



# The Symbolic Meaning of the *Wirèng* Dance Choreography at the Kasunanan Surakarta Palace

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to find out the specifications of the choreographic form and the symbolic meaning of *wirèng* in the Kasunanan Palace. A qualitative descriptive research design with form-matching techniques was employed; meanwhile, the data collection techniques employed observation, interviews, and literature study. The data analysis includes the form of the *wirèng* choreography and its symbolic meaning. From the results of the study, it was found that the choreographic form of *wirèng* in Kasunanan was used for pair dances and had a soldier's theme, while in Mangkunagaran *wirèng* was used to denote the term dance because *wirèng* is synonymous with the word *beksan* which means dance. The pattern of the *wirèng* choreography in Kasunanan has specifications, namely: (1) it is performed by male and female dancers in an even number, (2) it consists of three parts, namely the initial part (*maju beksan*), the main part (*beksan*), and the final part (*mundur beksan*), (3) in the main part of the dance there are variations of the dance scenes and variations of war scenes, such as *madras wars* or *gendhing wars*, referring to a typical war dance which is accompanied by slow (*lamba*) and constant (*steady*) rhythmic *gendhing* or music, and *ruket wars* which are accompanied by fast-rhythmic pieces of music (*mipil-lancaran*), (4) changes and differences always follow every change of part in the composition of the accompaniment pieces. *Wirèng's* symbolic meaning reflects the value system prevailing in the palace environment, symbolized by the numbers zero, two, and three, movement characteristics, and movement patterns (*gawang*) in the choreography.

**Keywords:** *wirèng*, choreography, symbolic meaning

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## INTRODUCTION

The existence of dance in the palace (palace, kingdom) environment is not just a beautiful rhythmic movement and is shown to be watched. In the beginning, dance was a human need to find harmony with the environment. Therefore, dance is often associated with the sociocultural and religious activities of the nobility. Tal-

king about the form of court dance choreography feels incomplete without involving the symbolic meaning behind the form of the choreography itself (Reason & Reynolds, 2010; Sunarmi, Sri, 2019; Kinder, 2021). This is relevant to the statement that to be able to understand a dance; one needs to know the cultural background of the dance itself and how it was formed. The rationale was based on the understand-

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ding that dance is a cultural product as a result of the creative process of its supporting community through the symbols used (Kaeppler, 1977; 1992; Jazuli, 2014; Jazuli & Alam, 2020). In his experimental study called *Choreometrics*, Alan Lomax proved that artistic style is determined by a nation's honor, culture, and society (Haberman and Meisel, 1970; Jazuli and Paranti, 2020; Jazuli, 2021). The perspective of Kaeppler and Lomax shows that in the context of sociocultural values, it is closely related to the way of understanding a work of art (dance) as a symbolic representation.

In Surakarta there are two palaces, namely the Kasunanan Palace which a king leads with the title *Inggang Sinuhun Kanjeng Susuhunan* (ISKS) Paku Buwana and the Mangkunagaran Palace which was led by an *adipati* or Duke who is also famous as *Raja Kecil* or the 'minor' king whose title is *Kanjeng Gusti Prince Adipati Arya* (KG-PAA) Mangkunagara. The signing of the Salatiga Agreement between Sunan Pakubuwono III and Raden Mas Said marked the two kingdoms. This agreement was made on March 17, 1757 (Ricklefs, 1956; 1995; 2019; Santoso, 2011; Suharji, 2009). The life activities of the two kingdoms are still ongoing even though their authority is no more than part of the center for the development of Javanese culture. In the view of Robert Redfield, in his field of study includes canon culture and folk culture. The canon culture or tradition for elite society was seen as the tradition of the literate and educated elite (court aristocrats) who were able to analyze, interpret and reflect cultural knowledge. Folk culture or populist traditions, on the other hand, relies on passing information, beliefs, and customs by way of oral tradition from one generation to the next.

The two palaces have different dance forms, both in terms of choreography and dance style, giving rise to the terms Kasunanan style and Mangkunagaran style (Hadi Subagyo 2010). Even though both of them have the same dance genre (related to the form, type, and character), such as

