



The Dialectics of Aesthetics and Philosophy in Tandang Mendet Dance: Analysis and its Implications for Cultural Education

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between aesthetic structures and philosophical meanings in Tandang Mendet Dance as a cultural practice of the Sasak community. Departing from the prevalent tendency to separate aesthetics from meaning in traditional art studies, this research employs an interpretive qualitative approach, integrating semiotic analysis, symbolic anthropology, and the sociology of art. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of Tandang Mendet performances at the Sembalun Mountain Festival 2025. The findings reveal that the aesthetic structure comprising repetitive movement patterns, collective synchronization, the use of properties, and musical rhythm functions as an operational system in the articulation of values. The philosophy of Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi, particularly the value of honesty, is not verbally represented but is internalized through consistent and coordinated performative practices. The analysis demonstrates a dialectical relationship between aesthetics and philosophy, in which form not only represents meaning but also produces and reproduces it within a dynamic social context. The study further highlights that traditional arts can function as an experiential medium of cultural education, while simultaneously confronting challenges of commodification and the transformation of meaning in the context of globalization.

Introduction

One of the fundamental issues in contemporary studies of traditional arts is the persistent tendency to separate aesthetic dimensions from philosophical meaning in analytical processes (Guo, 2025; Chao, 2025; Nazwanindya & Haq, 2026). Traditional arts are often reduced to visual or performative forms evaluated solely on the basis of formal beauty, while the underlying system of values is overlooked (Fernandez, 2025). As a consequence, art loses its position as a symbolic system that both represents and transmits cultural knowledge. In the context of globalization, which accelerates cultural transformation, this reduction becomes increasingly problematic, as it fosters decontextualization where traditional arts are preserved as forms but detached from the meanings that constitute their foundation. This condition indicates that the core issue lies not in the lack of documentation or preservation of form, but rather in the absence of an analytical framework capable of comprehensively capturing the interrelation between aesthetic form and value systems. Therefore, an approach is required that moves beyond descriptive accounts and positions aesthetics and philosophy as mutually constitutive within a unified analytical framework (Kerubo, 2024; Jati, 2023). This issue becomes particularly relevant when examined in specific traditional art practices such as Tandang Mendet Dance, which empirically demonstrates an intrinsic interconnection between aesthetic form and value systems that has not yet been fully articulated analytically.

From the perspective of sociology and cultural studies, art is understood as a form of social representation functioning as a symbolic system within society (Jahangiri et al., 2024; Suprpto et al., 2024). Art does not exist as an autonomous entity but is embedded within structures of values, norms, and ideologies. Through aesthetic symbols, art becomes a medium for the production and reproduction of social meaning, as well as for the formation of collective consciousness. Thus, every element in art whether form, movement, or expression contains symbolic dimensions that reflect the social structure of the community that sustains it (Durkheim, 2010; Suryadmaja et al., 2025). Within this framework, aesthetics is no longer viewed merely as a subjective experience, but as a structured and meaningful symbolic experience that bridges artistic form and culturally constructed value systems (Suryadmaja & Saearani, 2025). This perspective underscores that any aesthetic analysis detached from its social context will inevitably result in partial interpretations.

Traditional dance, as an embodied artistic practice, occupies a strategic position in the intergenerational transmission of cultural values. The structures of movement, rhythm, spatial patterns, and expression do not merely serve technical functions but are organized within a symbolic logic that represents social relations, moral values, and even cosmological systems (Utami et al., 2020; Maulidini et al., 2022; Hidayati et al., 2024). Accordingly, dance can be understood as a cultural text that both stores and transmits knowledge, norms, and philosophical systems of a society (Rahman et al., 2020; Harnish, 2019; Yudarta & Pasek, 2017). In this context, the separation between aesthetics and meaning not only obscures the cultural function of dance but also diminishes its analytical potential as a medium for interpreting value structures within society.

Within the Sasak community of Lombok, Tandang Mendet Dance represents a cultural practice that concretely demonstrates the interrelation between aesthetic form and local value systems. This dance functions not merely as a performance but as a social practice that reflects and reproduces values, norms, and relational structures within Sasak society (Umami Risti Ayuni et al., 2019; Yaningsih et al., 1991; Nuryahman et al., 2015). Such a position renders Tandang Mendet Dance not merely an object of descriptive inquiry, but an analytical medium through which the articulation of cultural meaning within aesthetic structures can be systematically examined.

