

# Exploring Dance Aesthetic in Contemporary Choreography at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

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## **Abstract**

In contemporary society, the creative concept of Indonesian choreography encounters the digitalisation and commercialisation, that can be both challenging and frightening. While young choreographers in Gorontalo are adjusting themselves in learning contemporary, they too need to appreciate traditional dance aesthetic, so they will have a clear concept while using ethnic elements in creating dance. One of the embodiments of North Sulawesi's dance aesthetic is *Dana Dana*, developed in a limited way in Bolaang Mongondow. The similar dance is also existing in Gorontalo under the same name but slightly different in some components. As dance aesthetic is essential to construct the regional dance style, it is necessary to look further how the aesthetic of Bolaang Mongondow's *Dana Dana* brings the distinctive features in the forms of choreographic development. Using a phenomenological approach integrated with creative-based choreographic, this research examined how the experimental and explorative works enrich the student's experience to produce genuine vocabularies, and the embodiment of cultural values in their creation. Through a circle of observing-feeling-imagining-manifesting-forming, the concept of contemporary choreography embraces new artistic understanding that bring the transcendental realm of creativity.

**Keywords:** contemporary choreography, dance aesthetic, dana dana, exploration

## ***Mengeksplorasi Estetika Tari pada Koreografi Kontemporer di Universitas Negeri Gorontalo***

### ***Abstrak***

*Dalam masyarakat kontemporer, konsep kreatif koreografi Indonesia menghadapi tantangan digitalisasi dan komersialisasi, yang sekaligus menakutkan. Pada saat koreografer muda di Gorontalo sedang menyesuaikan diri dan mempelajari kontemporer, mereka juga perlu menghayati nilai-nilai budaya seperti estetika tari, sehingga mereka akan memiliki konsep yang jelas saat menggunakan elemen etnis dalam mencipta tari. Salah satu wujud estetika tari daerah Sulawesi Utara adalah tari Dana Dana yang dikembangkan secara terbatas di Bolaang Mongondow. Menarik, karena tarian serupa juga ada di Gorontalo dengan nama yang sama namun sedikit berbeda di beberapa komponen. Karena estetika tari sangat penting untuk membangun gaya tari daerah, maka perlu dilihat lebih jauh bagaimana estetika tari Dana Dana Bolaang Mongondow menghadirkan ciri khas dalam bentuk pengembangan koreografi. Menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologis yang terintegrasi dengan koreografi berbasis kreatif, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana kerja eksperimental dan eksploratif memperkaya pengalaman mahasiswa untuk menghasilkan kosakata gerak sejati, dan memberi wujud nilai-nilai budaya dalam penciptaannya. Melalui proses melingkar mengamati-merasakan- membayangkan-mewujudkan-membentuk, konsep koreografi kontemporer diarahkan untuk merengkuh pemahaman artistik secara baru yang membawa kreativitas pada ranah transendental.*

***Kata kunci:*** koreografi kontemporer, estetika tari, dana dana, eksplorasi

## INTRODUCTION

The regional dances, both traditional and creative, bring their cultural significance through symbols and cultural codes underlie their nature of existence. It is crucial, especially because the life of multicultural society came along with the spirit of assimilation. Traditional dance carries the entire knowledge and culture of the past, where thoughts, habits and beliefs are passed down from generation to generation, from ancestors to posterity, which usually take place orally (Murgiyanto, 2004, p. 10). These habits of inheritance foster the codification or the value system that from time to time develops into a certain rule that underlies the presence of regional dances. It is these rules that distinguish one dance from another, as well as the dance style throughout the archipelago. Regional dance styles create an understanding of the dance's tangible form and the appreciation of the embedded soul and spirit. Such appreciation allows people, especially dance performers, to be aware of the presence of their own dances.