the *bedhaya*, *srimpi*, *beksan*, and *wirèng* genres. This is confirmed by the results of research on "*Spiritualitas budaya Jawa dalam seni tari klasik gaya Surakarta*" or Spirituality of Javanese culture in the art of classical dance of the Surakarta style, that the classical dance of the Surakarta style or called the Surakarta Kasunanan style is a tradition that lives and develops within the 'great tradition' environment and has noble values. The Surakarta style dance represents a symbol of power, the authority of the king, and at the same time, a barometer of the advancement of Javanese civilization (Heine & Von, 1982); Daryono, 2010; Jazuli, 2021). For this reason, palace dancers are required to have insight, knowledge, and appreciation of Javanese cultural norms with all the values contained therein. This aspect differentiates artists from rural areas who live in a 'small tradition' cultural atmosphere (Pamardi et al., 2014). In the Surakarta palace or *Kasunanan*, there are still various dance genres, namely *bedhaya*, *srimpi*, *beksan*, and *wirèng*, and the *fragmen* (drama dance) genre. Suharji's research (2009) informs that at Mangkunagaran Surakarta Palace, a dance has been born and developed which has become a flagship, namely the *Bedhaya Suryasumirat* and *Bedhaya Anglirmendhung* dances. *Suryasumirat* means the radiance of the sun, which gives life to the universe and everything in it (Wahyu Santosa Prabowo. et al., 2007; Rimasari Pramesthi Putri, Wahyu Lestari, 2015). This dance is a combination of the previous traditional *bedhaya* dance and contemporary dance. The *Surya Sumirat bedhaya* dance was co-created between Mangkunegara IX and a Mangkunegaran relative named Sulistyono Tirtokusumo. In this dance moves, *Bedhaya Suryasumirat* develops some of the dance moves from previous *bedhaya* dances, such as *Bedhaya Anglirmendhung*, *Bedhaya Dirathamerta*, *Bedhaya Pulung*, *Bedhaya Bedhah Madiun*, then combines them with movements according to the interpretations of the performers according to contemporary style. *Bedhaya Suryasumirat* as a soldier's dance uses a gun as an accessory tucked

into the *Slepe* which is wrapped around the stomach of nine female dancers. The accompaniment uses a set of Slendro and Pelog gamelan compiled with drums.

Based on this phenomenon, this writing is more focused on the study of the *wirèng* genre, especially on the form of dance choreography and its symbolic meaning. The argument is that previous studies seem fragmentary (separate), so they have not been analyzed as a whole (compare Jazuli's research, 1986; Prabowo et al., 2007; Hadi Subagyo, 2010). Besides that, the *wirèng* genre has its own specifications or uniqueness. The analysis strategy used is by placing two components: knowledge of cultural value systems and dance choreography. A cultural value system is a number of concepts about what lives in the minds of most members of society (palace society) and about things that are considered valuable and influential in their lives (Koentjaraningrat, 1980; 1984). The value system is reflected through symbols that function as a guide and gives direction and orientation in the life of the community concerned. The perspective of dance choreography includes aspects of presentation, treatment, and disclosure.

## METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study whose aim is to describe and explain the form and symbolic meaning of the choreography of the *wirèng* dance from Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta.

In analyzing the form and symbolic meaning of the choreography of the *wirèng* dance, a multidisciplinary approach is used (Ahimsa-Putra, 2007; Soedarsono, 2002; Supanggih, 2005). This is because *wirèng* as a genre of performing arts is multi-layered, and each of its components can be discussed, such as movement patterns, accompaniment patterns, costumes, and venues. Structural-functional theory and social action (value system) are used to examine contextual phenomena (Jazuli, 2014), while textual approaches are used with choreography and symbolic meaning

to analyze the presentation, treatment, and expression patterns of the *wirèng* dance (M.Jazuli, 1994; Jazuli, 2008; Hadi, 2016).

The research procedures and stages in this study include: (1) data collection through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and literature study; (2) the organization and identification of the results of data collection is carried out by a triangulation focus group discussion (FGD) to determine the validity of the data; (3) data analysis includes dance choreography patterns and their symbolic meanings.

Data collection using direct observation techniques was carried out by observing art-cultural events in Surakarta during 2021, especially those featuring the *wirèng* dance, such as the meeting of four Javanese palaces called Catur Sagotro, commemoration of the 90th anniversary of Paguyuban Kawula Surakarta (PAKASA, December 3, 2021), and Surakarta arts and culture performance during the Jumenengan Paku Buwana XIII commemoration at the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace Exhibition on April 20, 2021. Surakarta dance figures which were used as informants were Wahyu Santoso Prabowo, Daryono, and S. Pamardi. Data collection is carried out simultaneously in order to obtain valid, valid data. The validity of the data is determined based on the credibility and accountability of the data that has been obtained. Interactive analysis was chosen to analyze data about choreographic patterns and symbolic meanings (value systems), including data presentation, data reduction, verification, and drawing conclusions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; M. & Huberman, 1992).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Wirèng* Surakarta Dance Choreography