These values are rooted in the philosophy of Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi, which serves as the ethical foundation of Sasak society. This philosophy is not merely a symbolic identity but a value system that governs moral orientation and social relations. The principle of honesty, as a core value, sustains collective harmony and integrity and is internalized within cultural practices, including performing arts (Anggarista & Jaeka, 2019). More broadly, this philosophy reflects a complex social value system that shapes the structure of Sasak social life (Masyur, 2019; Nigsih, 2025; Wahyudin, 2018), with strong historical and conceptual roots (Antoro, 2010; Warsito, 2023). Therefore, interpreting the aesthetics of Tandang Mendet Dance requires an analytical framework capable of capturing how these values are embodied in symbolic forms, rather than merely identifying them as cultural background.

However, previous studies reveal a tendency toward fragmentation in the study of Sasak traditional arts. Existing research generally focuses on the description of form or cultural identity without elaborating the relationship between aesthetic structure and symbolic meaning (HD & Muttaqin, 2020; Yudarta & Pasek, 2017). On the other hand, studies of dance aesthetics often remain confined to formal analysis without connecting it to philosophical contexts (Utami et al., 2020; Maulidini et al., 2022). Meanwhile, semiotic studies have opened avenues for interpreting meaning in art; however, their application in the context of Sasak traditional arts

remains limited and insufficiently integrated analytically (Ardelia & Agriyani, 2023; Rizky & Kusnarto, 2024; Suryadmaja, 2025; Suryadmaja et al., 2025). This condition indicates that the primary issue lies not in the absence of approaches, but in the lack of an operational framework capable of integrating these approaches into a coherent analysis. Consequently, traditional arts tend to be understood partially either as aesthetic forms devoid of meaning or as symbols lacking structural coherence.

In response to this condition, the present study positions the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy as the central focus of analysis, rather than as two separate domains. This relationship is understood as a dynamic, mutually constitutive process embedded within the structure of performing arts (Suryadmaja et al., 2025). Accordingly, this study operationalizes a multidisciplinary theoretical approach that is not applied in parallel but integratively: semiotics to interpret sign structures and layers of meaning (Barthes, 1972; Ardelia & Agriyani, 2023; Suryadmaja, 2025), symbolic anthropology to situate meaning within lived cultural contexts (Geertz, 1973, 1973b), sociology of art to understand the relationship between art and social structures (Suryadmaja et al., 2025), and a structural cultural approach to identify relational patterns within aesthetic systems as structures of meaning (Suryadmaja et al., 2025; Levi-Strauss Mandalika). This framework is directed toward examining how aesthetic structures not only represent but actively construct value systems.

Within this framework, aesthetics and meaning are no longer positioned as separate domains, but as a relational system that can be analyzed simultaneously. This approach enables the interpretation of traditional arts as structured processes of value articulation, rather than merely symbolic representations, while also affirming their relevance in the development of practice-based cultural education. Based on this framework, this study formulates the following research questions: How is the aesthetic structure of Tandang Mendet Dance constituted? How is the philosophy of Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi represented within the dance? How is the dialectical relationship between aesthetics and philosophy formed? And what are its implications for cultural education?

Accordingly, this study aims not only to identify the aesthetic structure of Tandang Mendet Dance and analyze the representation of Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi philosophy, but more fundamentally to construct the dialectical relationship between them as an operational analytical framework. Through this approach, the study seeks to demonstrate how aesthetic structures function as a medium for value articulation, and how local philosophy is concretely manifested within performative practice. Furthermore, this study formulates both conceptual and practical implications for the development of cultural education based on traditional arts, positioning art not merely as an object of learning but as a system of knowledge capable of shaping reflective and contextual value consciousness, and one that is replicable in the study of other traditional art forms.

Methods

This study employs an interpretive qualitative approach to examine the relationship between aesthetic structures and philosophical meanings in Tandang Mendet Dance. This approach is selected as it enables the analysis of cultural practices as symbolic systems constructed within specific social contexts, while maintaining a close alignment between interpretation and empirical data. Accordingly, meaning is not positioned as a normative assumption but as an outcome of interpretation verified through practice, practitioners' narratives, and performance contexts (Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2013).

The research locus is centered on the performance of Tandang Mendet Dance within the context of the Sembalun Mountain Festival 2025, held in Sembalun on Saturday (25 October 2025). This site is selected based on the consideration that festivals function as spaces of cultural representation where traditional practices intersect with broader audiences. Such a setting enables observation of how aesthetics are produced, performed, and interpreted within a contemporary public context. Anchoring the study in a concrete event ensures that the analysis remains empirical and verifiable.

