility of a young man dancing to the rhythm of the *gamelan* (Dibia, 1999:49).

Dancing to the rhythm of the music in harmony with the pace and nuances of the music accompanying the dance is a hallmark of the concept of *igel nabuh* or *ngigelin gamelan* which characterizes the previous genre – Legong Keraton. Dibia (2003:46) in her research report, citing Ni Ketut Arini's statement, asserts that I Wayan Wandres as the creator of Legong Kebyar consciously borrowed the elements of Legong Keraton dance, after watching Ni Ketut

Reneng dance Legong Keraton several times. On the other hand, Dibia cited the statement of I Made Keranca, a musical artist from Jagaraga, that among the wider community in North Bali, the term legong implies an agile and dynamic dance movement (Dibia, 2003:15). Thus, the use of the word Legong as the name of the dance is not always interpreted as the influence of Legong Keraton on Kebyar Legong.

These characteristics of Kebyar Legong are identical to those of Legong Keraton. Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Legong Keraton genre indirectly provided the basis for the emergence of *kakebyaran* dance genre. Legong Kebyar as well as other kebyar dances that emerged later did not present a play or story in its presentation. Stories or characters that are used as sources are more directed at limiting the discovery and use of dance movements which tend to be abstract-symbolic.

After Legong Kebyar, there is Kebyar Sit and its variants called Kebyar Terompong, Tarunajaya (an update or refinement of Kebyar Legong), Margapati, and Tamulilingan Mangisep Sari (later became Oleg Tamulilingan). In its journey, Kebyar dances of this period (before the 1970s) could finally be classified as traditional dances and may even become classics because of their ability to survive for a relatively long period of time as well as because they still firmly adhere to the principles of traditional dance including *agem*, *tandang*, *tangkep*, and *tangkis* of Balinese dance. Legong inspires the creation of ballet. The meaning and use of the term ballet (art-drama-dance) is the same as ballet, a dance that emphasizes the presentation of the story through dance movements and accompanying music (Soedarsono, 1970:7). In Bali, I G. B. N. Panji called ballet as a Modern Dramatari, appearing after the presence of Ramayana ballet in Prambanan (Soedarsono, 1970:269). Experts and art observers in Bali agree that the creator of the first ballet in Bali was I Wayan Beratha, a Balinese dancer and musical artist who is also a teacher at Denpasar Karawitan Conservatory (KOKAR) (Dibia, 1999:67). The ballet that first appeared in Bali was a ballet with the play Jayaprana by I Wayan Beratha in 1962, but long before the Balinese had recognized an older form of ballet called Legong Keraton (Bandem, 1982:163). I Wayan Beratha admitted this and also emphasized that the form of presentation of Legong Keraton, especially in *lampahan* or drama section, is the source of reference for his ballet. The form of ballet is very clearly recognizable as a dance form that presents a play or story without dialogue by the dancers, only through motion and *karawitan* – traditional musical composition. The same is true for

Legong Keraton which presents one episode of the story through motion and musicality.

Legong Keraton as A Tool of Education

The presence of Legong genre in the constellation of performing arts in Bali has an important historical meaning that is useful for cultural education. Legong is presented as a form offering dance work aesthetics that are different from older dance genres. The appearance of Legong indicates an attempt to reinterpret traditions and values that are no longer relevant to be maintained. However, the presence of Legong bringing its novelty has not hindered the development of dance genres that have been born earlier, such as Gambuh, Arja, Sanghyang, Topeng, and others whose existence can be traced until now.

One of the implemented strategies, an effort to keep Legong exist as part of the cultural richness of the Balinese people, is transmitting the dance to the next generation continuously. The establishment of formal educational institutions such as ASTI (Academy of Indonesian Dance Arts) and KOKAR, has direct positive impact on the recognition of Legong by the wider community outside Bali. The traces of students' artistic works and activities and also alumni of these two government institutions are scattered in various regions. Therefore, the dance is automatically widely spread.