The dance choreography at the Kasunanan Surakarta palace can be broadly stated as follows. According to its type, there are two, namely female dances and male dances, each of which is divided into several characters. The female dance consists of the characters *luruh* (soft) and *lanyap*

(galant); the male dance too has the character of *alusan* (soft) and *agalan/gagahan* (strong). In defining characters, there are still more complicated details. For example, in the male *Alusan* dance, there is a distinction between *branyak* and *luruh*, and there is also the type of dance known as *putera agalan* which characters are *gagahan bergas* and *gagahan dugangan*. In the movement and attitude of dance, there is a normative provision called "Hasta Sawanda", which consists of *pacak* (standardization of attitude and movement); *pancat* (pattern of continuity); *pancat* (harmonious pattern); *wilet* (style, individual creativity); knee (motion); the rhythm (rhythm of movement) such as the *ganggeng kanyut* rhythm in the *bedhaya* and *srimpi* dances, the *banyak slulup* rhythm in the *gagahan* dance, the *prenjak tinaji* rhythm in the smooth *lanyap* dance, and the kebo gong rhythm in the *putera agalan* dance; *ulat* (mimic expression); and *gendhing* (accompaniment songs) with smooth, *ketawang* and *ladrang* songs along with slow (*lamba*) and fast (*sese*) rhythm content (Wahyu Santosa Prabowo. et al., 2007; Sugiyarso, 2018).

The essence of a work of art (dance) is a construction (structure) of parts that have basic characteristics and functional relationships in the whole or the integrity of the dance choreography building. Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta dance, viewed from a choreographic perspective, includes the form and structure of the dance building, themes, characteristics (*pria alus* or man's soft dance, *pria gagah* or gentle men, princesses), and the number of dancers who are distinguished in several dance genres. The *bedhaya* genre is danced by nine female dancers; the *srimpi* genre is danced by four female dancers, and the *wirèng* genre is danced by an even number of male and female dancers (in pairs). *Beksan* is usually a dance performed by a male or female dancer (single dance) and to mention a dance (*beksa*) in general, as well as the *frahmen* genre (dance drama) danced by male and female dancers with the number of dancers depending on the play of the story being told. Each dan-

ce genre usually has specifications in its choreography so that it differs from one genre to another. These specifications can be seen from the form and structure of the choreographic movements which are composed of varieties, phrases, motives, and movement characters in relation to the composition of the accompaniment, different attitudes, and body positions according to predetermined rules (*pathokan*). A technical example is in the character of the male dance, the range of strokes consisting of phrases and movement motifs, and the way of demonstrating or dancing is different between the alternating strokes and the dashing strokes; the same applies to other types of movements. For this reason, the *bedhaya*, *srimpi*, *beksan*, *frahmen*, and *wirèng* genres are different because of the form and meaning of the choreography.

The term *wirèng*, according to Chronicle Ila-ila (Soemahatmaka, 1928; 1930; Jazuli, 1986), is taken from the name of a Patih of the Kingdom of Jenggala Kediri, namely Patih Wirènggati. The duke was clever and skilled at war, so he often taught his soldiers (his men) his skills. So, it is inevitable that the real function of the *wirèng* is to train soldiers in battle and/or as a way to show off their strength before the king. Besides functioning as entertainment, this dance is also a vehicle for demonstrating the power of a kingdom. However, there are some experts (Poerbatjaraka, 1964) who argue that *wirèng* was inspired by ritual ceremonies that took place in the royal square, namely when there were horseback riding exercises carrying spear weapons (*sodoran*, *watang*), arrows, swords, and/or when there is a show of tiger fight in the more ancient kingdom. Based on this event, it was later appointed to become a war-themed dance genre and function as entertainment, especially entertainment for entertaining guests of royal palaces. During the Mataram era in Surakarta, *wirèng* was used to refer to special soldiers (Kopasus) who served as the king's bodyguard. This continued until the reign of Sunan Pakubuwana X (Jazuli, 1986; Jazuli, 2021).

Several dance figures in Surakarta

mentioned the following.

*Wirèng* is a kind of soldier's dance performed by dancers in pairs with the theme of war (Interview with S. Pamardi, June 24, 2021). Daryono said that according to the Chronicle book in the Reksapustaka Pura Mangkunagaran, apart from the *bedhaya* dance, the mention of a Mangkunagaran style dance is *wirèng*. However, in development, the mention of it is identified with the word 'beksan' (dance), both dance in pairs and solo dance (Interview on June 23, 2021).