Data were collected through triangulation, employing observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on the aesthetic structure of the performance including movement patterns, drum rhythms, expressions, and performer audience interactions to ensure that the analysis is grounded in actual practice. In-depth interviews were conducted with dancers, trainers, curators, and cultural figures to explore value interpretations and identify variations in meaning-making. Documentation, including video recordings, photographs, and archival materials, was used as a comparative reference to examine consistency between practice and representation (Mack et al., 2005).

Data analysis was conducted in a systematic and iterative manner. The first stage involved data reduction by identifying analytical units related to aesthetic structures and philosophical values. The second stage consisted of categorization based on emergent empirical patterns. The third stage involved symbolic interpretation using a semiotic approach to read aesthetic elements as meaningful signs. This process was iterative, continuously testing interpretations against field data to avoid analytical speculation (Given, 2008; Suryadmaja et al., 2025 symbolism approach). Through this procedure, the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy is examined as a systematically verifiable construction.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and interpretations. Cross-checking was conducted to maintain consistency across data sets, while findings were confirmed with key informants (member checking) to ensure alignment with cultural contexts. Additionally, critical reflexivity was applied to control researcher subjectivity throughout the analytical process, ensuring that the results remain accountable and methodologically sound (Busetto et al., 2020; Oranga & Matere, 2023; Ugwu & Eze, 2023).

As a complementary strategy, a limited ethnographic approach was employed to understand the social context of the performance within the festival environment. This approach enabled the interpretation of meaning as it emerges through practice, interaction, and audience response, while maintaining analytical distance to minimize bias (Siddiq & Salama, 2019). Overall, this methodology is designed to ensure that the analysis is not normative, but grounded in observable, verifiable, and systematically interpreted empirical practices. The integration of symbolic, contextual, and structural approaches allows for the articulation of the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy as a process that is scientifically traceable and academically accountable.

Results and Discussion

Aesthetic Structure of the Dance

Field findings from the *Tandang Mendet* Dance performance at the Sembalun Mountain Festival 2025 (25 October 2025) indicate that the aesthetic structure of this dance is constructed through the integration of the number of dancers, movement patterns, musical rhythm, the use of properties, and spatial configuration, all of which are tightly coordinated. The performance involved ten male dancers arranged in a group formation with an even composition (see Figure 1). Visually, not all dancers are fully visible within a single field of view due to positional overlap (occlusion) in the movement formation. However, this condition underscores that the structure of the performance does not rely on individual visibility, but rather on collective coordination operating as a unified whole. There is no dominant focal point; visual order is generated through the simultaneity of direction, rhythm, and movement intensity. This demonstrates that the aesthetic structure of the dance is grounded in an operational principle of collectivity rather than individual exposure (Umami Risti Ayuni et al., 2019; Nuryahman et al., 2015).



Figure 1. Synchronization of movement and integration of properties in the collective formation of *Tandang Mendet* dancers (researcher documentation).

Analysis of movement patterns reveals a structure that can be identified as a repetitive-segmented cycle. Foot movements consisting of synchronized forward steps in lifted positions, combined with arm swings and forward-directed properties, form a structured sequence of phases: preparation, execution, and suspension. This repetition is not mechanical but is tied to shifting rhythmic accents that regulate tempo and intensity. At certain moments, acceleration of steps is accompanied by increased bodily tension and directional focus, indicating that variation occurs within a stable structural framework. Thus, repetition functions as a mechanism for rhythmic stabilization as well as reinforcement of synchronization among dancers (Utami et al., 2020; Maulidini et al., 2022).

The use of properties spears, shields, and swords is directly integrated into the choreographic structure. Visually, the simultaneous elevation of spears forms a collective line of orientation that reinforces movement unity. Changes in property positions consistently correspond with changes in body direction and stepping patterns, thereby functioning as markers of transition within the movement structure. No instance of free or individual use of properties was

observed; all elements adhere to standardized patterns. This indicates that properties are not merely visual elements but integral components of the structural system governing the dynamics of the performance.

The musical dimension demonstrates a strong interdependence between drum rhythms and dancers' movements. Rhythmic accents function as markers of phase transitions in the performance and are responded to simultaneously by all dancers. No significant deviation in response to rhythm was observed, indicating that coordination is both trained and internalized. Thus, the aesthetic structure of *Tandang Mendet* Dance is synchronic and rhythm-command-based, where music does not merely accompany but regulates the dynamics of movement (Umami Risti Ayuni et al., 2019; Nuryahman et al., 2015).