The dance students in academic sphere learn not only their local dance but also some traditional dances from other regionals. The dance students in art institutions are provided with various dance genres both Indonesian and overseas, experiencing three or more different dance styles that may enhance their insight of the aspect of history, cultural code, social background, and the supporting society of the dances. It is because dance is always contextual that its performative, bodily, and expressive aspects should be learnt as well as its formal forms and technical aspects. It is emergent for the dancers, especially those who are more towards the area of dance creation, to direct their understanding of being wider and more complex: not merely capable to dance technique and imitating the repertoire, but may elaborate their insight upon philosophy and other interrelated dimension (Ramadani, 2018). In that way, the awareness of the presence of other ethnic dances could be actively and dynamically established.

The creativity of today's Indonesian choreography encounters the digitalisation and commercialisation that can be both challenging and frightening. Many Indonesian dances today tend to mix ethnic elements in passing, do not have a clear basic concept and somehow irrational (Murgiyanto, 2018, p. 4). This phenomenon is actually triggered by the awakening of millennial dance creators' awareness to explore the principles of previous art and dance styles. The young creators like to manifest them through experimental techniques and concepts. Such concept is often a kind of trial and error project, using different artistic media and deconstructing theory, to pursue spectaculars for new forms of expression (Sitharesmi, 2019a, p. 105). However, the manifestation of cultural elements was failing into a mere showcase rather than internalising the values within the concept of "newness" in dance creation.

For that matter, it is imperative to bring to front the ethnic values as a local

content in the creative process of choreography. To supporting Universitas Negeri Gorontalo's strategy of strengthening cultural values in the application of science and technology for regional-based innovation, my research attempts to contribute the dynamic resilience of cultural values of Gorontalo and the surrounding areas through exploring the dance aesthetic. I suggested the *Dana Dana*, one of Bolaang Mongondow's traditional dances, as a prime material for kinaesthetic design of contemporary choreography class in Prodi Pendidikan Sendratasik (the Department of Performing Art Education). Completing the previous research, the aesthetic sphere of the dance could be specifically valued in representing and initiating the efforts to find dance styles of eastern part of Indonesia. It is also to reveal the codes of beauty and aesthetic dimension of the Bolaang Mongondow's dance. The content of philosophical values that will provide references to the dance style of Bolaang Mongondow is the capital for the concept of preserving, developing, and creating dance in Gorontalo, Bolaang Mongondow itself, and other surrounding regions within the Tomini Bay area.

Reciprocally, the concept of contemporary choreography can profoundly explain the meaning of the Bolaang Mongondow's *Dana Dana* in the production of imaginative - sensory effects. This concept needs to be integrated into the learning process of contemporary choreography, so the students' creativity can be focused on revealing the unique sides, otherness and hidden possibilities implied from the reality of dance's existence. It is in this way that contemporary dance becomes important to show the complexities of life through an ever-renewing understanding, as a metacognition that continuously reconstructs the nature of cognition itself (Sugiharto, 2013, p. 35). Accordingly, through the choreographic praxis, the students' consciousness upon the presence of other ethnic dances is active, dynamic, and positive. The problem is the lack of both students' basic technical skill and knowledge upon the variety of other regional dances may bring up the boredom of monotonous vocabularies. Through imposing the aesthetic of *Dana Dana* in choreographic exploration process, I am looking for the generic and organic motion phrases grow up from students' somatic and cognitive construction.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The aesthetic elements of Bolaang Mongondow's *Dana Dana* are revealed prior to a practice-based research, through ethnographic qualitative research methods of arts field. The fieldwork was conducted in Bolaang Mongondow to produce emic data on the characteristics of Bolaang Mongondow's culture. The researcher - resource person interaction is participatory and interactive, for the resource person is not just a passive object who answers questions, but is an active participant who conveys his knowledge and experience in discussing the material.