Legong Keraton is established as one of the teaching materials not only due to its content of the art material which can be said to represent the classical genre, but also owing to its form and structure of the presentation that allow the presence of a wider communication space with audiences from various cultural backgrounds. In this position, Legong Keraton is able to provide social and economic benefits for Balinese people, especially those involved in coaching, managing, and organizing dance performances. Through Legong, several artists interact directly or indirectly, creating a dialogue space that has an impact on the enrichment of their respective artistic insights. The similarity in interest allows the birth of a bond to give each individual the opportunity to express their knowledge and skills, while other individuals have the opportunity to absorb and then re-express it as something new. Legong Training conducted by Ayu Bulan Dance Workshop in Bandung (founded by A. A. Ayu Bulantrisna Djelantik in 1994) is a concrete example that shows how 'Legong' has created a very wide 'space' for communication for a group of people, among individuals in a group or between one group to another.

The inheritance of traditional art dance in Bali, including Legong, is carried out in the form of direct (conscious and desired) or indirect teaching and education. The fact that can be taken into account as part of the dance learning process for Balinese is that since infancy, Balinese children have seen dances and heard *gamelan* sounds (Zoete and Spies, 1973:29). This indirect and continuous learning that is obtained while they are still living in Bali actually gives strong results that are rooted and penetrated into the soul, cultivating high kinesthetic sense or sensitivity in music. This condition makes it easier for them to participate in dance lessons that are consciously carried out or desired which in practice more often use the imitation method or imitate the teacher who dances by giving an example in front of the students. This teaching pattern is mostly carried out in the scope of traditional and non-formal education. This kind of education is not fully able to grow or open a critical understanding of the material being studied.

As the scope of dance education expands by formal educational institutions, there is an awareness of the broad benefits of learning dance. In the end it also leads to the use of different learning methods, i.e. using analytical and holistic methods. Students are no longer just imitating the dance moves performed by the teacher. Students and teachers together sharpen critical skills to achieve maximum results from the learning process involved.

The teaching of dance in Balinese tradition in the past was generally done by imitation. The dance teacher must dance first in front of the students, then the students would imitate, or the teacher and students danced together as like reflecting each other's shadows. Arcana (2007: 190) concluded that, in this kind of learning process, students never get "intellectual exercise" which is really needed to cultivate critical attitudes. Furthermore, it is said that the growth of a critical attitude is a Western education system, but this kind of knowledge transfer should be adapted so that there is no gap in the regeneration of dance teachers and dancers (Arcana, 2007:190).



Figure 4. Learning dance

(Krause, 1912. Dok. KLV001061319[2])

The implementation of dance learning has a different emphasis on the types and functions of dance in society. As it is well known, dances in Bali are classified into *wali*, *bebali*, and *balih-balihan*. The first group, for example, Rejang dance and other temple dances, is learned by imitating and practicing it immediately during the ceremony. While children seriously imitate the steps and swings of their older or adult arms, teenagers seem a little shy, and the older ones are aware of their obligation as role models (Zoete and Spies, 1973:29). This type of dance skill is achieved over time and of course the initiative of each individual to always devote himself is expressed in dancing at every ceremony

that requires the dance. Slightly different from the way of mastering the types of dances in the second group, it is generally acting dances functioning as a complement to the ceremony. To be able to dance or animate one of the characters in Gambuh dance drama, for example, the dancers should practice by imitating the movements of dancers who are considered to have been able to play the characters being danced (*ketakson*). They must also specifically receive technical guidance from experts.

The system and method of inheritance of ritual dance are different from that of non-ritual dance. Legong Keraton is a non-ritual *balih-balihan* dance

whose emphasis is on aesthetic presentation to entertain the audience ([Sugiartha, 2018:10](#)). The process of inheritance of Legong is quite intensive from the preparation until the learning process. The teacher starts with the selection process. To get prospective Legong dancers, a number of little girls are selected based on the views of the teacher. Learning is carried out together with the teacher and the students imitating and the movements are controlled (*diuyeng*) by the teacher. Through this way of learning, students can immediately feel the quality of the dynamics of the movement being demonstrated. The teacher not only directs the form but also the quality of motion, that is the distribution of energy in moving. Meanwhile, there is accompaniment of playing a drum instrument or one of the traditional instruments (*saron*). Instrumental accompaniment is also often replaced by vocals imitating the sound of playing drum instruments and so on.