From a spatial perspective, the floor pattern tends to be linear and open, with a diagonal orientation facing the audience. Within the festival context, this configuration enables collective visibility without altering the relational principles among dancers. Although not all dancers are visible simultaneously, the formation structure operates as a unified whole without fragmentation. This suggests that adaptation to a public performance space does not alter the fundamental structure but rather shifts the orientation of presentation.

Overall, the empirical data indicate that the aesthetic structure of *Tandang Mendet* Dance is built upon a coordinated, repetitive-segmented, and collectively synchronized system. This structure not only produces visual order but also establishes the conditions for consistent articulation of meaning. Therefore, aesthetics in this dance does not function as individual expression, but as a collective system that can be empirically observed and analyzed. These findings affirm that aesthetic structure in traditional dance serves as an operational mechanism in the formation of meaning, rather than merely an abstract symbolic construction.

Philosophical Representation

Empirical findings from the *Tandang Mendet* Dance performance at the Sembalun Mountain Festival 2025 reveal that philosophical values are not conveyed explicitly through verbal narratives but are operationalized through structured, repetitive, and coordinated bodily practices. Observations show that the ten male dancers maintained relatively stable movement patterns across approximately three to four cycles of repetition without significant individual deviation. This condition indicates that meaning is not declarative but embodied through consistent actions that are visually verifiable. Thus, philosophical representation operates as an embodied practice, where values emerge through the alignment between structure and execution (Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2013).

This relationship becomes particularly significant when linked to the philosophy of *Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi*, which positions honesty as a central principle in lived reality. In interviews, a dancer stated that,

"Movements must be the same; no one should move earlier or later, as that would be considered out of harmony" (male dancer, 23 years old, interview, 2025).

This statement indicates that honesty is interpreted as consistency of action within a collective pattern. Empirically, this is reflected in the dancers' ability to respond simultaneously to changes in drum rhythm without verbal coordination. Within the framework of *Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi*, this practice reflects the ethical-practical dimension (*adat tapsile*), where integrity is realized through the alignment between values and actions (Anggarista & Jaeka, 2019).

Furthermore, the configuration of ten dancers moving without a dominant center indicates that the performance structure operationally eliminates performative hierarchy. Observations reveal

no fixed position indicating visual leadership; all dancers experience rotational positioning within the formation. This suggests a system based on the equal distribution of roles. A local cultural figure emphasized that,

“this dance is not about who stands out, but about how everyone moves in harmony” (Sembalun cultural figure, interview, 2025).

This finding demonstrates that the value of togetherness is not merely represented but enacted as a concrete social practice. In the context of Sasak philosophy, this aligns with the social dimension (*adat krame*), where honesty serves as the foundation for trust and community cohesion (Masyur, 2019; Wahyudin, 2018).

The use of properties such as spears, shields, and swords reflects a more complex articulation of values. Empirically, these properties are used in coordinated movement patterns, particularly during transitional phases between formations. For instance, at certain moments, all dancers simultaneously raise their spears while slowing the tempo, followed by a directional shift in formation. No instance of individually aggressive use of properties was observed. This indicates that symbols of power are interpreted as collective readiness rather than personal dominance. A dance trainer stated that,

“These weapons are not for attacking, but a sign of readiness to protect” (dance trainer, 45 years old, interview, 2025).

Within the framework of *Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi*, this reflects an ethical responsibility to maintain balance in life (Wahyudin, 2018; Masyur, 2019).

The musical dimension further reveals that drum rhythm functions as a normative structure regulating dancers’ actions. Observations indicate that each change in rhythmic accent is responded to simultaneously by all dancers without noticeable delay. This suggests that rhythm is internalized as a shared pattern rather than perceived as an external stimulus. A trainer affirmed that,

“Dancers must follow the drum, not create their own rhythm” (dance trainer, 45 years old, interview, 2025).

Philosophically, this condition reflects a transcendental dimension (*adat game*), in which individuals align themselves with a higher order of structure (Antoro, 2010; Warsito, 2023).

In addition, the relationship between performers and audience indicates that values operate not only within the internal structure of the dance but also within broader social interactions. The open floor pattern allows for intense visual engagement, with audiences responding attentively to changes in movement and rhythm. Observations show increased audience attention during shifts in tempo and formation, indicating affective involvement in the performance. This reinforces the notion that *Tandang Mendet* Dance functions as a collective practice that symbolically involves the community.

