



The meaning of the *Dulang* dance movement as a traditional dance in traditional ceremonies in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the meaning of the *Dulang* Dance. In this study, the method chosen is a qualitative descriptive method. The data collection process was carried out through observation, conversation, and document recording, aiming to explore the significance of the implied meaning in the *Dulang* Dance movements. This qualitative research is able to provide insight into the meaning contained in the *Dulang* Dance in Langkat. The findings of the study revealed that in the *sembah* movement when greeting the host of the event, each movement has its own symbolic value. Such as the contour of the *sembah* movement following the direction of the wind, and the low horse stance position that represents stability. In addition, the sitting position is similar to the *tahyad* prayer, but with the legs more open and not overlapping, expressing deep respect. The gentle movements in the martial art of *silat*, still contain strength and spirit, while the steps on the plate and the jumps onto the *Dulang* have deep philosophical meanings. All of this symbolizes an expression of gratitude to the Creator, respect for respected individuals, as well as the values of simplicity, humility, and respect for religion. The implication of the greeting to the steps on the stage, *Dulang* Dance expresses gratitude to Allah SWT while respecting the King or leader. For the future, the young generation can preserve the meaning of *Dulang* Dance.



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1. Introduction

Art is one of the cultural works that has always been an inseparable part of people's lives [1]. Society has a very vital role in the sustainability of culture, because art embodies the typical activities of the existence of culture itself. Thus, society has an important role in supporting the sustainability of culture, especially in the field of art, where dance is one of its branches [2]. The development of culture in society has become an increase in cultural relations and dance arts widely throughout the world [3]. Traditional dance art has meaning as an expression and characteristic of culture [4]. In addition, traditional dance art develops through cultural heritage and community customs and as a way to strengthen social ties in relationships between humans and other humans in community life. The art of dancing involves the motions of many body parts, particularly those that are rhythmically and musical [5]. Traditional dance art is known to be able to combine distinctive body movements with ritual meanings from the idea of simplicity [6]. Traditional dance art has meaning in the expression of dance movements and dancers' expressions, making regional culture rich in historical heritage and deep philosophical

meaning, encompassing spiritual, moral and social dimensions that are held firmly by the community in order to form character [7]. Traditional dance in other countries also has a multifaceted role such as the Umxhentso dance, which highlights its function as a medium for connecting with ancestors, enhancing divination practices, and strengthening spiritual potential in society [8].

The Malay community, as one of the ethnic groups in North Sumatra Province, also has a variety of dances that are quite well-known, such as the *Serampang XII* Dance, *Zapin* Dance, *Ronggeng* Dance, *Makyong* Dance, and other dances that beautify the culture and arts of the Malay community. The presence of the Minangkabau Malay dance with all its specificity and uniqueness has given a distinctive character to Minangkabau dance as a whole, so that it is able to color the perception of some Minangkabau dance artists and cultural figures in the statement that the basic movements of Minangkabau dance are graceful but remain dynamic and sharp [9]. There is cultural diversity in the Langkat area and it is developing rapidly in the Langkat Hulu area and its surroundings. It also occurs in Langkat Hilir, both native and non-native. This diversity is mixed with the cultural values of immigrants, all bringing richness [10]. In Langkat there is also a beautiful dance art, namely the dance tradition found in North Sumatra, especially in the Langkat area, is the *Dulang* Dance. The *Dulang* Dance is one of the traditional dances of the Langkat Malay community. The presence of this dance may not be widely known, but this dance has existed since ancient times. No one knows for sure how, where, and who created the *Dulang* dance.

The *Dulang* dance has been performed again since 1986 in Langkat Regency. Until now, the dancers have been fully focused on understanding and developing dance movements without delving into the origins and values contained in each dance. Based on various sources that have been studied, the *Dulang* dance has been popular among the Malay community since the time of the ancient kingdom. This dance is presented specifically for the nobles and great leaders at historical ceremonies in the Malay lands. To dance the *Dulang* dance, a male dancer is needed and the number of dancers must be odd, at least three people. There is no definite limit regarding the number of dancers in this *Dulang* dance performance, it can be performed by 3, 5, 7, or even 9 people at once. This dance is now often performed at night. This dance is performed while accompanied by Malay music, traditional and religious events that present cultural arts such as salawaik *Dulang* [11].