Zoete and Spies ([1973:30-31](#)) described how Mario in Tabanan teaches two boys Kebyar dance and how Ida Bagoes Boda transmits Legong in Denpasar. Mario holds one child, and then carries him in his dance moves, and soon releasing that one to hold the other. Ida Bagoes Boda is also not different, occasionally holding or 'moving' the dancers. Another time he dances exemplifies the incessant singing of melodies and rhythms that are emphasized by alternating syllables: *dedollar-dedolér, ninong-nongnér, not-ndong-nér, ndot-nong-nang, nderongrongrong*, and many more variations that can be used according to the musical abilities of each teacher. From experience in the field, apart from the *gendér* (melodic bearer) instrument, it seems that the sound of the instrument that is most often imitated is the drum instrument (eg *dag kom pang-kompang tut, dag kapak-kapak*) related to motion accentuation, and the echo of the sound of the gong (*sirrrrrr*) which emphasizes the movement in the end of each movement motif.

The process of transmitting dance is not formulated and standardized. To keep the learning process from pursuing the targeted results, various methods and strategies are needed. Students must grow and develop a sense of loving and belonging to the dance they are learning. In other words, the process of transmitting or learning dance is not only the sense of training, but also education that leads to the mental and emotional realm or understanding the meaning beyond the dance and the activity (behavior) of the dance. One of these areas is the concept of appreciation of dance called *pageh*, i.e. sincerity in carrying out the obligations it supports. Discipline as part of the formation of students'

mental character is instilled together with mastery of skills.

Senior artists such as Sang Ayu Muklen and I Gusti Gede Raka said that, by studying Legong Keraton, a student (dancer) has been introduced to most of the repertoire of Balinese dance movements. Especially for female dancers, through the Legong dance, the flexibility of the body will be more formed and directed. Regarding this matter, I Gusti Gede Raka said that "you haven't learned Balinese dance if you haven't learned Legong Keraton dance". (Interview of I Gusti Gede Raka, in Saba Gianyar, April 1991). Furthermore, Muklen explained that "learning Balinese dance will be easy if you have completely mastered the basics of old musical composition or percussion in Legong". (interview of Sang Ayu Muklen in Banjar Sala Pejeng Kawan Tampaksiring, February 2006). Gusti Raka also emphasized that learning to dance should be from early age because the brain is more receptive to dance material. The stages are first looking for flexibility and coordination of body parts in moving (*its caluh*), then instilling discipline in order not to suddenly stop learning for no reason (*ngambul*). Children are allowed to find joy and pleasure in dancing as well as being praised or flattered, so that their expressions will come naturally. [Georgios \(2018:109\)](#) also found that the teaching and learning process of dance is more effective if there is a sense of love. After mastering the basic body postures in Balinese dance (*ngagem*), then the teachers give the dance form and structure (*paileh*) along with the musical composition. Before this step, in order to create a musical sense, rhyme and rhythm to the movements performed, a teacher often accompanies the practice with drum sounds or vocals imitating actual musical composition.

Dance, in this case Legong, as a form of behavior, has two dimensions of socio-psychological function called cognitive and affective ([Peterson, 1977:196](#)). The dance communicates cultural symbols and patterned interactions of an experience and then provides a qualitative experience for consciousness which will then lead to the presence of another form of behavior. Symbols in this case are hidden phenomena that are interpreted in society ([Kusumastuti et al., 2020:339](#)). Utilization of cultural values in every creative process of creating new art (dance), will show how local cultural abilities (local genius) still have meaning in the process of social and cultural change.

The symbols in Legong Keraton can be interpreted to mean something. Its appearance in the constellation of Balinese performing arts which is

based on various cultural thoughts, if understood, will certainly be able to direct generations of heirs in responding to the inheritance they receive. Likewise, every element of their art can be traced to contain the concept that became the basis for its formation.

