Regional Identity Through Dance:

Ethnic Symbolism in *Piring* and *Bedhaya*

Dance Traditions

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ABSTRACT

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| **Aims:** This study aims to explore ethnic dance as a cultural product that collectively represents the identity of its originating ethnic community. The study is considered crucial because ethnic dance holds strong relevance in the formation of identity politics.  **Study design:** This study employs a qualitative method with an ethnochoreological approach, focusing on *Piring* and *Bedhaya* dances as collective representations of each ethnic community’s cultural identity.  **Place and Duration of Study:** This study is non-field research that relies on literature study and the researcher’s lived experience as a dancer within the studied ethnic communities.  **Methodology:** The literature study in this research involves a critical analysis of relevant documents, including journal articles, research reports, and books, primarily consisting of previous ethnographic accounts. The collected data are evaluated based on authenticity, accuracy, and contextual relevance to address the research questions and objectives. This approach is strengthened by the experience of two research team members who are also dancers from the Minangkabau and Javanese ethnic cultures under study. The team’s diverse cultural backgrounds significantly enrich the interpretative perspective and enhance the validity of the analysis throughout the research process.  **Results:** The study of *Piring* and *Bedhaya* dances reveals that the distinctive characteristics shaped by creative and innovative processes within each cultural context establish ethnic dance as a powerful symbol of regional identity. *Piring* dance, as an artistic expression of the Minangkabau community shaped by Islamic religiosity, reflects its values through movement patterns and modest costume design. In contrast, *Bedhaya* embodies the Javanese worldview of cosmic balance and self-restraint through refined, slow movements and majestic, serene music. These dances differ not only in performative style but also in their representation of cultural values and paradigms, making them potent symbols of regional identity.  **Conclusion:** Ethnic dance represents the cultural values, social systems, and paradigms of its community while also reflecting regional identity as a statement of behavior and culture. This study contributes to the discourse on cultural preservation and identity politics by demonstrating how traditional performances function as living cultural texts. |

*Keywords: Ethnic dance, Collective representation, Regional Identity, Ethnochoreology, Piring dance, Bedhaya dance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethnic dance refers to a form of dance that originates and evolves within a specific ethnic or cultural community. According to Hanna (1973), it is a deliberate mode of cultural communication, carrying meaning within its social context. Zhang (2023) defines ethnic dance as an artistic expression of ethnic identity shaped by geography, culture, and local customs. It encompasses not only movement and choreographic patterns but also supporting elements such as traditional costumes, indigenous music, and religious symbolism. Thus, ethnic dance serves as a cultural expression rooted in and reflective of a community’s lived traditions.

As a cultural manifestation born and shaped within a specific ethnic community, ethnic dance functions not only as an artistic expression but also as a representation of the community’s values, paradigms, and collective consciousness. Pramutomo and Sriyadi (2023), in their study on *Tayub* dance, emphasize that ethnic dance, as a cultural product, embodies an inseparable relationship between its form and the value systems it conveys. Similarly, Narawati (2013) argues that ethnic dance reflects how a community perceives and responds to its surrounding contexts. Ethnic dance, therefore, should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be isolated from its socio-cultural environment. As a cultural text, it is deeply intertwined with the identity, social structure, and lived dynamics of the community from which it emerges, reflecting the social realities of its people.

Ethnic dance represents a distinctive cultural identity of the community to which it belongs. As a form of collective expression, it emerges from the innovation and creativity of the cultural group that produces it. Pramutomo (2024) explains that ethnic dance arises within specific communities or ethnic communities as a manifestation of cultural behavior and expression. This aligns with Sedyawati’s (2007) view, which emphasizes that ethnic dance serves as a cultural statement carrying specific messages. It is shaped by the values and artistic concepts inherent in the ethnic community that creates it. Furthermore, Pramutomo (2024) adds that ethnic dance features highly distinctive movement configurations and patterns, reflecting the behavioral and cultural diversity of each region or ethnic community. Thus, ethnic dance functions not only as an artistic expression but also as a cultural identity that embodies the essence of its originating community.