A dance that is born and developed in a society has a meaning from the dance, as well as the *Dulang* Dance which originates from Langkat, North Sumatra. Previous research revealed that there are a number of movements that are included in the category of meaningful movements (gestures). Meaningful movements are movements that have been processed from everyday movements, which clearly express the special meaning contained in them. Of the 17 variations of the movements, not all of them are included in meaningful movements. Those included in meaningful movements include the *Amitan*, *Natah*, *Nyobaan Kedhok*, *Mulas*, *Make Kedhok*, *Ulin*, and *Buka Kedhok* movements [12]. The dance persona is characterized by characteristics such as being human, humility, altruism, and self-confidence [13]. As a dance in the US shows, there is a strong and real connection between commercial dance and competitive dance culture, and that the overlapping values indicate a symbiotic relationship between the two [14].

Caci dance is one of the traditional fighting dances that is unique and contains an intense value [15]. The meaning contained in the movements of the *Bat Koko* Dance can be found through the movements of the *rembaq ures*, *teleq gendang*, *gendang* dance, and *sumsum udang* as its qualities. The meaning of sinsign is found in the movements of hitting the tambourine, playing the drum, dancing with the drum, and the movement of waving the shrimp, while the meaning of legisign is found in the movements of dancing with the drum and the movement of waving the shrimp [16]. The meaning contained in the *Retno Tanjung* dance is that religious values can be seen in the worship and *Balangan Mega* movements, the lyrics of the dance accompaniment, and the use of hijab as the dance costume. Another value is the care for environmental value which can be seen in the *tracat skew*, *miyak toya*, *nyerok mina*, and *piletan mina* movements. *Retno Tanjung* dance as the identity dance of Tegal city can be seen from the behavioral patterns and language used [17]. For the world of education, there is a meaning to

the value of dance, namely the socio-economic value of school dance education as education for sustainable development [18].

The values contained in the *Gawe Daku* dance are the values of togetherness, unity, family and beauty [19]. These values can be given to dance education so that they help realize the potential for self-development, self-confidence, problem solving, and creativity among students [20]. This research is in line with the research conducted by the researcher, which aims to find the meaning of the *Dulang* Dance so that the movements in the *Dulang* Dance danced by male dancers convey the meaning contained in the movements to the dancers and dance enthusiasts. North Sumatra Province is located in the west of the Indonesian archipelago, namely the island of Sumatra. Furthermore, North Sumatra is known to have a variety of traditional dances originating from various tribes that inhabit the area. The uniqueness of the dance movements of the ethnic groups in the province of North Sumatra can be considered a valuable cultural heritage for Indonesia. The shift in the values of the Sigale-gale dance is due to changes in the way the Sigale-gale dance is presented by playing cassettes which were previously always accompanied by the strains of traditional Batak musical instruments [21]. From this, the younger generation now does not understand the meaning of the *Dulang* Dance, so they are not active in preserving and maintaining the philosophy of the history of the dance. So it is feared that there will be a shift in the movements and meaning of the *Dulang* dance. Therefore, it is important for the younger generation who continue the traditional arts in Langkat, North Sumatra, to understand the meaning of the *Dulang* Dance in order to maintain the cultural heritage properly.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to reveal in detail the meaning of the *Dulang* Dance in Langkat. Data collection involves observation, interviews, and documentation. This study is a qualitative study that focuses on the description and analysis of meaning in the movements of the *Dulang* Dance. The data analysis process involves steps such as tidying up data, displaying data visually, providing data interpretation, and making conclusions based on the results of the analysis. This research was conducted in Langkat, North Sumatra. Qualitative research is a study that investigates quality. The interaction between relationships, activities, situations, and various materials. This means that qualitative research emphasizes more on holistic descriptions, which are able to explain comprehensively. Information about ongoing activities or situations. Comparing the effects of special treatments or explaining a person's attitude or behavior. In terms of analysis, the data is analyzed using data triangulation techniques and a re-examination process by respondents. The examination and data analysis techniques according to Miles and Huberman are reduction. Information, displaying data, and conclusions [22].