Following the opinion of Keesing and Bleicher, subjectivity has a central role in cultural studies which is an interpretive and contextual area, so that interpreters' subjectivity often includes reception, sensitivity, common sense, and open cultural depictions (Endraswara, 2003, pp. 20–21). A Literature study as a vital phase come from unreported magazines, newspapers, reports, letters, manuscripts, and office documents. The exchange of views between cultural owners and researcher is a form of inter-subjectivity that is crucial for art, culture, and philosophy research to achieve scientific objectivity. The concept of interpretation refers to as part of “local interpretation” offered by the experts and resource persons through extensive discussions and conversations is a way of recording and direct representation that provides wide space for inter-subjective relations. It is so that all information can be better captured and communicated (Fountein, 2014, pp. 58; 65).

The realm of “local interpretation” for wider inter-subjective relations is then developed on to the concept of creating contemporary dance for the needs of enriching traditional content and local values. As the imperative of the research, the choreographic process itself is practical-based research that is experimental in nature and strengthens artistic exploration of the aesthetic of the *Dana Dana*. Within the studio investigation, a practice-based research embodies not only physical-psychomotor activities but also integrated with methodical experiments in a learning subject of contemporary choreography (also read as a non-traditional choreography in the Prodi Pendidikan Sendratasik of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo). It is an effort in responding a problematic query upon an epistemological issue of dance practice, about how dance practice develops the original insight, its dissemination and contribution to choreographer-researcher's claim that choreographic research as equivalent status as other more traditional forms of academic enquiry to generate a distinctive form of knowledge (Pakes, 2009, p. 52).

Ten dance students' participants are provided a treatment as young choreographers to conduct the practice-based research in making dance. *Observing* the video recording of the *Dana Dana* (Sanggar Komalig & Vidya Potabuga, 2020) is choreographic analysis process for the student to convey her connection to the dance. This observation is synchronized with the on-going aesthetic hypothesis of the dance constructed by me, so the students (choreographers) have been sharing their perception to accomplish the intersubjective understanding. This type of the intersubjective understanding also accommodates Gadamerian hermeneutics in the process of inter-textually interpreting the related research materials. The intersubjective shows the validity of the research itself, as emphasized that phenomenological analysis is always a formidable task to present the validity of something that is not an object. Therefore, subjective attainment must be returned to its essential activity, which is transcendent – which clearly confirms the horizon

of universal consciousness. The transcendently reduced subjectivity is the source of all objectification (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 239–240).

The activity of exploring the *Dana Dana*'s aesthetic is the process of back and forth between developing the chosen *Dana Dana*'s dance phrases and reading my research report as well as other supporting literatures. In the context of dance composition, exploration is an experimental act of choreographer within a wide range to fully familiar with the movement and the feeling/meaning connoted. In exploring, the choreographer consciously or intuitively experience the expressive aspects of the movement, opening the potential of the idea that can provoke the composition, while the improvisation is required to experience the various ways of treating the movement from feeling to knowing – knowing what the movement is – analyzing it and capturing the complex to start creating a dance (Smith-Autard, 2010, pp. 90; 94). The choreographer's subjective upon the aesthetic elements of the *Dana Dana* can be understood through evaluating the way she responds the unique and develops them into generic phrases: the dictions (of movement), the dynamic, the clarity, and the intention. Every phase of evaluation reaches the accumulative experiences of the choreographer, so that she become closer to the progress of creating dance.

## RESULTS

### **The *Dana Dana* of Bolaang Mongondow and its aesthetic**

The traditional Bolaang Mongondow's *Dana Dana* (hereinafter referred to as *Dana Dana Bolmong*) is a dance that grows and develops among the people of Kopandakan Village, Lolayan District. This dance began to be known along with the entry of Islam in Bolaang Mongondow around 1917, marked mainly by the tradition of *sholawatan* with the accompanying the performing of *hadra*. Islam was strengthening in this region along with the growth of the spirit of nationality among the kings who saw the Islamic character as representing the "*bangsa bumi putera*" (Assagaf, 1996, p. 206). The other similar dance forms are that we knew as *Zapin* (North Sumatra and Riau), *Dana* (Jambi, South Sumatra, and Bengkulu). The people of Lampung developed it into *Bedana*, while the *santri* of East Java named it *Zafin* or *Hajir Marawis* (Bondowoso). Other names are *Jepin* (Kalimantan), *Jippeng* or *Jepen* in Sulawesi, *Dana Dani* (Nusa Tenggara), and *Dana Dana* (Gorontalo and North Maluku).