The *Piring* dance or *Piriang* dance from Minangkabau and the *Bedhaya* dance from Java are significant examples of ethnic dances that function as cultural expressions representing the behaviors and values of their respective communities. The *Piring* dance, as a cultural product of the Minangkabau people, not only showcases aesthetic movement but also serves as a statement of behavior and a distinctive cultural identity of the community. It acts as a collective representation that reflects the values and paradigm of the Minangkabau society. Similarly, the *Bedhaya* dance holds an important role in Javanese life as a manifestation of cultural behavior and collective ideas within its community. Through these two dance genres, it is evident that ethnic dance is not merely a form of collective artistic expression but also a vital medium for conveying the values, behaviors, and ideas intrinsic to an ethnic community’s cultural identity.

This article aims to describe ethnic dance as a collective representation reflecting the identity of its ethnic community. The study focuses on the *Piring* and *Bedhaya* dances as examples that embody the behaviors and cultural values of their respective communities. This descriptive approach is essential because ethnic dance conveys the values, paradigms, and ideas of its people, serving as a distinctive cultural identity. Ethnic dance results from the innovation and creativity of its community in response to their contextual realities. Thus, it functions not only as artistic expression but also as a cultural and behavioral statement that reflects the identity of its originating ethnic community.

Various studies on traditional dance highlight its central role as a medium for shaping ethnocultural identity, encompassing the distinctive cultural traits of ethnic communities. Stoyanov (2024), in his research on traditional Bulgarian dance, asserts that the diversity of ethnic dances in the region forms a complex mosaic of identities, where each regional tradition reflects the deep connection between local communities and their history and cultural values. Similarly, Galtseva (2023) argues that Russian traditional dance not only represents ethnic and national identity but also functions as an intra-ethnic communication language in rural societies. Furthermore, Filippidou and Koutsouba (2020), in their study of the *Kna* dance—an identity marker of the Arvan community in Neo Cheimonio Evros, Greece—demonstrate that ethnic dance can transform according to social context and interactions with other groups, serving as a symbol and “container” of meanings reflecting the community’s ethnocultural identity.

2. material and methods

This study employs a qualitative research design with an ethnocoreological approach, suitable for examining ethnic dance as a multidimensional phenomenon. Within this framework, ethnic dance is understood as a cultural text reflecting the values, behaviors, and paradigms of a specific ethnic community. The study focuses on two ethnic dances—the *Piring* dance from Minangkabau and the *Bedhaya* dance from Java—both serving as expressions of cultural identity and collective community representation. The ethnocoreological approach enables an in-depth analysis of the relationship between dance forms and the cultural values they embody. Thus, this approach effectively captures how ethnic dance functions not only as artistic expression but also as a symbolic representation of the cultural identity of its community.

This study adopts a non-field research model, using literature study as its primary data source. The literature study involves analyzing relevant documents—including journal articles, research reports, and books—many of which are previous ethnographic accounts. The researcher evaluates and interprets the data to address the research questions and objectives, paying close attention to each document’s authenticity, accuracy, and context. This approach also minimizes potential bias through data triangulation, namely by comparing information from various sources, thereby ensuring the reliability, objectivity, and interpretive integrity of the data used.

The researcher’s experience as a dancer and practitioner of two distinct cultural traditions—Minangkabau and Javanese—significantly contributes to the depth and execution of this study. The involvement of two research team members, each rooted in the ethnic backgrounds under study (*Piring* dance from Minangkabau and *Bedhaya* dance from Java), enables a contextual, reflective, and nuanced understanding of the dances’ forms, meanings, and functions within their original communities. This diverse cultural background not only enriches the analytical perspective but also strengthens the interpretive validity of the findings.