The qualitative approach focuses on the field research method, therefore the data obtained is sourced from the results of field research. This approach was chosen because it is relevant to the research problem to be studied. Researchers go directly to the field, adapting to local time and space to obtain the necessary data. The things to be studied include the meaning of the *Dulang* Dance in the Langkat community, where the meaning seen in the *Dulang* Dance is from the Movements in the *Dulang* Dance. The main data needed for this study are information and phenomena that underlie the presence of the *Dulang* dance in the Langkat community, the variety of *Dulang* dance movements and the meaning of the *Dulang* dance from the variety of movements, while supporting data in the form of potential data, environmental data sources (natural/physical, social and cultural) which are the background of the research. The analysis process is carried out with a cycle model starting from data collection, reducing and clarifying, concluding, and interpreting all information selectively.

3. Results and Discussion

Bedaya dance in the palace environment plays an important role in the implementation of the king's great ceremonies, the coronation of the king, and official royal ceremonies. *Bedaya* dance is considered a symbol of glory for the king and is an inseparable part of the influence of

the king's power, so it is not surprising that *Bedaya* dance is always wholeheartedly supported by the king. *Bedaya* is a type of group dance danced by nine female dancers who wear similar makeup and clothing. Each dancer displays a different role and name, such as *Batak*, *Gulu*, *Dhadha*, *Endhel Weton*, *Endhel Ajeg*, *Apit Meneng*, *Apit Wingking*, *Apit Ngajeng*, and *Boncit*.

Bedaya dance has a distinctive meaning with various elements, such as movement structure, spatial patterns, musical accompaniment, and clothing worn in the dance performance. In addition, *Bedaya* dance has developed outside the palace, and the conventions in *Bedaya* dance have also changed between *Bedaya* outside the palace and *Bedaya* inside the palace. So many new *Bedaya* dance works have emerged, even leaving the *Bedaya Kraton* tradition [23]. *Bedhaya Tunggal Jiwa* has a deep symbolic meaning, symbolizing the unity between officials and the community who gather in one place to enjoy this performance. The performance reflects the togetherness, discipline, and spirit of cooperation in achieving common goals. This symbolic meaning is manifested in the movements, floor patterns, costumes, accompanying music, and properties that reflect the social and cultural conditions of Demak Regency. Overall, all these elements depict harmonious and aligned interactions between fellow human beings, [24] The offering dance used as a means of socialization includes educational values, tolerance, moral education, culture, aesthetics, and social solidarity [25].

The values contained in the *Pakarena Anida* dance are life values that uphold self-respect, politeness and patience [26]. Referring to previous research, it is clear that the *Dulang* Dance performance involves a group of warriors led by a head dancer who will perform their movements on the *Dulang* with a number of three, five or seven, which must be odd and not even. The performance begins with a man paying respects to the bride and her family. Then, with graceful martial arts steps, the warriors placed the *Dulang* containing plates, henna, and burning candles in the middle of the room that had been prepared. In a dance filled with stunning backward movements, the dancers sequentially arrange the plates neatly on the *Dulang*. After the plate arrangement is formed, several dancers will start moving together in harmony until in the end one dancer will jump and dance on the tray. Several sequences of movements that are generally used in the *Dulang* or henna dance are: (1) *Sembah* (worship) or greeting to the host; (2) *Pecut*, a worship movement in the form of the four cardinal directions; (3) *Selewah* or low horse stance; (4) *Simpuk*, a sitting movement like the *tahyad* prayer but with the legs more open, wider, not pressed together; (5) *Bunga silat*, a silat movement that is played softly but still has meaning; (6) *Meniti batang*, a movement used by the dancer to step on plates and jump onto trays.