The statement by the dance figures is the same as what the author has received from several dance masters from the Kasunanan Palace and Mangkunagaran Temple around 1985 who were deceased, namely RT. Jagamanta, RM. Joko Suharja, R. Ng. S. Ngaliman, RT. Sena Suryasumasta, R. Ng. Rana Suropto.

When *wirèng* developed outside the Kasunanan Palace, the term *wirèng* was used to refer to dances with warrior or heroic themes and were performed by dancers in pairs, such as *wirèng* Bandayuda or Bandabaya, Gelo Ganjret, Bugis Twins, Lawung, and so on. This is different from what developed in the Mangkunegaran Surakarta Temple. Based on the manuscripts in the Mangkunagaran library, the term *wirèng* tends to be used to refer to almost all forms and types of dance in the Mangkunagaran, such as *wirèng* Mandrarini, *wirèng* Lambangsari, *wirèng* Golek Montro, *wirèng* Kelana Topeng, and so on (compare with (Malarsih, 2007b); (Suharji, 2009)).

Based on the specifics of the choreography, the *wirèng* dance is performed/danced by an even number of dancers, meaning that there can be two, four, six, or eight dancers in pairs. With the number of dancers and the position of the pair, the *wirèng* at the Kasunanan Palace includes a pair dance with a soldier's theme and functions as entertainment and spectacle. The presentation of *wirèng* is divided into two, namely *wirèng*, which tells a story and does not tell a story. The *wirèng* who tells the story is the *wirèng* who uses sto-

rytelling or picking (Javanese: *methil*) from a story originating from the Chronicle of Panji, Mahabarata and Ramayana which is then called *wirèng pethilan* - depicting a battle between two characters who have different characters, such as good-bad, fine-tune characters, rude, and totally wrong. For example, *wirèng pethilan* Kelana Jayèngsari, Karna Tinanding, Prawiratama, Gatutkaca-Antasena, Srikandi-Mustakaweni, Anila-Prahasta, and so on (Jazuli, 1986); Hadawiyah & Maryani, 2019). The *Wirèng* that doesn't tell a story depicts two soldiers practicing war, such as the *Wirèng Bandayuda*, *Bugis Twins*, *Lawung*. The uniqueness of the *wirèng* choreography is that no one ever loses or wins in war. However, in the *wirèng pethilan* at the end of the war, characters who are considered to have good, refined, and true characteristics are symbolically superior.

The movement patterns of the *wirèng* seem simpler than other court dance genres, such as *bedhaya* and *srimpi*. However, in its development, the *wirèng*'s movement patterns are increasingly varied. This development also occurs in the form of the accompaniment, from the mild form to the *ketawang* and *ladrang* pieces and their displacements, as well as the variations in fast and slow rhythms. The place where it was originally performed was in a *pendhapa* (a typical Javanese building with four pillars as the main support) now it can be staged on any stage, such as the proscenium stage and others. In the war scene of the main part of the dance (the *beksan* part), the movement variation pattern, which was originally accompanied by two small drums and a large drum develop accompanied by a bar/*chiblon* drum. An example is the presentation of the *Bandayuda wirèng* as a type of *wirèng* that does not use stories, performed by two male dancers in the same attire, and carrying shields and short sticks. The structure of the dance consists of: (1) the initial part (*maju beksan*) is at the *gawang sopana* (dancer's position, the place/room where the dance begins). With the motive of the worship movement and the movement of walking forward to-

wards the essence of the dance (*beksan*); (2) the main part of the dance is that the dancers are in the main gate (middle room/*pendhapa* center) doing dances, *madas wars*, *ruket wars*, and more dancing. The following is an example of a storytelling *wirèng* (*pethilan wirèng*) and a non-telling *wirèng* (See Figure 1 and Figure 2).