3. results and discussion

**3.1 *Piring* Dance: An Artistic Expression of the Minangkabau Society**

*Piring* dance is a traditional performance that features plates as its central props, with dancers skillfully rotating them on their palms. The choreography demands agility, rhythmic precision, and harmonious body coordination, accompanied by traditional instruments such as *talempong*, *pupuik sarunai*, *saluang*, *gandang katindik,* and *gandang* *tambua*, which produce fast, dynamic rhythms that reinforce the dance’s energetic and agile character (Fathonah, Paramita, & Utami, 2019). The plates are held without falling, even during complex movements like jumps and spins, making the performance visually striking and technically demanding. A distinctive feature is the foot-stomping segment on broken glass, showcasing the dancers’ physical endurance and skill (Sapitri, Risnawati, & Gusti, 2023). The aesthetic value of *Piring* dance lies in the synergy between precise movement, compelling rhythmic accompaniment, and the visual allure of its plate props.

*Piring* dance is a genre of ethnic dance marked by distinct aesthetic and technical identities, characterized by the central use of plates and a consistent presentational structure. Its uniqueness is reflected in the diverse regional variations found across West Sumatra, each maintaining the fundamental elements of plate-handling techniques and characteristic movement structures. Notable examples include *Piring Guguak* dance from Guguak Periangan, Tanah Datar (Nofitri, 2015); *Piring Pandai Sikek* dance, which features symbolic gestures such as planting and playful interactions as expressions of joy (Surya, 2022); *Piring Suluah* dance from Nagari Gunuang, Padangpanjang, distinguished by dancers balancing oil lamps (*suluah*) on their heads and wearing candlenut rings on their fingers (Susanti & Erlinda, 2019); and *Piring Padang Magek* dance, which conveys the authority of village leaders (Syahrial, 2013). Despite variations in form and context, all maintain a shared choreographic structure and the use of plates as core elements, reinforcing *Piring* dance as an ethnic genre with a well-preserved aesthetic framework across regions. Thus, *Piring* dance is not merely a property-based performance, but a representation of richly structured tradition expressed through movement.

*Piring* dance is a distinctive artistic expression of Minangkabau society, characterized by movement patterns that specifically derive from the bodily techniques of *pencak silat*. These particular movements—rooted in *pencak* movement—serve as the foundational vocabulary for choreographic exploration and creation. According to Syahrial (2013), Minangkabau society refers to traditional performing arts as *pamainan anak nagari* (the people’s play), which consist of four core elements: *kaba* (oral tradition) as the thematic source, *pencak silat* as the movement source, *dendang* as the vocal element, and *karawitan* as the musical accompaniment. As part of *pamainan anak nagari*, *Piring* dance grounds its movement structure in *pencak silat*, particularly in those movements specific to martial forms. This view is supported by Indrayuda (2013) and Sedyawati (1995), who affirm the central role of *pencak silat* in shaping the movement system of *Piring* dance. Thus, the incorporation of martial movement idioms into the dance’s structure constitutes a key stylistic trait, marking it as a unique artistic expression of Minangkabau society.

*Piring* dance is a genre with various forms and performance styles that have developed across different regions. Despite its diversity, the shared presentation structure and performance style reveal the dance’s fundamental character as a cultural product born from, owned by, and functioning within Minangkabau society. Syahrial (2013) emphasizes that *Piring* dance is an integral part of the Minangkabau socio-cultural life, serving specific functions closely tied to its performance context. This aligns with Anggraini and Astuti’s (2021) view that *Piring* dance is collectively owned and inseparable from the values and social norms of the Minangkabau community. The dance embodies an aesthetic dimension shaped by the relationship between individuals and the community, reflecting the connection between artistic expression and social structure.