The movements or *silat* moves used in the *Dulang* dance are all born from everyday life in society, and contain good messages for both the dancers and non-dancers, such as walking on a stick, in this movement it can be interpreted as how we should behave gracefully in living this life, don't take the wrong steps, let alone break the plate you step on. You could be in trouble in life in the world, that's what the *Dulang* dancer, Mr. Nizam, said in the village of Berlian, Selesai sub-district. The main materials used in dance or the basic elements of dance are movements that come from energy, space formed from movement patterns, and time that forms a beautiful rhythm. The elements that support the dance performance include accompanying music, theme, costume, make-up, performance location (stage), lighting, and sound [27]. From here, various relationships in dance will be seen, such as relationships in dance, such as relationships between dynamic aspects (speed, complexity, strength), dancer aspects (number and gender of dancers), visual aspects (setting, properties), and environmental aspects (music, lighting, and sound) [28], [29]. Explanation from Mr. Jun *Dulang*, one of the research informants, explained that:

"The Dulang Dancers consist of 5 people, 1 (one) leader and 4 (four) others are termed as the community. The Dulang Dance is based on silat movements, the Dulang Dance is an expression of gratitude. The Dulang Dance has religious values seen from the movements on the Dulang, where a human being must be humble, not arrogant and haughty living in the world. The Dulang Dance is also performed in front of the King for offerings and movements not to be arrogant in front of the King. The

Dulang Dance movements are attractive and full of spirit. The Dulang Dance is currently performed according to today's needs."

From the explanation of the informant, it can be concluded that, in Fig. 1, namely the *Dulang* Dance salute movement. As with the *Padduppa* dance, it was originally only danced specifically to entertain kings and important guests at traditional festivals and weddings [30]. The *Saman* dance has Islamic educational values, namely politeness in welcoming guests, establishing friendship, prayer, unity, obedience to leaders and religious scholars [31]. The *Dulang* Dance movement has the meaning of gratitude to the creator, respect for someone who is glorified, and being a simple, humble person and upholding religious values. Explanation by Mr. Afifuddin Ali Iskandar, one of the researcher's informants, that:

"This Dulang dance is famous among kings and palaces. Dulang means displaying something and presenting something to the king to please and honor the king."



Fig. 1. *Dulang* Dance Greeting Movement

Based on the results of the interview and Fig. 2, that the *Dulang* Dance in the *Pecut* movement has meaning in its movements, the rolling of this movement in the world is interpreted by the spirit of mutual cooperation, togetherness in society, an attitude of tolerance, and a strong belief in carrying out the teachings of Islam. In accordance with the function of the *Rapa'i Geleng* Dance, it is a cultural identity of coastal communities that reflects personal and communal life. Basically, this dance has a form that is developed through standard patterns that originate from socio-religious activities based on the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith, [32]. It is important to prioritize focus and belief when doing something that has educational value.



Fig. 2. *Pecut* Movement

In the *Selewah* movement or low horse stance has a meaning in this movement, see Fig 3. The movements used use *silat* movements that give meaning to the movement in the *Dulang* dance showing discipline, responsibility and as a soldier showing the spirit of a knight who is full of discipline and responsibility. As previous research that the *Buja Kadanda* Dance with the theme of struggle depicts the meaning of togetherness through its welcoming movements. *Silat* movements reflect the spirit of a knight who is full of responsibility. Contains the meaning of courage, agility, and brave actions in maintaining the balance of life. The compactness of coordination is clearly seen through a regular rhythm [33]. Show that in the *Jatidhuwur* Mask dance performance there are local cultural values such as religious values, discipline values, life values, and the value of struggle [34]. Thus, *Dulang* Dance is interpreted as an expression of

gratitude in the form of dance for the struggle and courage of the soldiers of the past in defending the Langkat region. In addition, it is also an effort to provide lessons and knowledge to the Langkat generation so that they understand that as a man, responsibility, courage, coolness, and the spirit of a knight are important things in dealing with complex situations or problems.



