

**CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF NATURE MOVEMENT
A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN TRADITIONAL DANCE
AND MODERN DANCE**

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Abstract: *Dance as part of human culture is constantly changing with the times, social dynamics, and shifting aesthetic values of society. These changes are evident in the nature of dance movements, which not only function as an aesthetic element, but also as a medium of expression of values, symbols, and cultural identities. In the context of Indonesian performing arts, the difference in the character of the natural movement between traditional dance and modern dance shows the existence of a complex and continuous process of cultural transformation. This study utilizes a qualitative approach through literature study by examining various academic literature, scientific journals, and references that discuss dance, movement aesthetics, and cultural transformation. The results of the study show that the nature of traditional dance movements is structured, symbolic, and full of philosophical meanings that are rooted in customs, religious values, and social norms of the supporting community. In contrast, modern dance features freer, more flexible, and expressive characters of movement, with an emphasis on individual creativity, form innovation, and openness to global cultural influences. The transformation of the natural movement of dance reflects the shift in aesthetic paradigm from collective and normative forms to more personal and experimental expression. Nevertheless, modern dance still shows a connection with tradition as a source of inspiration in the process of its creation. Thus, cultural transformation in dance art not only shows a change in form, but also becomes an adaptive strategy in maintaining the sustainability and relevance of dance in the midst of modernization and globalization.*

Keywords: *Cultural Transformation, Nature Movement, Traditional Dance, Modern Dance*

INTRODUCTION

Culture is the product of human creation, taste, and karsa that develops through social processes and is inherited from generation to generation. As a system that includes values, norms, knowledge, and symbolic expressions, culture shapes the way humans understand and live life. Andreas Eppink views culture as a whole

system of social values, norms, social, religious structures, and intellectual and artistic expressions that characterize a society. In this context, culture is not only abstract as a system of ideas, but also present in a tangible form that can be lived through the five senses, one of which is through art ([Mahkmudova, 2025; Nursalam et al., 2023](#)).

Art is an integral part of culture that functions as a medium of aesthetic expression, symbolization of values, and a means of preserving community norms and customs. Through works of art, human beings express their inner experiences, outlook on life, and collective identity. Art cannot be separated from its supporting society, because society plays a role in creating, maintaining, developing, and transmitting art from one generation to the next. Therefore, the social and cultural changes that occur in society directly affect the form and meaning of the art produced ([Mangoensong & Yanuartuti, 2020](#)).

One form of art that has a strong affinity with cultural expression is dance. Dance uses gestures as the main medium to convey certain meanings, messages, and values. Movement in dance is not just physical, but is the result of processing imagination, feeling, and thought that is symbolically manifested. Each series of movements has a meaning that represents man's relationship with nature, spirituality, and social life. In the context of Indonesia's rich cultural diversity and traditions, dance art develops as an important part of cultural identity and a means of preserving local values.

Nevertheless, the art of dance is not static. Along with the development of the times, changes in aesthetic tastes, and socio-cultural dynamics of society, the form and meaning of dance have undergone transformation. This transformation is evident in changes in the nature of movement, which is the basic characteristics of body movements that reflect certain cultural values and views. Traditional dance tends to maintain a movement structure that is bound by customary norms, is symbolic, and functions in the context of rituals, ceremonies, and the preservation of traditions. In contrast, modern dance thrives by emphasizing freedom of expression, individual creativity, and openness to cross-cultural influences and globalization.

The difference in the nature of movement between traditional dance and modern dance shows a shift in aesthetic paradigm, from collective, normative, and spiritual forms to more personal, flexible, and experimental expressions. This shift not only reflects changes in artistic forms, but also represents cultural dynamics in response to social changes and the development of the times. Dance, in this case, becomes a space for dialogue between tradition and modernity, where old values are not completely abandoned, but are reprocessed in new forms of expression ([Lamothe, 2025](#)).

Based on this phenomenon, this study is directed to examine the process of cultural transformation that occurs in the realm of movement between traditional dance and modern dance in Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research method through the study of various scientific articles, journals, and relevant academic literature. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of aesthetic changes and meaning in dance, as well as strengthen understanding of the role of dance as a medium of adaptation and preservation of cultural identity in the midst of modernization and globalization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dance art is understood as a form of cultural expression that represents the values, norms, and outlook on life of the supporting community. Dance movements not only function as an aesthetic element, but also as a symbol that contains philosophical, religious, and social meanings. Various studies have stated that dance was born from the collective experience of society and develops along with the cultural context, customs, and belief systems that surround it. Therefore, dance art is an important medium in preserving cultural identity and transmitting local values from one generation to the next ([Ramesh, 2023](#)).

The literature on traditional dance shows that the nature of movement in traditional dance is structured, has a fixed pattern, and is full of symbolic meaning. Every element of movement, formation, clothing, and makeup is closely related to traditional values, philosophies, and ritual and social functions in society. Traditional dance develops from generation to generation and relatively maintains the pakem that has been inherited. The steadfastness of this movement structure reflects the collective orientation of the community as well as the function of dance as part of an established and sustainable cultural system ([Oktavianus et al., 2024](#)).