*Piring* dance, as an ethnic dance form of Minangkabau society, reflects cultural values and social paradigms rooted in Islamic religiosity. The Minangkabau uphold the philosophy of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*, which asserts that custom must be grounded in Islamic law, and Islamic law in the Qur’an (Fajria & Fitri, 2024). As a guiding philosophy of life, this paradigm is deeply embedded in the social and cultural structures of Minangkabau society (Mariana, Sibawaihi, & Anna, 2024). Consequently, these values shape artistic expressions, including the creation and performance of *Piring* dance (Kustedja & Kairupan, 2024). They are evident in the modest costume design that aligns with Islamic principles and in movement patterns that avoid emphasizing bodily curves, favoring firm lines and strength inspired by *pencak silat*. Thus, *Piring* dance serves as an artistic representation of Minangkabau religious and cultural values.

Minangkabau society is predominantly agrarian, with farming as a primary livelihood and a strong emphasis on communal values. Jalil et al. (2021) highlight the high degree of solidarity among agrarian communities, aligning with Rolitia, Achdiani, and Eridiana (2016), who identify *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) as a foundational element in cultivating this solidarity. This value is embedded in *Piring* dance as a cultural expression of Minangkabau society—originally a folk dance performed as a form of artistic relief following the harvest season. The principle of *gotong royong* is reflected in the dance’s emphasis on togetherness and interaction among dancers, typical of folk dances that prioritize collective expression (Pramutomo & Sriyadi, 2023). Furthermore, its performance style—often dissolving boundaries between dancers and audience—encourages participation and reinforces communal spirit. The *manyabik* movement, which mimics the act of harvesting rice, further affirms *Piring* dance’s connection to Minangkabau agrarian life. Thus, *Piring* dance stands as an integral manifestation of the values and social-cultural paradigms of Minangkabau society.

*Piring* dance holds an integral relationship with the value system of Minangkabau society, as reflected in its significant role across various socio-cultural contexts. Beyond its artistic function, it serves as a medium that embodies the values and social practices of the community. Syahrial (2013) emphasizes that *Piring* dance is performed at events such as the inauguration of traditional leaders (*penghulu*), weddings, and welcoming ceremonies—each representing key expressions of Minangkabau social structure and cultural values. Indrayuda (2013) further notes its use in traditional and social ceremonies, including title bestowals for *penghulu* and martial arts masters, birth rituals, the inauguration of *rumah gadang* (traditional houses), and harvest celebrations. Additionally, as Khaira (2022) and Kustedja & Kairupan (2024) observe, the dance reflects the agrarian character of Minangkabau society, functioning as both a fertility rite and an expression of gratitude for agricultural abundance. Thus, *Piring* dance underscores its role as an inseparable element of the value system and social practices of Minangkabau society as the cultural bearer.

The integral relationship between *Piring* dance and the value system of Minangkabau society is reflected in its evolving performance style, which aligns with shifts in social norms and local worldviews. Rooted in a matrilineal kinship system, Minangkabau society positions women as the guardians of family honor (*marwah*), traditionally imposing limitations on women’s participation in the public sphere, including prohibitions against dancing. Initially, *Piring* dance was performed exclusively by men, as women's involvement in dance—particularly *Piring*—was seen as taboo and potentially degrading to their dignity (Syahrial, 2013). This norm shifted significantly with the emergence of artist Huriah Adam, who challenged restrictive gender norms in the performing arts. Her pioneering efforts enabled women to participate as *Piring* dancers (Efrida, 2022), marking a transformation in social values and expanding gender roles within Minangkabau society. These changes have influenced the form and presentation of *Piring* dance, yet remain in alignment with the community’s Islamic-based worldview. Thus, *Piring* dance serves as a cultural expression that reflects its embeddedness within the value system and social practices of Minangkabau society.

**3.2 *Bedhaya* Dance in Javanese Society**

The *Bedhaya* dance is a classical genre developed within the Javanese royal courts, particularly among the heirs of the Islamic Mataram dynasty. It is performed by seven or nine female dancers using the *putri* (female) dance style. The term *bedhaya* derives from *ambadhaya*, meaning dancing in a lined formation, accompanied by *gendhing kemanak* and metrical poetry such as *sekar kawi* or *sekar ageng* (Pradjapangrawit, 1990). Over time, the accompanying music evolved from solely *gendhing kemanak* to include *pradangga* or *gamelan ageng*, which features a more complex instrumental arrangement (Brakel-Papenhuyzen, 1988). As a group choreography, *Bedhaya* emphasizes *rampak*—simultaneous uniformity of movement. This unity creates visual harmony, a central element in expressing the dance’s meaning and character. The music structure in *Bedhaya* performances consists of *merong*, *inggah*, and *ladrang* and/or *ketawang*, with *merong* and *inggah* serving as the core sections and *ladrang* and *ketawang* as variations.