Thus, the representation of philosophy in *Tandang Mendet* Dance does not reside in singular symbols but in the consistency of the relationship between structure and practice, which can be empirically observed. The value of honesty as the core of *Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi* does not appear as an explicit theme but operates as a governing principle regulating movement synchronization, role distribution, adherence to rhythm, and the controlled use of symbols of power. These findings demonstrate that local philosophy is not merely an interpretive framework but is genuinely internalized and enacted within aesthetic practice.

From this perspective, *Tandang Mendet* Dance functions as a mechanism for the performative reproduction of values. Each performance becomes a space of actualization in which values such as honesty, togetherness, and balance are not verbally taught but collectively and repeatedly practiced. Therefore, this performing art not only represents culture but also operates as a system of cultural education, functioning through concrete and reflective aesthetic experience.

Semiotic Analysis

The semiotic analysis of *Tandang Mendet* Dance within the context of its performance at the Sembalun Mountain Festival 2025 reveals that the previously described aesthetic structure operates as an active system of signs rather than a passive representation. Drawing on Roland Barthes' framework, each element movement, rhythm, properties, and formation does not merely carry denotative meaning (what is visibly presented), but also produces connotative and ideological meanings that relate to how society understands and organizes its social life (Barthes, 1972; Ardelia & Agriyani, 2023). In this context, it is essential to emphasize that meaning does not inherently reside in form; rather, it emerges through the relationship between performance structure, practitioners' practices, and the surrounding cultural context.

At the denotative level, the repetition of movement performed by the ten male dancers can be understood as a simple and structured choreographic pattern. However, empirical data indicate that this repetition is not merely an aesthetic strategy but a mechanism for reinforcing meaning. Across approximately three to four cycles of repetition, no significant deviation in tempo or direction was observed, suggesting that repetition functions as a stabilizing mechanism for structure. When a dancer stated that,

"The movements are repeated so that everyone remains aligned and does not deviate from the pattern" (male dancer, 23 years old, interview, 2025),

This statement not only explains technique but also reveals the internal logic of the performance: uniformity is a prerequisite for order. In semiotic terms, this repetition can be interpreted as a sign constructing the meaning of integrity namely, the alignment between principle and practice. Thus, repetition is not decorative but operational in meaning-making.

The configuration of ten dancers moving without a dominant center illustrates how visual structure carries ideological narratives. At the denotative level, this formation is simply a spatial distribution of positions. However, at the connotative level, the absence of visual hierarchy generates meaning related to egalitarian social relations. The lack of a central figure indicates that the performance structure actively resists the logic of individual dominance. In Barthesian terms, this can be interpreted as a "social myth," where aesthetic form naturalizes particular values as if they were self-evident (Barthes, 1972). In this context, collectivity is not explicitly stated as a message but presented as an enacted reality. Critically, however, this equality does not imply the absence of structure; rather, it reflects a strong system of coordination regulating each individual. Thus, collectivity here is the result of shared discipline rather than spontaneity.

The use of properties such as spears, shields, and swords demonstrates a significant transformation of meaning. At the denotative level, these objects refer to weapons tools commonly associated with violence or conflict. However, within the performance, no individual expressions of aggression were observed. Instead, properties are used in measured group coordination, often within slower and controlled tempos. In one observed moment, all dancers simultaneously raised their spears while slowing their movements, creating a reflective rather than confrontational atmosphere. A trainer stated that,

“These weapons are not for attacking, but a sign of readiness to protect” (dance trainer, 45 years old, interview, 2025).

From a semiotic perspective, this indicates a shift from denotative meaning (weapons as instruments of attack) to connotative meaning (weapons as symbols of collective responsibility). Critically, this transformation illustrates how culture does not erase prior meanings but rearticulates them according to prevailing values.

The musical dimension, particularly drum rhythm, demonstrates a normative function as a sign system. Denotatively, the drum regulates movement tempo; however, at the connotative level, rhythm becomes a structure that must be followed rather than negotiated. The dancers’ simultaneous responses to rhythmic changes indicate that rhythm has been internalized as a shared reference rather than perceived as an external stimulus. When a trainer stated that,

“dancers must not resist the rhythm” (dance trainer, 45 years old, interview, 2025).

This underscores that rhythm functions as a sign regulating the relationship between individual and system. In semiotic terms, this represents the principle of order where individuals position themselves within a larger structural framework. Critically, this also reveals constraints on improvisation, as individual freedom is conditioned by collective structure.