The original *Dana Dana Bolmong* was presented during *momosad*. The word from Mongondow's language which consists of the syllables *mo* (go) and *mosad* (garden) can be interpreted as "going to the garden". This word can also be interpreted as mutual cooperation and togetherness for the activities in the garden. When the people of Bolaang Mongondow "go to the garden", they did not only

bring the tools such as hoes, sickles, and other garden tools, but also *gambus* and *marwas* (small tambourine). These musical instruments were played along with rhymes of poetry, while two other members of community complement the dynamics and rhythm of the ensemble with *modana*, demonstrating the agile footwork and 'spinning'. The presentation of *Dana Dana Bolmong* in the midst of gardening activities entertained the people who are resting, while it entertained and trained the dexterity of the performers' reflexes.

The component of dance is observed, analysed and investigated to identify specific dimensions within a "sufficient" horizon of knowledge, a kind of preliminary competence to be able to bring the dance analysis process into an organic nature. To understand art, one must learn to see, to hear, and to feel, consciously and intentionally, to be personally involved with art and artistic experiences (Rohidi, 2011, pp. 74–75). The aesthetic component of the dance can be traced by analysing more observantly (discerning) the form and structure of the dance or its presentation. The "dynamic image" itself is an aesthetic factor that can be seen, heard, and felt through the integration of dance components which basically consist of movement vocabulary, dancers, visual sets, and aural elements. The structure of *Dana Dana Bolmong* is quite simple in terms of its movement material, but actually has a complex presentation technique, especially in relation to the accompaniment of the music and *pantun*. This dance is essentially presented by two male dancers and can be grouped as a type of study dance that cultivates footwork techniques in 'spinning' and circular spatial patterns.

The movement vocabulary is dominated by lifting of the legs, and by swinging with minimal forearm swings. Overall, the *Dana Dana Bolmong* has six motional motifs (or phrases) which are completed in twelve stages, namely *ragam dasar* (the basic), *ragam hormat* (the gesture of salute), *ragam variasi* (the variations), *ragam ombak-ombak* (to depict the waves), *ragam sorong-sorong* (to depict the shoving activity) and *ragam hayun* (the closing). The two dancers of *Dana Dana Bolmong* are expected to perform identical movements in terms of motional technique, the accuracy (of tempo), dynamics, floor patterns, and costumes. At the time when *momosad* still existed, the *Dana Dana Bolmong* as a *mo-dana* activity was carried out in the gardens on the grass or on the flat ground. Today, this dance can be presented at various events with kinds of conditions where it is presented. The dance basically requires a space that does not necessarily be spacious, because of the need for the composition and the floor pattern only reverses direction in one linear line. In rustic and casual events, it is enough to perform the dance on the veranda, or in the middle of living room, but rarely on a conventional stage.

During the performance, the dancers dressed up in Bolaang Mongondow ethnic clothe. At first, the costumes were daily regional clothes that were usually

worn when Bolaang Mongondow people attending the event, which consisted of a *koko* top-shirt, trousers, sarong, and a skullcap. In its development to this days, the *Dana Dana Bolmong*'s performers, both dancers and musicians, wear *bangiang* (tops-shirt and trousers with the same type of fabric and color), *bintol* (woven cloth, songket, or sarong), and *kupiah* (cap). The *Dana Dana Bolmong* is presented with the accompaniment of Bolaang Mongondow ethnic music consisting of *gambus*, *marwas*, and a rhyme of poetry (*pantun*). *Marwas* is a kind of small tambourine, which usually consists of three pieces or more for each performance. It is sounded in an ensemble with the strumming of *gambus* and the rhymes. The *gambus* player is also the *pantun* chanter. The rhymes or the poetry differ from one presentation to another, to be adapted for the purpose of the event. In more secular events, the poems deliver some funny and witty stories or sentences for the intimate occasions or folk parties. While at the events such as *aqiqah* and circumcision, the poem mostly contains advices and prayers (Potabuga, 2020).