The *Bedhaya* dance is an artistic expression of the Javanese society, particularly within the royal courts, developing in various forms across the four branches of the Islamic Mataram Palace: the Kasultanan Yogyakarta, Kasunanan Surakarta, Mangkunegaran Duchy, and Paku Alaman Duchy. Each court has its own version of *Bedhaya*, such as *Bedhaya Semang, Bedhaya Ketawang, Bedhaya Anglirmendhung, Bedhaya Sinom, Bedhaya Pangkur, Bedhaya Duradasih, Bedhaya Tejanata, Bedhaya Endhol-endhol, Bedhaya Durma, Bedhaya Gandakusuma*, and *Bedhaya Miyangong*. Among these variants, *Bedhaya Semang* serves as the foundation for *Bedhaya* development in Kasultanan Yogyakarta, while *Bedhaya* *Ketawang* is the main reference in Kasunanan Surakarta. Both dances are considered heirlooms from Sultan Agung Prabu Hanyokrokusumo and believed to be works of Kanjeng Ratu Kencana Hadi Sari (the South Sea Queen), with narratives depicting a spiritual encounter between them (Suharti, 2015). The *Bedhaya* forms in Mangkunegaran and Paku Alaman Duchies essentially result from the absorption and adaptation of the *Bedhaya* traditions originating from Kasultanan Yogyakarta and Kasunanan Surakarta (Sriyadi & Pramutomo, 2020).

The *Bedhaya* dance holds a long history and a special position within Javanese court culture, regarded as a sacred ancestral heritage and a representation of Javanese ethical and aesthetic values (Sunaryadi, 2013). Although its exact origins remain uncertain, several researchers link the dance to religious traditions from the Hindu-Buddhist era. Helsdingen (1925) and Hadiwidjojo (1981) argue that *Bedhaya* originated from offerings performed for the god Shiva by *endhang* or *devadāsi*—temple dancers considered “beloved of the gods” who played a vital role in worship rituals. These *devadāsi* danced in simple costumes adorned with flowers as an act of spiritual devotion, with movements based on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a classical text associated with Shiva (Lelyveld, 1931; Sedyawati, 1981; Soedarsono, 1999). Thus, *Bedhaya* can be understood as a continuation of a sacred dance tradition rich in religious values, preserved within the cultural framework of the Javanese court.

The *Bedhaya* dance features abstract and symbolic movement patterns. As Soedarsono (1972) noted, its gestures do not explicitly depict human behavior but convey subtle meanings that are not easily understood. Lelyveld (1931) adds that this abstraction stems from Hindu artistic influences, emphasizing mystical concepts and inner experience rather than visual observation. Similarly, the *sindhenan* text plays a crucial role in expressing the dance’s essence, with poetic verses like *kidung sekar kawi* or *sekar ageng* serving as key elements that enhance meaning within the performance structure (Brakel-Papenhuyzen, 1988).

*Bedhaya* dance employs *gendhing* as its music, which is carefully structured and rich in religious significance, creating a meditative atmosphere that affirms its role as a spiritual expression in Javanese tradition. The *Serat Sastra Gendhing* states that the harmonious gamelan melodies evoke beauty, softness, and nobility, reflecting unity between servant and God (Adji & Achmad, 2019). The dignified, grand, slow, and calm *gendhing* complements the dance’s gentle and graceful movements, fostering inner tranquility. Brakel-Papenhuyzen (1988) even likens *Bedhaya* practice to meditation or yoga, due to its subtle, harmonious motions, reinforcing the spiritual dimension it embodies.