Fig. 3. *Selewah* Movement or low horse stance

The movement in the picture above is interpreted as a sign of respect for the King as proof of loyalty from the people to the King. As in the play, the goddess of the gods Ruci has a very famous discourse (advice) meaning, namely "*Sangkan Paraning Dumadi*" which contains the meaning that there must be a balance between the body and the soul and all life in this world will definitely return to God Almighty [35]. As in the *Nayakatama* dance, it contains character values that exist within humans, namely that greed, avarice, arrogance and all ambitions achieved in bad ways can bring disaster [36]. Interpretation of *Hasta Sawanda* in *Gambiranom* dance as good will and the presentation form of *Gambiranom* dance as act rightly [37]. The technique as the application of the basic guidelines for the implementation of the motion presents kinesthetic that is a sense of gallant, agile, and authoritative [38]. From this movement radiates a sense of respect for the leader. Therefore, the *Dulang* Dance cannot be separated from the meaning believed in the norms of life of its people. The *simpuk* movement also has the meaning that as ordinary humans must continue to follow the teachings of our creator Allah SWT, see Fig. 4



Fig. 4. *Simpuk* Movement

The movements in the *Dulang* dances as seen in the *Bungan silat* motion (Fig. 5) symbolize the essence of military values, which are reflected in the spirit, firmness, courage, and fighting spirit as a form of soldier patriotism that emphasizes the importance of unity, togetherness, and peace in defending the country. The movements in the *Dulang* Dance emphasize that the courage possessed by the Langkat community needs to be maintained for the sake of friendship and solidarity between each other, as well as upholding respect for the King in order to support the tolerance that exists in Langkat.



Fig. 5. Bunga Silat Movement

Fig. 6, the movement is *Meniti Batang* (walking on the trunk), where the dancer climbs and sits on the *Dulang*. The dancer also holds a plate containing burnt lilies. This has the meaning of respect and humility and must be able to control oneself as a human being. In the *Turonggo Yakso jaranan* performance, the form and meaning may be conveyed through the unique properties used by the dancer, namely the *jaranan* (*turonggo*) with a giant head (*yakso*). Visual attributes are symbols of desires that must be calmed or controlled so as not to become wild. The basic principle is that the performance becomes the result or meeting point of interaction between the dancer and the audience, [39]. Since art consumption is closely related to feelings, the experiential approach becomes a valuable lens for exploring and understanding individuals, [40]. In accordance with previous research, the *Dulang* Dance uses *Dulang* properties and *Dulang* means presenting something to the King with respect and humility, in accordance with customs and procedures in the palace. The *Dulang* Dance is inseparable from its religious values, becoming a humble human being and always respecting someone who is honored. And being a human being must have a balance where it is not easily divided by bad things.



Fig. 6. Meniti Batang Movement

4. Conclusion

The *Dulang* Dance has the *Sembah* Movement or greeting to the host, *Pecut* the *sembah* movement in the form of the four cardinal directions, *Selewah* or low horse stance, *Simpuk* the sitting movement like *tahyad* prayer but the legs are more open, wider not overlapping, *Bunga silat* the *silat* movement that is played softly but still full, *Meniti batang* the movement used by the dancer to step on the plate and jump onto the tray. The strong cultural value and deep sacredness for those who dance it, have the meaning of movement in the *Dulang* Dance in the life of the Langkat community, namely extraordinary spiritual power. *Dulang* dancers are considered to have supernatural powers because they are able to dance gracefully on trays and plates without damaging the property, and carry candles that are always lit and henna that remains neat. Only a *silat* warrior can combine *silat* and dance movements to dance this *Dulang* Dance, which is usually performed by a group of warriors led by a leader who will dance on the tray. The number of dancers is usually three, five, or seven, but always an odd number and

cannot be even. *Dulang* Dance, as one of the distinctive traditional dance forms, has a deep meaning in the context of traditional ceremonies in Langkat Regency. The movements performed in this dance are not only artistic expressions, but are also full of symbolism that reflects the cultural values and traditions of the local community. Through the *Dulang* Dance, the dancers convey spiritual messages and local wisdom that have been passed down from generation to generation. As an integral part of traditional ceremonies, the *Dulang* Dance plays an important role in strengthening cultural identity and strengthening community solidarity. The *Dulang* Dance movements are known to have deep meanings, namely expressions of gratitude to the creator, respect for respected individuals, and forms of simplicity, humility, and respect for religious values. From greeting movements to walking on a tree trunk, the *Dulang* Dance is filled with the meaning of gratitude to Allah SWT by paying respect to the King or leader.

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