**Figure 1.** *Wirèng "Bandayuda"* (non-telling *wirèng*) (romadecade.org/tari-beksan-wireng 2021)

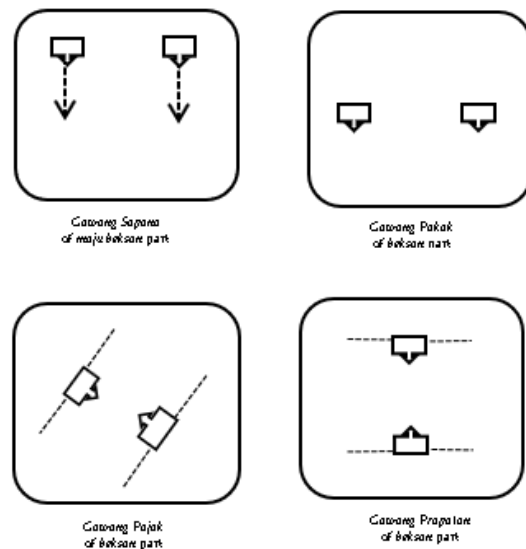


**Figure 2.** *Wirèng pethilan "Bambangan-Cakil"* (the telling *wirèng*)

In sub-sections or war scenes, there are variations in a spatial formation called *gawang prapatan* (crossroad spaces), *gawang jeblos* (opponent space/places), and *gawang pojok* (*pendhapa* rectangular corner spaces). After the war scene is finished, they dance again, then it is continued with the final part of the dance (*mundur beksan*); (3) the final part of the dance is the same as the initial part of the dance, namely, the dancer returns to the starting position, *gawang sopana*. The difference lies in the intended direction, namely the movement in the

early part of the dance from the *gawang sopana* to *gawang pokok*, while the movement in the final part of the dance is from the *gawang pokok* to the *gawang sopana*. Based on this description, it can be said that the form of the choreography of the *wirèng* dance presented on stage is the form of the *pendhapa* by making the most of the space but remaining consistent at its center, namely the midpoint of the *pendhapa* between the two dancers. This kind of development also occurred in other court dance genres that developed outside the palace.

The following is a description of the position of the *wirèng* dancers occupying the Sopana, Pokok, Corner, and Prapatan movement patterns (goals) on the *Pendhapa Keraton* (the Palace's *pendhapa*) stage (See Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Types of *Gawang*

### Kasunanan Surakarta Palace's Value System

The cultural value system in a society is often general in nature and has a fairly broad scope. Kluckhohn distinguishes the cultural value system in five variations, namely about the nature of human life, human work, human position in space-time, human relations with the natural surroundings, and human relations with each other (Koentjaraningrat, 1980). In simple terms, Kluckhohn's framework concerns human life as a person and socially. Such a

universal framework for Javanese society, especially court society (nobility), is not surprising; it has even become part of their outlook on life.

Culture from the perspective of the Javanese people is the result of processing "mind and power" - including things related to the potential for reasoning (rational), psychological (sense-ethical) and beauty (aesthetic) strengths. Within "mind" there is a refinement so that the processing method is called *alusan* which means *kasutapan*, *pasemèdèn* or *pamesu budi*, namely actions related to concentration of creativity, taste and intention. Rationally, *budi* is a spirit of action based on the nuances of divinity which has a holy, compassionate, and primal nature, so it is inevitable that the Palace also has the position and function as the place of the king as the leader of government, relatives of the Palace (family) who carried out the king's orders (Geertz, 1960) and were the physical and spiritual protectors - a great tradition (Redfield, 1956). The culture of the Surakarta palace, as a source of Javanese culture, always strives to achieve a noble character and soul that is capable of being self-guided and self-controlled. This is because this noble character and soul is seen as capable of radiating authority or inner strength called *prabawa-wibawa*, and emits an external power that can be recognized through feeling, smelling, hearing, seeing, and creating (Yosodipuro, 1982; Gesick, 1989). As said by Sapardi Yosodipuro, that:

"Amargi budi punika golonganing 'alus' Pramila pangolahinipun ugi sinartan "ke-alusan" tegesipun kasutapan, pasemedèn utawi pamesu budi. Mungga-hing tata lahir, budi punika tegesipun pakarti ingkang awewaton sunar, kadosta suci, asih, adil, rahayu, utama lan sasaminipun' (1982).

("Considering that the mind belongs to the mystical class, the processing is also called mystical meaning that it is through asceticism, meditation or to awaken the power of the mind. In its embodiment, the mind means an act based on the holy light, love, fair, safe, sublime, and so on that is equivalent).

In the *Tripama* and *Wedhatama* chronicle book by KGPAA, Mangkunagara IV (1811 - 1881), it is clearly stated that the existence of Javanese human life was based on three problems, namely: 1) the problem of life in relation to God, relations with oneself and one another, and relations with the universe and the world around it (Mangkoenagoro IV, 1931; Wibawa, 2010; Mulyoto, 1992). In summary, these three problems can be explained that God for the Javanese is *dat tan kena kinanya ngapa* (that cannot be described), *cedhak tanpa sénggolan, adoh tanpa wangenan* (too close to touch, too far and is not limited). Therefore, the Javanese in their lives are always looking for knowledge of perfection as a provision for traveling to cyberspace. Human existence consists of physical and spiritual. The body is the unity between the elements of flesh, skin, blood; amniotic fluid and placenta (after the placenta); nine holes (breathable air); and the five senses. Spiritual is formed from *sadular papat kalima pancer* which is incarnated in a person's attitude and behavior that comes from the function of lust, "I" (ego), person, soul. The order of the universe is formed from a hierarchical arrangement that is considered to have things in common with human beings. So the awareness of the Javanese towards the order of the universe is often called the macrocosm (*jagat gedhé*), which is identical to self-awareness as the microcosm (little universe).