The *Bedhaya* dance, performed by nine dancers, embodies deep philosophical meanings tied to Javanese cosmology, emphasizing the parallelism between the macrocosm (universe) and microcosm (human self) as key to well-being. The nine dancers symbolize the balance of natural elements and cardinal directions linked to deities and represent *babahan hawa sanga*—nine body orifices symbolizing desires to be controlled for inner harmony (Suharti, 2015). Each dancer represents a body part and self-control value, with *batak* symbolizing reason and *endhel* desire; this duality appears in a struggle reflecting the *loro-loroning atunggal* principle—the unity of opposing aspects for spiritual balance. Dance formations like *rakit lajur* (*rakit montor mabur*) and *rakit tiga-tiga* reinforce this symbolism, arranging dancers to depict the human body and the *manunggal* (unity) principle, highlighting the harmony between humans and the universe (Brongtodiningrat, 1981).

In Javanese culture, the *Bedhaya* dance holds a vital role as a royal heirloom, serving not only as an aesthetic expression but also as a symbol of legitimacy, authority, and royal power (Sriyadi et al., 2024). As a sacred court legacy, it is performed in special ceremonies under strict normative codes. According to *Serat Wedhapradangga*, Sultan Agung Prabu Hanyokrosumo designated the *bedhaya sanga*—performed by nine female dancers—as an exclusive form reserved solely for the king, while nobles such as dukes, princes, and ministers were permitted only the seven-dancer version (Pradjapangrawit, 1990). In Javanese cosmology, the number nine symbolizes perfection and is linked to religious figures like the *Wali Sanga*, reinforcing both aesthetic monopoly and hierarchical power (Soedarsono, 1997). Exclusive possession of the *bedhaya sanga* affirms the king’s political and spiritual dominance, further legitimized by mystical narratives involving sacred figures such as the Queen of the Southern Sea (*Kanjeng Ratu Kencana Hadi Sari*) and Sunan Kalijaga, as well as specific rituals preceding the performance. This symbolic function is embodied in *Bedhaya Ketawang* and *Bedhaya Semang*, two sacred court dances representing the spiritual and political supremacy of the Mataram Islamic dynasty’s successors (Pramutomo & Sriyadi, 2025).

During the colonial period, *Bedhaya* played a strategic role in royal state ceremonies as a symbol of prestige and political legitimacy. It was frequently performed at major palace events, including the birthdays of Dutch monarchs, as a form of symbolic offering (Hughes-Freeland, 2009). Within colonial relations, *Bedhaya* appeared in *Jendralan* or *Tedhak Loji* processions—official visits by the Sultan or Sunan to the Dutch Resident’s house—featuring grand parades of *Bedhaya* dancers escorted by royal carriages and performances at the loji (Pramutomo & Sriyadi, 2025). In this context, *Bedhaya* extended beyond its aesthetic function to serve as a political tool and medium of cultural diplomacy, reinforcing the symbolic supremacy of the king within the colonial power structure. Thus, *Bedhaya* became an affirmation of the court’s status within the complex sociopolitical order of the colonial era.

The Indonesian Revolution brought fundamental changes to the status of *Bedhaya* in Javanese society. With the end of colonial rule, the royal courts lost their political authority as subordinate states, leading to the decline of ceremonial contexts that had long been the primary stage for *Bedhaya* performances (Lindsay, 1991). As the courts transformed into centers of cultural preservation, *Bedhaya* shifted from a sacred rite to a cultural attraction tailored to public and touristic demands (Larson, 1990; Sriyadi & Pramutomo, 2021). This shift prompted significant adaptations, including shorter performance durations and broader accessibility, allowing *Bedhaya* to be enjoyed beyond palace confines. Today, *Bedhaya* is no longer limited to the *kraton* (Javanese palace) but thrives in educational institutions, art studios, and public spaces, also serving as a creative source for contemporary choreography (Pramutomo & Sriyadi, 2025). This transformation reflects a changing view of aesthetic authority and demonstrates how Javanese culture continues to adapt to modern sociopolitical dynamics.