The value dimensions that appear to be the reference for the embodiment of Legong Keraton are the concept or dimension of value of two and the concept of value of three. The concept of the value of two in question is the concept of *Rwa Bhineda*, *Purusa Pradana*. This concept means that two things are opposite or contradictory (for example, good and bad, *kaja-kelod*) but they become one unit and are in balance in life (Sunarya, 2020: 49). Meanwhile, the concept of value of three is reflected in the application of the concepts of Tri Mandala, Tri Angga, and Tri Kona. Tri Mandala is the concept of dividing an area or building into three parts: the inner, middle, and outer areas. Tri Angga asserts that an activity is realized by prioritizing its purpose, so it can be presented in a measure of form – large (*utama*), medium (*madya*), or small (*nista*). Tri Kona is a concept that in carrying out or assessing an activity, people have to consider the place (*desa*), time (*kala*), and situation (*patra*). (Geriya, 1990).

The visualization of Legong form danced by two or more dancers in the same outfits implies the content of the two-dimensional concept in which Balinese society knows as *rwa bhineda*, *purusa pradana*. In some parts of the dance, two dancers take positions side by side (when dancing the Pangawit, Pangawak, and Pakaed dance sections), and take opposite positions facing each other (in the Pangecet dance section). In addition, the concept of value of two is also observed in the episodic-symbolic presentation of the play or *lampahan*, focusing on highlighting the role of two characters in the story. Each theme presented describes the conflict between the two main characters, such as Lasem and Rangkesari in Legong Lasem; Subali and Sugriwa in Legong Kutir and Legong Jobog; also in the presentation of non-literal themes such as in Legong Bapang (characters move hard against each other or gently alternate in which the order of movement to the right is always followed to the left) and so on. (interview of Ni Ketut Arini, December 2021).

The concept of value of three can be seen when Legong is performed. In the constellation of art in Bali, Legong genre is in the group of *balih-balihan* or performing arts. When performing Legong in the temple area, for example, the used area is the *jaba pura*, the outermost temple area, not in the *jeroan*, which is the inner or sacred area according to Tri

Mandala concept. Likewise, there will be technical adjustments (such as determining the size of the dance area, the use of make-up, lighting, etc.) taking into account the space, time, and current situation (Tri Kona concept) as well as the purpose of holding the performance (Tri Angga concept). The third dimension is also reflected in the structure of the dance as well as the musical composition. *Pangawit*, *pangawak-pangècèt*, and *pekaad* constitute the main composition (*jajar pageh*) which can be said to be based on Tri Angga conception in terms of three main parts of the human body: head (*pangawit*), body (*pangawak-pangècèt*), and feet (*pakaad*). It not only characterizes Legong, but also Balinese dance and karawitan in general. (Interview of with I Wayan Dibia, December 2021).

CONCLUSION

Legong Keraton is believed as the starting point of the form changes of Balinese dance, coming with aesthetic principles that are different from the preceding genres. Legong is also a source of inspiration for the creation of works of art, painting, and of course dance. Until nowadays Legong develops and continues to exist side by side with its new variants. Its existence is also seen as having motivated the presence of new dance genres such as *kakebyaran* dance and ballet. Legong is a highly priceless tradition of Balinese people that is transmitted from generation to generation, studied, performed in various arts and non-art events, and also disseminated to foreign countries.

Legong Keraton, as a manifestation of Balinese traditional culture, has been known and recognized as a tool of carrying the identity of Balinese dance. The visual charm of the female dancers' movements and their clothing is present in the performance stage recorded in various forms of audio-visual documentation. This kind of documentation looks like saying “this is Bali”.

This article describes how the community, especially Balinese artists, view the reality of the existence of Legong Keraton in Bali. Legong Keraton as a cultural treasure that has been deeply rooted, especially in Balinese society, must be preserved. As a traditional art, it needs to be known and considered in relation to the contemporary way of life in this era, so that it can be a cultural wealth that is beneficial for the people. In the end, this dance will become an additional value for increasing the appreciation of the community art which in this way will unwittingly strengthen the people's affection toward valuable traditional arts.

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