The brief description above indicates that the life orientation of the Javanese always leads to a state of complete harmony, harmony, and balance, in achieving the highest ideals, namely *manunggaling kawula gusti*. In the life of the Javanese nobility (aristocrats, noblemen, especially in the Palace), it is believed that people who have a noble spirit will be able to achieve their goals. A virtuous person is a person who is able to control himself in attitudes and behavior for life and always makes other people happy or *Amemangun karyenak tyasing sasama* (Pujasworo, 1982; Prasetyo and Poniman, 2019). Therefore, it is natural for the Javanese to think that soft and

calm people become idols and are simultaneously the opposite of those who are rude or arrogant. Such is depicted in dance, wayang, and other art forms. Soft and rough, right and left, and good and bad are natural dichotomies (binary opposition) that need to be kept in balance.

Therefore, the process of creating palace dances and their accessories is always based on efforts to cultivate the mind physically and spiritually. The rhythm of the *gendhing* that accompanies the dance must unite with the (action) of the dancer, the expressions of the dancing soul united with the audience's vitality, and united in a feeling that penetrates the heart. Dance in the palace environment (Kraton Kasunan and Pura Mangkunagaran) Surakarta represents the progress of Javanese civilization that lives and develops in an environment of 'great traditions' with noble values. The existence of dance in the Palace has an important meaning because it is a symbol of the authority of the king. Palace dancers are required to have insight, knowledge, and appreciation of Javanese culture with all the values contained therein. It is this aspect that distinguishes artists outside the Palace (people, rural areas) who are in a 'little tradition' cultural atmosphere. Thus, the art and culture of the Palace can become a source of life and development of the arts outside it, although it functions more as a means of entertainment and traditional ceremonies in the countryside (Pamardi et al., 2014). In this context, an example can be the *wirèng pethilan* dance genre which depicts the dichotomy of smooth-coarse, good-bad, right-left, fine-coarse characters, male-female; while the *wirèng* without a story describes the balance of a dichotomy that should exist in the universe (a picture of binary opposition). If a fine and good character is won over a rough and bad one it is a purely symbolic choice because there is no such victory that does not last long (lasting) for the balance of the cosmos.

Viscosity to the cultural value system is reflected in the form of works of art (dance), then giving rise to the notion that

good works of art are works of art that are symbolic in nature. This situation shows that cultural values are very essential in the life of the Javanese, especially among the Palace, even though this has experienced decadence in the present era. Therefore, in analyzing Javanese art (*wirèng* dance), it is appropriate to always consider things beyond what appears, namely the symbolic meaning.

### **The Symbolic Meaning of *Wirèng's* Choreography**

The discussion of *wirèng* choreography is inseparable from form and content, although the form and content can be relatively different. From a structural-functional perspective, the form in question includes elements or parts that are organized in a unified whole, while content relates to what lies behind the form, which symbolically has certain values and meanings. Because, it is impossible to limit the contents of works of art to mere (forms of) beauty. Therefore, the contents of works of art need to be assessed and appreciated as a whole, concrete and intact (Herusatoto, 1983). This understanding indicates that any value can be represented, connoted, and given a form that the senses can perceive.

The basic thing in Javanese court dances is the concept of soft-hard movement. This concept has been applied to the presentation, treatment, and disclosure aspects. In a more detailed division, subtle-coarse occurs in the form, nature, character, and type of dance, so it can be said that fine-coarse is the 'ideology' of Javanese cultural art. For example, the disclosure and treatment in the *alus* or smooth dance, if the dancer is unable to animate or convey according to the situation (character) being played, can be said to be 'rough'; conversely, a dancer can be said to be 'good' if he is able to play a role/character (even though he has a rough character) in accordance with the character of the character being played. However, all the normative values or rules of dance has functioned more as guidelines that direct the freedom of the



'*wilet*' or the creativity of the dancers so that they are not rigid to interpret. Every dancer has a life capacity (*rasa*) that is not always the same, so every belief and interpretation of a dance teacher often varies from one another. This difference is caused by a sense of appreciation (personal style), sect (a smaller level division of style and then successive schools) that a dancer adheres to. Phenomena like this can be compared with the Javanese expression 'copy the teacher, copy the song (different teachers, different teaching styles)'.