Through the lens of Clifford Geertz’ symbolic anthropology, the performance can be understood as a “cultural text” containing layered meanings (Geertz, 1973). Movement, rhythm, and properties are not merely signs but components of a symbolic system that can only be understood within its cultural context. In this perspective, synchronized movement represents togetherness; the use of properties signifies ethical responsibility in maintaining balance; and rhythmic order reflects an orientation toward a broader cosmological order. However, these meanings are not universal. For external audiences, such signs may be perceived merely as visual aesthetics, whereas for the local community, they carry existential significance. This demonstrates that sign interpretation is always contingent upon the cultural position of the interpreter (Rizky & Kusnarto, 2024; Suryadmaja, 2025).

Thus, the semiotic analysis demonstrates that *Tandang Mendet* Dance operates as a sign system that not only represents but also produces and naturalizes values. Aesthetic structure becomes the medium through which values such as integrity, togetherness, and balance are presented as seemingly “natural” practices. Critically, however, these findings also reveal that what appears natural is in fact the result of cultural construction, learned and reinforced through repeated practice. In other words, meaning in this dance is not static but continuously reproduced through performative processes.

From this perspective, *Tandang Mendet* Dance can be understood not merely as a cultural expression but as a semiotic system that connects empirical experience with broader value structures. Each aesthetic element functions as a sign that does not stand independently but interacts within a complex network of meaning. Consequently, the semiotic approach enables an analysis that not only explains what occurs in the performance but also why and how such meanings are sustained within cultural life.

Aesthetic Philosophical Dialectics

The relationship between aesthetics and philosophy in *Tandang Mendet* Dance does not operate as a unidirectional process where form merely represents values but as a dialectical process that continuously moves between stabilization and transformation. Aesthetics in this context is not merely a “container” for philosophy but a space in which values are tested, negotiated, and, in certain cases, redefined. Accordingly, this relationship must be understood as a living

process, constantly situated within the tension between preservation and adaptation (Kerubo, 2024; Suryadmaja et al., 2025).

This tension becomes particularly evident when *Tandang Mendet* Dance is relocated from the ritual context of *Ngayu-ayu* into the festival space. Within ritual contexts, aesthetics serves a sacred function, where every movement, rhythm, and symbol is directly embedded within a belief system. However, within the festival context, aesthetics enters the domain of public representation, which demands visual legibility and performative appeal. Empirically, although core elements such as movement structure, repetition, and property usage are preserved, a shift in orientation occurs: movements become more communicative toward audiences rather than purely functional within ritual contexts. It is within this shift that dialectics operates values are maintained, yet their modes of articulation transform.

However, this transformation is not neutral. On one hand, it enables the continuity of tradition within modern contexts; on the other, it opens the potential for the reduction of meaning. When aesthetics is positioned as spectacle, there is a tendency for visual aspects to dominate over philosophical dimensions. Observations indicate that audience attention is primarily directed toward movement dynamics and property usage, while deeper layers of meaning are not always accessible. This raises a critical question: does aesthetics continue to function as a medium of value articulation, or is it shifting toward a form of visual commodification? This question is crucial, as it reveals that the aesthetic philosophical dialectic does not always produce balance but may also generate distortion.

At the same time, it is precisely within this tension that the continuity of tradition finds its space. The persistence of core structures such as synchronized movement, repetitive patterns, and collective property use demonstrates that aesthetics functions as a mechanism for value conservation. However, this conservation is not rigid. Variations in tempo, expressive intensity, and spatial orientation indicate that aesthetics also operates as a medium of adaptation. Thus, aesthetics not only preserves philosophy but also enables it to negotiate with new contexts.

Furthermore, this dialectic reveals that philosophy itself is neither fixed nor complete but continuously reproduced through aesthetic practice. Values such as honesty, togetherness, and balance are not merely transmitted from a value system into the dance but are reconstituted through performative experience. When dancers maintain synchronized movement, they do not merely represent togetherness they enact it. In this sense, aesthetics becomes a praxis space where philosophy is not only understood but lived.

Critically, however, this process does not always unfold ideally. In certain conditions, pressures to accommodate public taste or tourism demands may lead to the simplification of structures or the amplification of visually appealing aspects. If left unregulated, this may disrupt the balance between aesthetics and philosophy. Therefore, this dialectic should not be understood as a stable harmony but as an ongoing negotiation one that requires critical awareness from cultural practitioners.

In this sense, the aesthetic philosophical dialectic in *Tandang Mendet* Dance demonstrates that traditional art is not a static entity but a dynamic practice operating within the space between value and form, between sacredness and representation, and between conservation and transformation. This is both its strength and its vulnerability: it endures because it adapts, yet it risks losing meaning if transformation is not accompanied by a strong awareness of values.