Performed by only male dancers is the principle of the *Dana Dana* and it has not changed until today. The form of the duet male dancer is also a part of the influence of Islamic ethics, in accordance with the ethical and moral reasonableness in Indonesian Muslim society which separates men from women in several contexts, such as places of worship, events, and even workplaces. The *Dana Dana* shows its nature of abstract through symbolic movements, a linear structure with gradual dramatics without narrative tendencies, complicated but subtle steps and loops, and the formation of vague. It manifests the presence that is organic and spectacle-free from artificial elements of modern life. The abstraction process in dance is '...to remove, separate from ... isolates and refines such essences from life. There is no intention to copy external reality ... from a comprehensive macrocosmic world, the artist singles out a specific facet and works with it, exploring its subtleties and shadings, organically forms it, and presents it to the viewer (Blom, 1989, p. 125).

The overall structure of *Dana Dana* is really focused on the kinesthetic response, so that this dance is so intensively processing the movements of the legs and feet to embody the pattern of alternating back and forth. Abstraction is made significantly by the presence of pure motion, as well as the emphasis on the design and composition which – to borrow the term Blom & Chaplin – “against” the dramatic content, negates plot, avoids emotional tones and representational forms (Blom, 1989, p. 126). The ethnic music ensemble accompanying the *Dana Dana* is a major aural aspect to convey the ultimate aesthetic. The rhyme of the poetry, however, will change according to the purpose of the event. The beats of *marwas* jerk occasionally, creating the rhythmic and dynamics, while the strumming of *gambus* and the rhyme more moving within a flat-monotonous tones. The abstract of the dance becomes the most settled part of the presentation, intensifies the

chanting of the poems into a kind of prayer rite whose meaning penetrates into the inner movement of the dancer in steps and turns.

The intensity of rotation, and the back and forth in straight-line space always ends in the forward and backward directions. Some variations produce the profile poses that are only momentary because they are immediately greeted with a full or a half twist of steps and the body. This reminds us upon the spiritual dimension hidden in the typical of the Sufi dance; the dervish or whirling dance, where the spin dominates the whole dance and composition. The loops in the *Dana Dana* are constructed through the gestures that play the tension space between the lift and the footsteps within the link of *marwas* beats and *gambus*' melodies. The integrity of this form of presentation is the best achievement of inner expression. In its nature of abstraction, the *Dana Dana* continues to embody the human relationship between the quality of motion in the processing of space, time, form, and the culture and social conditions of the Bolaang Mongondow. In the structure of movement and the simple form of the dance, the personal style of the actors, both dancers and musicians, is very crucial. The personal style supported by a certain competence in executing the movements elevates the abstract of the *Dana Dana Bolmong* into its unique characteristics – familiar but exotic at the same time.

### **Internalizing the Aesthetic through Conceptual Exploration in Contemporary Choreography**

In teaching choreography, I always try to encourage and direct young choreographers to find their own significant organic forms in creating dance. The studio process of preparing contemporary dance is guided towards new experiences using Alma Hawkins's methods that is implemented along with the hermeneutic realm to embrace the ontological aesthetic. It is an integral, experimental way for creating dances and analyzing important aspects of the choreographic process. Hawkins' concept focuses on the creative process that puts forward the experience, as a physical process integrated with philosophical, psychological, and lesson plans through choreographic stages that define sensitivity, meaning, and inner understanding as the main stimulants for creating dance.