From the perspective of presentation, *Wirèng* includes supporting aspects of the dance performance, such as staging, dress, accompaniment, and other accessories. The supporting aspect of the dance itself is inseparable from the intent and purpose of why the dance is performed. Suppose the performance of the dance is meant to legitimize power or show the greatness of the state (king of a kingdom). In that case, the performance can appear glamorous, sophisticated, and neatly arranged so that the goal of legitimizing the people's beliefs can be obtained. If dance at the Palace is used for entertainment, ritual, and educational purposes, such as to instill norms, attitudes, ethics, aesthetics, and soul enlightenment, then all the rules in court dance are very important to support that goal. Regarding the place for performing dances in the palace environment, a king always provided a place that could be used for dance performances, such as a *pendhapa* (a rectangular room with four pillars), *bangsal-tratag* (similar to a proscenium stage), or other places. The place for dance performances is always rectangular in shape, as is the concept of the *pendhapa*. The place has an important role because it also determines the authority of the dance. It seems that the concept of the *pendhapa* stage was deliberately used as a reference for the concept of dance with a specific purpose. This is because the four *pendhapa* pillars have a certain meaning in the Javanese cultural concept, namely the symbol of the four cardinal points (east, west, south and north) with a central point in the

middle of the four pillars as a symbol of 'I' (human self or dancer) commonly called '*keblat papat limo pancer*'. Besides that, '*keblat papat limo pancer*' can also be interpreted as a symbol of the four passions in humans, namely *Mutmainah*, *Amarah*, *Lauamah*, and *Supiah*. The four passions are also considered brothers because they function as guides for the fifth brother, namely 'I,' in living life.

Likewise, the dance costume will refer to interests that show the greatness of the king. The splendor of the implementation of dance performances at the Palace and all the equipment presented became a reference for the palace people and ordinary people. The function of dance accompaniment is not solely to accompany the dance but often also determines the structure of the dance movement. For example, a series of dance movements consisting of several motion motifs is always bound by the form of the piece, the sense of *pangkat-dawah* movement (the beginning and end of the movement process) is also determined by the rhythm of the *gendhing*.

Understanding the treatment perspective is related to the attitude and movement that a dancer must demonstrate. Even though in the previous description, it has been said that the Surakarta style dance already has normative provisions, namely *Hasta Sawanda*, the eight normative guidelines for a dancer in the Kasunanan palace. However, this is only a dancer's starting point (guideline). So far, no dancer has ever been able to fully achieve *Hasta Sawanda*. Does this mean *Hasta Sawanda* is an ideological requirement, even utopian? It is possible, but *Hasta Sawanda* is still needed as a reference material in the effort to create quality dancers (Wahyu Santosa Prabowo. et al., 2007).

The *wirèng* choreography is performed by an even number of dancers (two, four, eight) viewed from the disclosure perspective. The even number is symbolically related to philosophy in human life. Two identical dancers with a value of two means dichotomous or binary opposition, such as right-left, male-female,

good-bad, subtle-coarse, and so on. The four dancers symbolize the four cardinal directions (east, west, north, south, with a central point as a symbol of 'I' - '*keblat papat limo pancer*' within ('I') human beings. If the *wirèng* dance is performed by eight dancers, then the value of eight is a symbolic representation of Hasta Sawanda (eight guidelines for the quality of a palace dancer). Although there are also those who relate it to the teachings of Hasta Bra-ta, namely the eight characteristics and behaviors that must be possessed by a leader who functions as self-control, especially in every action of his leadership (Suhari, 2014). Shouldn't a good (quality) dancer be able to lead himself by controlling his creativity, taste, and intention when expressing his dance? As said and discussed by the Javanese dancers of the Surakarta style Daryono, Wahyu Santoso, and Pamardi:

a Javanese dancer must be able to *nge-mong rasa lan sumeleh* (controlling one's own emotions and uniting feelings with their role) (Interview 23-24 June 2021).