Implications for Cultural Education

The findings of this study indicate that *Tandang Mendet* Dance holds significant potential as a medium of cultural education, particularly in fostering value-based understanding through

direct experience. Unlike cognitive and text-based educational approaches, this dance practice operates through the body, rhythm, and social relations, thereby enabling a deeper and more reflective internalization of values (Rahman et al., 2020).

Empirically, the dance training process demonstrates how values are instilled through practice rather than through verbal instruction. Dancers learn to maintain synchrony, adjust themselves to rhythm, and control their movements in order to remain aligned with the group. A trainer explained that,

“They learn discipline not from theory, but from practice if they are not in harmony, it is immediately visible” (dance trainer, 45 years old, interview, 2025).

This suggests that values such as honesty and togetherness are internalized through direct experience, in which the body becomes a medium of learning. In this sense, education does not merely transfer knowledge, but shapes habit and character (Hidayati et al., 2024).

However, this potential should not be treated uncritically as something that is automatically realized. In modern contexts, when *Tandang Mendet* Dance is more frequently presented as a festival performance, there is a risk that its educational function may be reduced. When the focus shifts toward performativity and visual aesthetics, the process of value internalization may become secondary. Children or younger generations may learn the movements, yet they do not necessarily understand the meanings embedded within them. This condition reveals a gap between aesthetic practice and philosophical awareness.

It is at this point that the challenge of cultural education emerges. Traditional arts cannot merely be taught as technical skills; they must be integrated with an understanding of the meanings that underlie them. Without such integration, art risks becoming “a surface without substance” visually appealing yet empty of value. Therefore, pedagogical approaches need to be designed integratively, in which physical practice is accompanied by reflection on the symbolic meanings embedded in movement and dance structure (Nigsih, 2025).

In addition, cultural education through *Tandang Mendet* Dance also has the potential to cultivate ecological and spiritual awareness. The value of balance between human beings, nature, and God, as articulated in this dance, is highly relevant to contemporary global challenges such as environmental crises and crises of values. Yet, once again, this relevance can only be actualized if such values are genuinely understood rather than merely represented.

More broadly, the integration of traditional arts into education also faces a dilemma between preservation and innovation. On the one hand, education must safeguard the authenticity of values; on the other, it must remain responsive to the context of younger generations living within digital culture. If it is overly conservative, traditional art risks being abandoned; if it is overly adaptive, it risks losing its meaning. Therefore, cultural education must position traditional art as a dialogical space not simply between past and present, but between values and lived experiences that continue to change (Rahman et al., 2020).

Accordingly, *Tandang Mendet* Dance offers not only a model of experience-based education, but also presents critical challenges in its implementation. It demonstrates that cultural education is not merely a matter of transmitting values, but of reactivating those values within contexts that remain relevant. From this perspective, traditional art becomes not only a medium of learning, but also a reflective space through which individuals may understand themselves in relation to community, nature, and broader systems of value.

The findings of this study position *Tandang Mendet* Dance not merely as an aesthetic expression, but as a cultural practice that embodies a complex relationship among form, meaning, and an ever-changing social context. Within this framework, the discussion serves not only to elaborate the findings, but also as a critical space to assess how traditional arts operate within contemporary dynamics, particularly in relation to globalization, commodification, and cultural education.

One of the main issues that emerges is the tendency toward cultural commodification in traditional arts. In the context of its performance at the Sembalun Mountain Festival 2025, *Tandang Mendet* Dance was presented in a public space that positioned it as part of a cultural attraction. This condition indirectly shifts the status of art from ritual practice to representational product. Empirically, this is evident in the performance orientation, which is more open to audiences, as well as in the emphasis on communicative visual aspects. From a critical perspective, such commodification carries two contradictory implications: on the one hand, it expands cultural access and visibility; on the other, it risks reducing meaning to mere aesthetic consumption. This is consistent with previous findings that traditional arts often undergo a functional transformation from sacred spaces to representational spaces (HD & Muttaqin, 2020).

However, commodification should not be understood simplistically as a degradation of value. In the case of *Tandang Mendet* Dance, the empirical data show that its core structures such as synchronized movement, repetitive patterns, and the collective use of properties remain preserved. This indicates that although the context has shifted, there are internal mechanisms that maintain the stability of meaning. In other words, commodification in this context does not entirely eliminate value, but compels value to negotiate within a more adaptive form. It is here that the transformation of meaning occurs: not as loss, but as a process of reinterpretation within a new context.