The class is designed to be an integral learning space, where students use their cognitive and praxis for the creative process of making dances. Learning activities through this method aim to provide an environment that can motivate individuals to find themselves in dance creations that have "content" while it is also aesthetically satisfying. Hawkins believes that creativity of the dancers, especially the beginners, can be fostered by encouraging them to explore their inner sources and become aware of the forms and meanings of concepts. In this way, choreographers are motivated to develop further motion ideas, determine their respective directions, and organize their own creative activities (2003, pp. 88–89).



This method parallels the Gadamerian aesthetic conceptualized from his philosophical hermeneutics. Like Hawkins, Gadamer believes that human creativity has always been a mystery that should be treated as a challenge to artistic development. Creativity is a continuous process of search and discovery, which involves the complexity of human experience as a circle of self-existence (DaSilva Gusmao, 2012, p. 94).

The visual structure of *Dana Dana Bolmong* is analysed to find its aesthetic values, while the transcendental dimension brings the aesthetics into intrinsic and ontological terms. In this way, the understanding of *Dana Dana Bolmong*'s aesthetic is managed through a creative process circle which consists of observing (and feeling), deep understanding, imagination, manifestation, and formation. As I found that referencing Hawkins is not always sufficient in tutoring young choreographers within provided time, I simplify the choreographic operation or to reconnect with the more familiar model: *Improvising, Developing, Evaluating, and Assimilating* (IDEA). Following Lavender, I emphasize that the IDEA is not a method of creating dance, and by doing the circle means that the choreographer must experience the artistic work as an intrinsic operation of dance making, preparing to each of which challenges would have been arise at any time, rather than imposing the rigid progress of stages (Lavender, 2009, pp. 171–172). In their respective individual tasks, the students reach each own progress depends on their responses to the *Dana Dana*, whether she/he can embrace the intrinsic values of the dance or more involved in kinesthetic processing. Within the exploration space is directed, the “play” between Hawkins’ instruction and Lavender’s model allows the students to discover their tendencies.

This research limits the choreographic process to the initial formation stage, to see the development of the work concept in its most practical form. This is done within the consideration on implementing the subject of *Koreografi Tari 3* in the odd semester starting in September 2021. The choreographic process only lasted eight meetings which were conducted semi-intensively in three to four hours each session. The meetings are also held under the conditions of medium-scale Covid-19 social restrictions, which recommended the implementation of blended learning through offline and online. However, some significant artistic processes are executed in the studio basis that require direct interaction between researcher/lecturer and the choreographers, and amongst the choreographers as they are aware about the interdependence on each other as dance students.

In every session of learning, each student must have completed series of tasks to show the progress. Although they help each other outside the class, and even they often overcome some technical problem together, the results of exploring the same dance material more reveal the variety of movements rather than the similarity. It is because the centered kinesthetic stimuli provide the rich

development of movement vocabularies through exploring the aspects of *space – time – effort*. The choreographer must choose three phrases from the overall phrases of *Dana Dana*. She/he then develops each original phrase from its aspect of *space*, aspect of *time*, and aspect of *effort*, so there will be at least nine generative phrases that are different yet have significant character in common. As these nine generative phrases are again explored and elaborated, the student finally collects the derivative phrases that can be constructed into sequences. Afterwards, she/he intuitively think about the theme, exploring the theme and makes a proper structure of it. The process probably seems less ideal to be claimed as an art project or choreographic project as it should be. Nevertheless, such process is contextually worthwhile for my students to arise self-confidence in truly “moving” their bodies, while at the same time they consciously internalizing the aesthetic value of the dance and living in it through dance structure.