In contrast to traditional dance, the study of modern dance emphasizes freedom of expression, individual creativity, and movement innovation. Modern dance emerged as a response to the rigid structure of classical dance and developed along with social changes and the influence of globalization. The nature of modern dance movements is flexible, experimental, and open to the incorporation of various artistic disciplines and performance technologies. In this context, modern dance is understood as a medium of personal expression and reflection on contemporary social, psychological, and cultural issues, without being strictly bound by certain customary norms.

Although various studies have discussed traditional dance and modern dance separately, studies that specifically examine cultural transformation through the comparison of the nature of movement between traditional dance and modern dance are still relatively limited. Most of the research focuses more on the historical, social, or aesthetic aspects of each dance form, without examining changes in the nature of movement as an indicator of cultural transformation. Therefore, this research fills this gap by examining the shifting character of nature as a reflection of cultural dynamics, as well as placing dance as a dialogue space between tradition and modernity in the context of Indonesian culture.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research to examine cultural transformation in the realm of traditional dance movement and modern dance. The research data is sourced from secondary data in the form of national and international journals, reference books, and scientific papers that discuss dance, movement aesthetics, and cultural transformation. Data collection was carried out through literature studies by reading, recording, and classifying sources based on the theme of the study, namely the characteristics of the nature of traditional dance movements, the characteristics of modern dance movements, and forms of cultural transformation in dance art. Data analysis was carried out in a qualitative descriptive manner through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn, so as to obtain a comprehensive understanding

of the changes in the meaning and natural form of dance movements in the context of Indonesian culture.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The art of dance is the beauty of the expression of the human soul expressed in the form of gestures that are refined with aesthetics. Dance is an expression of the human soul that is transformed by imagination and given shape through the medium of movement, so that it becomes a symbolic form of movement and as an expression of the creator of the dance. Dance is a rhythmic movement of either part or all of the limbs consisting of individual or group patterns accompanied by certain expressions or ideas. Dance is a combination of patterns in a space that are arranged and woven according to certain time filling rules. From some of the expert opinions above, it can be concluded that dance is an expression of the human soul according to certain motivations, which are expressed through beautiful and rhythmic movements. A dance art demands the precision and perfection that is imposed on a dancer in performing a movement. So, dancers must be established in mastering the material and souling its meaning. In this case, dance means a combination of beautiful and rhythmic movements that are arranged or arranged so that they can provide pleasure and satisfaction for the performers and connoisseurs ([Hidayatullah & Bulan, 2017](#)).

The art of dance, with all the beauty and meaning contained in it, is not static. Along with the times, changes in aesthetic tastes, and socio-cultural dynamics of society, the form and meaning of dance have also shifted. This process of change is then known as dance transformation. The term "transformation" is very closely related to "change", which is a change in a thing or situation. In a text a work of art always undergoes a change no matter how big or small it is, as mentioned above that the key meaning of transformation is change. A dance work that is performed in one form, then again performed in the same form, will certainly undergo changes. This means that even though it is in the same form, if it is performed at different times, there will be changes.

As a form of cultural expression, dance has an important role in representing the values of people's lives. Through movement, rhythm, and expression, each dance reflects the character, beliefs, and cultural identity of its home region. In the context of Indonesia's diverse culture, dance forms develop according to the social environment, customs, and belief systems of the community. From here emerged various types of dances that have their own characteristics, one of which is traditional dance. Culture is a holistic way of life. Culture is complex, abstract, and broad. Many aspects of culture also determine communicative behavior. These socio-cultural elements are scattered, and include many human social activities. One form of culture is dance. Indonesian dance reflects the richness and diversity of Indonesia's ethnicities and culture. The types of dances according to the choreography can be divided into folk dance, kllasik dance, and new creation dance. Dance can also be classified as traditional and modern dance. Traditional dance is a dance that basically develops in a certain area that is broadly guided and based on the adaptation of hereditary habits embraced/embraced by the people who have the dance. Traditional dance generally has high historical value, broad guidelines, and is based on the adaptation of the customs of the environment around the place where it grows ([Lail, 2015](#)).

The main characteristic of traditional dance lies not only in its form of movement, but also in the cultural values it contains. This type of dance grows and develops with the lives of the supporting communities, so that it becomes an important part of the cultural identity of a region. Because of its hereditary nature, the existence of traditional dance cannot be separated from the history, customs, and belief systems of the local community. Therefore, traditional dance is a type of dance that has existed for a long time and has been passed down from generation to generation, from one generation to the next. Traditional dance is a type of dance that has existed for a long time and has been passed down from generation to generation, from one generation to the next. According to [\(Yayat, 2007\)](#) in general, traditional dance usually contains philosophical, symbolic, and religious values. All the rules of various movements, formations, clothes, and makeup have not changed much. To preserve regional culture such as traditional dance, traditional dance needs to be introduced and taught to children from an early age.