**3.3 Ethnic Dance and the Collective Representation of Regional Identity**

Ethnic dance can play a vital role in constructing and representing regional identity. As a performing art rooted in a particular cultural community, it not only showcases movement aesthetics but also embodies the complex values, paradigms, and ideas of the indigenous ethnic society that created it. Case studies of *Piring* dance from Minangkabau and *Bedhaya* dance from Java reveal how dance serves as a symbolic medium for negotiating cultural identity. While *Piring* dance reflects Minangkabau values and social norms, *Bedhaya* dance expresses Javanese spirituality, cosmology, and social structure. Ethnic dance thus stands as both artistic expression and cultural representation.

**Tabel 1**. Characteristics of the presentation styles of the *Piring* and *Bedhaya* dances

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| **Characteristic** | ***Piring* Dance** | ***Bedhaya* Dance** |
| **Atmosphere** | Displays a lively, energetic, and dynamic atmosphere, requiring strong physical power. | Creates a graceful, slow, and calm ambiance, reflecting softness and controlled movement. |
| **Movement Pattern** | Employs firm and assertive movements rooted in *pencak* *silat*, without emphasizing bodily curves. | Emphasizes graceful and delicate movements that highlight feminine elegance. |
| **Costume Design** | Features modest costumes that cover the body, aligned with Minangkabau cultural values. | Utilizes costumes that highlight feminine beauty and elegance, in accordance with Javanese aesthetic ideals. |
| **Music** | Accompanied by traditional Minangkabau music with fast tempo and energetic rhythm. | Uses Javanese gamelan music with slow tempo and serene atmosphere, enhancing the dance’s meditative and sacred quality. |
| **Main Property** | Uses plates as the primary and significant prop in the performance. | Uses *sampur* and *samparan* in the Surakarta style, and *sampur* or *udhet* along with *seredan* or *wiron* in the Yogyakarta style, which function not only as costume elements but also play a crucial role in enhancing the expression of movement. |

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*Piring* dance in Minangkabau society serves as an artistic medium that reflects the community’s cultural values and social paradigms. As a form of performance art, it embodies the close relationship between aesthetic expression and a value system rooted in the philosophy *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*—the principle that custom is grounded in Islamic law, and Islamic law is grounded in the Qur’an. This underscores the strong religiosity of Minangkabau society, particularly within the Islamic context. Additionally, the dance represents communal values such as cooperation and mutual support, which are central to agrarian life. Its distinctiveness lies in its technical and aesthetic elements, including the use of plates as the primary props, movement patterns inspired by *pencak silat*, and the dynamic rhythms of Minangkabau *karawitan*. More than an artistic performance, *Piring* dance holds significant social functions, evident in its role within customary ceremonies and community events. As a cultural product deeply embedded in the Minangkabau context, *Piring* dance cannot be separated from the social structures and values that shape it.

As an artistic expression of Javanese society, *Bedhaya* dance possesses distinctive characteristics that represent the symbolic and philosophical values of palace culture. Its defining features include refined, slow, and synchronized movements, accompanied by *gendhing*—a dignified, majestic, and meditative musical form. The choreography and formation of nine dancers with specific roles reflect the Javanese cosmology of balance between the macrocosm and microcosm. Rather than depicting human behavior directly, *Bedhaya* conveys meaning through abstract forms and deep inner contemplation. Within the context of palace culture, the dance serves as a symbol of royal legitimacy and authority, while also integrating aesthetic, spiritual, and social dimensions. Despite shifts in its role and function in modern contexts, the distinctive qualities of *Bedhaya* continue to mark it as a living expression of Javanese cultural identity.