To enrich the students’ sight towards the contemporary concept, I direct them to do the improvisation and exploration out-of-door using the gardens and courtyards. It is also to bring their feelings closer to the original context of the presentment of *Dana Dana Bolmong*. For some reason, only three of the six phrases of the *Dana Dana* are succesfully explored, as shown by figures below:



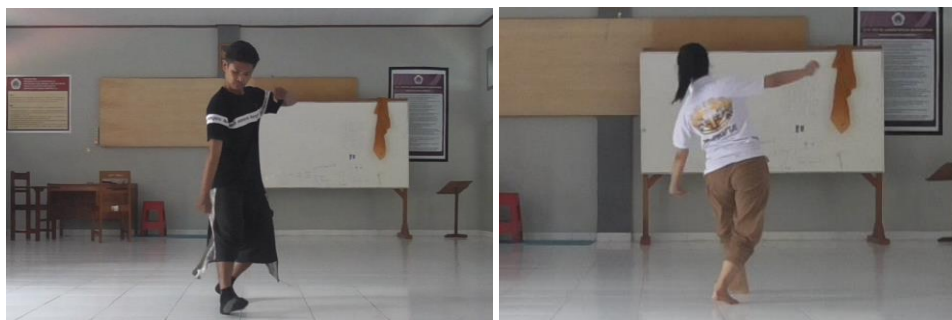
**Figure 1.** The original presentation of *Dana Dana Bolmong*, taken by Dr. Kaulder Waltren (Swedish ethnographer) while visiting Bolaang Mongondow around 1913 – 1917  
Source: Document of Tegela, Kotamobagu, 2020



**Figure 2.** Exploration based on the original presentation of *Dana Dana Bolmong* in the context of the garden environment as a studio  
Source: Document of Sitharesmi, Desa Huntu Gorontalo, 2021



**Figure 3.** The basic phrase of *Dana Dana* or *ragam dasar*, the dominant movement performed at the beginning (opening) and repeated in each transition to the next movement.  
Source: Document of Sitharesmi, Gorontalo, 2021



**Figure 4.** Some poses developed from *ragam dasar* to represent or simply articulate the 'journey', which is favorable to imply the variety of spatial design  
Source: Document of Sitharesmi, Gorontalo, 2021



**Figure 5.** *ragam hormat* (the gesture of salute), becomes the favorite phrase to explore. This gesture is intended as a symbolic tribute to all whom present and involved in the event.  
Source: Document of Sitharesmi, Gorontalo, 2021



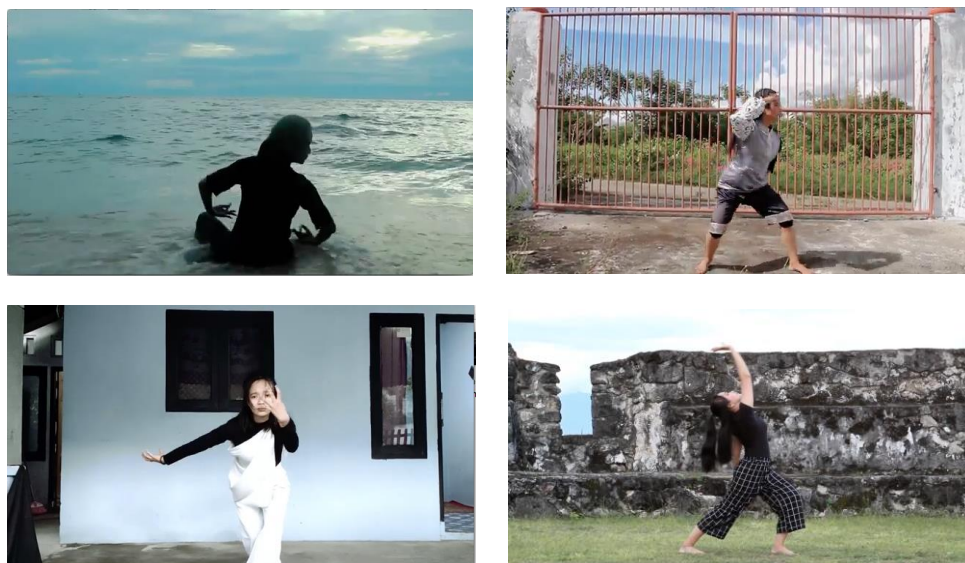
**Figure 6.** some poses of movement development from the *ragam hormat* (the gesture of salute), which is the most dominant in students' exploration  
Source: Document of Sitharesmi, Gorontalo, 2021