Traditional dance emphasizes the preservation of cultural, symbolic, and philosophical values that have been passed down from generation to generation, the development of dance art does not stop at traditional forms only. Along with social, cultural, and global influences, dance forms that emphasize freedom of expression and innovation emerged, namely modern dance. In contrast to traditional dances rooted in the customs and norms of society, modern dance emerged as a reaction to the formalities and rigid structure of classical ballet, with a focus on individual creativity, exploration of gestures, and thematic freedom. This difference shows how dance art has undergone a transformation from a conservative and symbolic form to a form that is freer, flexible, and adaptive to the dynamics of the times. Modern/contemporary dance is a topic that has evolved the least since the last hundred years. If we reflect on the discussions that took place at the global level, before arriving at the term 'contemporary', the dance world (especially in Europe and America) first came up with the term 'modern dance' whose reference to an artistic momentum when the creation of dance was motivated by the intention to make dance the language of expression of dance itself. That is, the momentum when dance no longer serves needs outside of itself, whether it is a context in the world of rituals, or social and cultural spaces, but serves the dance itself ([Maryani et al., 2025](#)).

The development of modern/contemporary dance emphasizes freedom of expression and movement innovation, so that each dancer and choreographer can create a unique language of movement according to his or her interpretation, experience, and artistic vision. In contrast to traditional dance which has relatively fixed patterns of movement, rules, and symbolic meaning, modern dance is flexible and open to experimentation with form, tempo, space, and interaction with music, light, and stage properties. This approach allows dance to express ideas, emotions, and concepts that are personal and collective, including social, psychological, and political issues, so that dance becomes a medium of broader cultural reflection. Thus, modern dance is no longer just a means of entertainment or ritual, but also a medium of independent artistic expression, emphasizing body language as a center of communication. This phenomenon shows a cultural transformation in the art of dance, where traditional elements remain an inspiration, but are processed through creative and contemporary approaches. This reflects how dance can adapt to the dynamics of the times, presenting a new identity without losing the connection with

the cultural roots that are its source of inspiration ([Sagiv et al., 2020](#)).

In its development, modern/contemporary dance continues to experience innovation both in terms of technique, form of movement, and performance concept. Choreographers develop new methods and approaches that emphasize the freedom of exploration of the body, the creative use of space, as well as integration with various other artistic disciplines such as theatre, contemporary music, visual, and multimedia. Modern dance works are often thematic and conceptual, presenting a specific emotional message or experience to the audience. In addition, the development of technology and performance media also opens up opportunities for choreographers to experiment with new ways of conveying artistic expression. This transformation shows that modern dance is not only a form of performing art, but also a medium of cultural reflection, creativity, and human thought in the contemporary era, which is always dynamic and adaptive to social and aesthetic changes.

Table 1. Comparison of Traditional Dance and Modern Dance

Aspects	Traditional Dance	Modern Dance
Origin and background	Developing in a certain area, inherited from generation to generation, rooted in customs, norms, and beliefs of the community	Flourishing in Europe and America since the early 20th century, it emerged as an individual artistic expression and reaction to the formalities of classical ballet
Values and Philosophy	Contains historical, symbolic, philosophical, and religious value	It emphasizes personal expression, artistic freedom, as well as social, psychological, and conceptual themes.
Motion Forms	Structured, has a fixed pattern, follows certain rules and formations	Flexible, free, experimenting with movement, tempo, space, and interaction with other media
Purpose of the Show	For rituals, traditional ceremonies, cultural preservation, and traditional entertainment	For artistic expression, aesthetic exploration, communication of ideas and emotions, and creative performances
Clothing and Property	Following customs and traditions, symbolic, tends to remain from generation to generation	Flexible, can be experimental, adapt a theme or choreography concept

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review and discussions that have been carried out, it can be concluded that dance is a dynamic cultural expression and is constantly undergoing transformation along with changes in social, aesthetic, and cultural values of society. This transformation is evident in the shift in the nature of movement between traditional dance and modern dance, which reflects the changing way humans express their identity and outlook on life through gestures. The nature of traditional dance movements shows a structured, symbolic, and full of philosophical and religious meanings, which are firmly rooted in the customs, norms, and belief systems of the supporting community. Traditional dance functions as a medium for the preservation of culture and collective identity that is inherited from generation to generation. In contrast, modern dance features freer, more flexible, and innovative character movements, with an emphasis on individual creativity, aesthetic exploration, and openness to cross-cultural influences and technological developments. The comparison between traditional dance and modern dance shows that cultural transformation in dance does not mean the loss of traditional values, but rather the process of cultural adaptation that allows dance art to remain relevant in the midst of the dynamics of the times. Traditional elements are still a source of inspiration that is reworked through creative and contemporary approaches. Thus, dance art can be understood as a medium of dialogue between tradition and modernity, as well as a means of cultural reflection that is adaptive to social and aesthetic changes in the global era.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

All authors contributed equally to the publication of this paper, and all authors read and approved this paper, and all authors declare no conflict of interest.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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