The structure of the disclosure of the *wirèng* dance consists of three parts (*maju beksan, beksan, mundur beksan*) symbolically related to the journey of the *purwa*, middle, *wasana* (beginning, middle, end) life which are represented by three values, namely birth, life, and death. Revealing the war scene in the *beksan* (principal dance) section, the dancers form a circular floor (space) pattern which is revealed in the process of moving from the main goal to the Prapatan, corner goal, broken goal, and corner goal. In that battle scene, no one wins or loses, meaning that the strength of the two (characters) of the *wireng* dancers are equally strong so that the result of the war is zero - a symbol of the state of emptiness (*Sanskrit*). The state of nil or emptiness is interpreted as nothingness, a circle pattern with a value of zero symbolizes emptiness. This is related to the teachings of Kejawen that to be able to *mulih mulanira dumadi* (return to the origin, namely God Almighty) leads to *sangkan paraning dumadi* (return to the origin of life) through nothingness or emptiness. Therefore, the end of the battle

scene of the *wireng* dance is nil as a symbolic representation of the state of emptiness which is revealed through the dance floor pattern in the form of a circle, which is interpreted as having a zero value. This is relevant to the statement contained in Wirid Hidayat Jati's chronicle book, which many teachers of mysticism or *Kejawèn* refer to, especially the section on understanding the teachings about God, which reads as follows:

Wisikan Ananing Dat: Sejiné ora ana apa-apa, awit duk maksih awang-uwung durung ana sawiji-wiji, kang ana dhangin iku Ingsun. Ora ana Pangéran among Ingsun sejatiné Dat kang Maha Suci, anglimputi ing sipat Ingsun, amartani ing asmaning-Sun, amratandhani ing afngal Ingsun.

(In fact, when it was empty there was nothing, what existed before was I. The word "I" in this case means God, the Creator of all. -Me signifies My will. God "exists" without being, and God creates everything that is His will. Everything that exists is by His Power. God's power encompasses all forms, enlivens all names of His creation, and marks His creations' attitudes and behavior (Suyanto, 2018).

Starting from the zero value, value two, and value three, philosophically represent human life which is symbolized through cultural artwork activities in the form of *wirèng* choreography.

The value of two as a description of the contents of the world which is always dichotomous (binary opposition), such as good and bad, right and left, and so on, must be in a balance of harmony. *Wirèng*, as a warrior-themed dance depicting war without winners and losers, is a reflection of a symbolic expression of the necessity of that dichotomy, which always 'exists,' taken for granted. The even number of dancers who are at war and succumb to each other to achieve real victory is just relativity because the target is not found, just circling or empty, or has zero value. This symbolizes the meaning of oneness between the small and big universe, or '*manunggaling kawula gusti*'. This analysis is more relevant when connected with the

meaning of the three values. In the *wirèng* dance, three values (*maju beksan*, *beksan*, *mundur beksan*) as a symbol of human existence (*purwa*, *madya*, *wasana*) in living life are bound by three practices, namely behavior in external life, practice in inner life, and practice in natural life. The values two and three are actually framed by a circle (zero value, empty) which can be interpreted as eternal life, a symbol of a rotating world. The central point in the circle is abstract but still 'existing and eternal'. Therefore, at the beginning of the *wirèng* dance, it always begins with the posture of sitting cross-legged and the movement of worship in place as a symbol that humans must know themselves personally and with decency. Because in worship, it has the meaning of being one, so *beksan* is also one, from sitting to standing, usually followed by a dance movement called *laras*. The movement of the *laras* is a symbol of the essence of life in harmony between body and soul. This unity is capable of controlling human thoughts and feelings. Thus, a true dance can become a symbol of teaching about norms, ethics, and belief in God for the Javanese people, especially for the royal family.

## CONCLUSION

The existence of Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta dance is inseparable from the cultural conception of its environment which is always based on ethical-aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural norms (value systems) with divine nuances. The form of dance occurs because there is a unified symbol embodied in the function and structure of its presentation. In terms of the choreographic pattern, the *wirèng* dance appears simpler and uncomplicated when compared to the *Bedaya* and *Srimpi* genres. However, behind its simplicity, it contains a description of the symbols to be communicated, namely (expressive) symbols in the order of human life personally, socially, and human relations with the environment and God.

The pattern or form of *wirèng* cho-

reography that lives and develops in the Kasunanan Palace has specifications with certain characteristics, namely: (1) performed by male and female dancers in an even number which symbolically means the achievement of balance and order, (2) consists of three parts, namely the initial part (*maju beksan*), the main part (*beksan*), and the final part (*mundur beksan*) related to the symbolization of the nature of human life, (3) in the main part of the dance there are variations of dancing scenes and variations of war scenes as symbols of a struggle for human life in the world, (4) every change of part is always followed by an adjustment of the composition of the accompaniment music, which means that joys and sorrows, ups and downs, as well as strengths and weaknesses, take place one after another as it happens in the course of life. Such symbolic meanings have been presented and confirmed in *wirèng's* choreography through movement-space-time patterns and the symbolization of zero, two, and three values.

The implication of studying the choreography and symbolic meaning of the *wirèng* dance is that dance values and their meanings can cultivate conscious human attitudes and behavior to create peace.

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