This transformation demonstrates that meaning in traditional art is not static, but is always in the process of being reproduced. When *Tandang Mendet* Dance is staged in a festival, meaning no longer functions solely within the sacred relationship among humans, nature, and God, but also within the representational relationship between cultural practitioners and broader audiences. This creates new layers of meaning that are communicative and performative in nature. Critically, however, it must be acknowledged that this transformation also opens the possibility of “meaning reduction,” in which complex values are simplified in order to be more easily consumed by the public. Thus, the transformation of meaning must be understood as an ambivalent process: it creates opportunities for continuity, yet also carries the risk of simplification (HD & Muttaqin, 2020).

The tension between preservation and innovation becomes a central issue in this discourse. The findings of this study indicate that *Tandang Mendet* Dance is able to retain its basic structure while adapting certain aspects of presentation. This suggests that preservation is not identical with the literal reproduction of form, but with the ability to sustain the relationship between form and meaning within changing contexts. However, innovation that is not grounded in an understanding of values has the potential to disturb that balance. In this context, the central challenge lies not in change itself, but in how such change remains situated within a coherent value framework.

From a broader perspective, the relevance of traditional arts in modern education becomes increasingly significant. The earlier findings show that *Tandang Mendet* Dance has strong potential as a medium of experience-based cultural education. Yet in the context of globalization, education faces the challenge of bridging local values with global realities.

Traditional arts may serve as a medium connecting the two, because the values embedded within them such as honesty, togetherness, and balance carry universal dimensions, even though they are rooted in local contexts (Jati, 2023; Kerubo, 2024).

At the same time, it must be critically acknowledged that integrating traditional arts into modern education does not always proceed smoothly. In practice, art is often reduced to technical curriculum material, without a deeper exploration of meaning. This risks eliminating the reflective dimension that is in fact the primary strength of traditional arts. Therefore, cultural education must move beyond instructional approaches and toward experiential processes that enable learners to understand values through practice, rather than merely through conceptual explanation.

In the context of globalization, the position of *Tandang Mendet* Dance becomes increasingly complex. Globalization not only brings the threat of cultural homogenization, but also opens space for intercultural dialogue. In such a situation, traditional art can function both as identity and as a medium of global communication. However, this position also places art under pressure to conform to global standards that often privilege visual and performative aspects. The findings of this study show that *Tandang Mendet* Dance is able to maintain its value structure within such a context, yet it remains at risk of reduction if adaptation is not critically controlled (Suryadmaja et al., 2025; Yudarta & Pasek, 2017).

Accordingly, this discussion affirms that traditional art exists within a field of ongoing negotiation: between value and representation, between preservation and transformation, and between locality and globality. *Tandang Mendet* Dance demonstrates that the sustainability of traditional art is determined not by its ability to survive in an unchanged form, but by its capacity to preserve the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy within ever-changing contexts. This is where the significance of the present study lies: not only in its understanding of a single art form, but also in its contribution to explaining how traditional arts may remain alive, meaningful, and relevant amid the dynamics of the contemporary era.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Tandang Mendet* Dance cannot be adequately understood if aesthetics and philosophy are treated as separate domains. The empirical findings confirm that the aesthetic structure comprising repetitive movement patterns, dancer synchronization, the integration of properties, and adherence to musical rhythm functions as an operational system through which philosophical values are concretely enacted in practice. In this context, the philosophy of *Lombok Mirah Sasak Adi*, particularly the principle of honesty, does not appear as an abstract concept, but as a principle embodied through consistency of movement, collective alignment, and compliance with rhythmic structure.

Furthermore, this study reveals that the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy is dialectical in nature. Aesthetics does not merely serve as a medium of representation, but also as a site of meaning production that continuously operates between preservation and adaptation. The transformation of context from ritual to festival indicates that meaning is not lost, but rather negotiated in more communicative forms. However, this process also introduces the potential for meaning reduction, particularly when aesthetics becomes more dominant as spectacle rather than as a value system.

Within the framework of cultural education, *Tandang Mendet* Dance demonstrates significant potential as an experience-based learning model capable of internalizing values through embodied practice and social interaction. Nevertheless, its implementation requires an integrative pedagogical approach to avoid reduction into purely technical instruction.

Conceptually, this study contributes by proposing an analytical framework that positions aesthetics as a field of value articulation, enabling simultaneous analysis with philosophical meaning. This framework is not only relevant to *Tandang Mendet* Dance, but also holds potential for application in the study of other traditional art forms, particularly in examining the dynamic interplay between form, meaning, and social context in a more comprehensive manner.

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