The roles of *Piring* dance in Minangkabau society and *Bedhaya* dance in Javanese society demonstrate that ethnic dance is a multidimensional phenomenon inseparable from the cultural context of its community. As cultural products, ethnic dances are intertwined with the paradigms, value systems, social structures, and life dynamics of the ethnic communities that produce them. From this perspective, ethnic dance can be understood as a cultural text reflecting the social realities of its society. For example, *Piring* dance reveals its connection to Minangkabau life through its central role in various customary and social activities. Similarly, *Bedhaya* dance reflects Javanese philosophy of life not only through the symbolism of its choreographic structure but also through its position within the social hierarchy and court power system. Both dances illustrate that ethnic dance is a meaningful artistic manifestation that continuously represents the way of life, paradigms, and value systems of the ethnic society as the cultural bearer.

*Piring* and *Bedhaya* dances, as representations of ethnic dance, reflect the distinct characteristics of Minangkabau and Javanese societies. Both are collective expressions born from creative processes shaped by the values, philosophies of life, and cultural systems of their communities. In the Minangkabau context, *Piring* dance embodies cultural values through its form, function, and role in various social and customary rites. Meanwhile, *Bedhaya* dance, rooted in Javanese culture, is closely linked to spiritual aspects, social structure, and court symbolism. As cultural products, both dances carry symbolic messages integrated within their communities' values and norms. The differing paradigms and cultural contexts behind their creation give *Piring* and *Bedhaya* dances unique and distinctive characteristics, reflecting the diversity of ethnic cultural expressions.

Ethnic dance is not only an artistic expression but also serves as a statement of behavior and culture of its originating community. As a product of creative processes influenced by various contextual factors, ethnic dance possesses distinct characteristics that reflect the values, norms, and paradigms of the ethnic community that produces it. For example, *Piring* dance is a concrete expression of Minangkabau behavior and culture, embodying their philosophy of life and values while playing a crucial role in various customary and social rites. Similarly, *Bedhaya* dance presents cultural symbols of Javanese society and functions as a statement of Javanese behavior and culture, closely tied to the community’s philosophies and ideas. Both dances affirm that the unique characteristics shaped by creative processes and contextual influences make ethnic dance a powerful representation of the behavioral and cultural expressions of its originating society.

As a form of behavioral and cultural expression shaped by various contextual influences, ethnic dance has the capacity to represent regional identity. This aligns with Hall’s (1990) perspective that cultural identity is dynamic and formed through processes of negotiating meaning within its surrounding contexts. Such negotiation, reflected in the innovation and creative processes of dance, gives ethnic dance its distinctive characteristics as a statement of the behavior and culture of its originating community. This contextual dynamism is clearly visible in *Piring* and *Bedhaya* dances, both of which have undergone significant influences that have shaped their stylistic transformations. Thus, ethnic dance, as an expression of behavior and culture, functions as a medium for negotiating cultural identity while also illustrating the diversity of paradigms inherent in each ethnic community.

4. Conclusion

Ethnic dance is not merely an artistic expression but a multidimensional manifestation of the cultural values, social systems, and paradigms of its originating ethnic community. Studies of *Piring* and *Bedhaya* dances demonstrate how distinctive characteristics—shaped through creative and innovative processes within their respective cultural contexts—establish ethnic dance as a powerful symbol of regional identity. *Piring* dance exhibits uniqueness through its use of plates as primary props, movement patterns rooted in *pencak silat*, and dynamic, rhythmic Minangkabau *karawitan* music. In contrast, *Bedhaya* dance is characterized by refined, slow, and synchronized movements accompanied by solemn and majestic *gendhing* compositions. These contrasting styles not only reflect different performance aesthetics but also embody the philosophies of life and value systems of their respective communities, making them strong representations of local identity. Understanding ethnic dance, therefore, requires attention to the contextual frameworks that shape it, as its forms and styles reflect the behavioral and cultural statements of its creators. Accordingly, engaging with ethnic dance cannot rely on universal approaches that overlook historical and cultural specificities, but must be grounded in a deep awareness of local paradigms and contexts.

**COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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