**Figure 7.** some poses of movement development from exploring the essence of ‘spinning’, which bring the initial articulation of spiritual realm – a *sufi dance* like  
Source: Document of Sitharesmi, Gorontalo, 2021

The choreographers are strongly advised to accompany their work with a “choreographic diary” (rather than a ready-read manuscript), which implies the background, improvisational experiences, and artistic tendencies, as well as the attitude to life from which the ideas of their works originate. This is to underline that the human mind and body are one unit, so that a choreographer is not only skilled in moving and dancing, but also able to think reflectively. Within a work process like this, choreographers are able to create artistic and innovative works that can also make meaningful changes for themselves, the community and the environment where they live (Murgiyanto, 2018, p. 256). Although the research does not enforce the ready-made dance piece, each student-participant produces a complete structure of a 7-minute dance presentation. Surely the presentation is a raw model to elaborate in further artistic works, but it is done for now as they show their ‘new’ understanding on the concept of contemporary choreography. Using digital camera and practical editing tool such as *CapCut*, *Power Direct*, and *Vegas Pro*, the student submits their works online.





**Figure 8.** Four of the ten students' final assessment, show what has been accomplished through the process of new understanding upon the concept of contemporary: organic dance movements, using environmental space rather than conventional, and the attempt of personal features

Source: Document of Sitharesmi, captured from video submitting, Gorontalo, 2021

Other works can also be accessed at <https://youtu.be/cJWqvEANrIk>,  
<https://youtu.be/6UumuVOhoIE>, <https://youtu.be/ecN7PCgz3iM>,  
<https://youtu.be/TeylDbwSPFE>

## DISCUSSION

The nature of art is always related to what causes it to "exist", which is manifested through the integral bond of the faculties of the artists, works of art, and audiences (supporting communities). Thus, the freedom of inspiration itself must meet the social world in which the artist and his work are rooted. Emphasizing on Gadamer's ontological aesthetics, Siswanto (2016, p. 66) believes that art is not a world that is isolated and separated from life, but a world bound by the context of the wanderings of human history. Gonçalves asserted that art at the level of deep understanding is very likely to be used as a space of relations, whose effects can work well when produced and performed in a neutral arena. The power of understanding through and in art can emerge one's emotional sharpness and critical thinking in building relationships with the world around (2016, p. 9). The harmonious relationship between the soul (inner depth), mind (analytical power), and body (practical health) should be the foundation in building relations between the world of education and the arts. It confirms the intercultural experiences that can make educational institutions the correct context for learning, and to understand the existence of humans as global citizens.

The current reality is that art education in Indonesia often deviates from its concept. One of them is domination towards the students because the educators do not apply the right method for the art learning process. Instead, they present themselves as “masters” who always know everything, and treat the students as obedient objects (as an obedient subordinates) (Rachmat, 2017, pp. 41–42). Art educators with certain agendas often emphasise structural hegemony and superiority including bringing religious advice and beliefs but providing not enough space for creativity and the experience of artistic activity itself. This is where the function of art is treated pragmatically and understood only at a superficial level, because the character of the students is directed to become a generation that is religious and obedient, but far from being smart and critical. Hegemony, mainly due to dogmatic doctrine in the learning process, gradually fades personal identity, which will eventually disappear altogether. Art education institutions only produce art teachers with low skills and less competent in "art", which is far from understanding the universality of art, including ethics and aesthetics.

Whereas art should be at a neutral level of deep understanding, based on the praxis and thinking of humanism. Art is very likely to be used as a space for multicultural relations whose effects can work well, only if it appears in an arena that is free of dogma and hegemony. The power of understanding through and in art can bring out a person's emotional sharpness and critical thinking in building relationships with the world around them. The harmonious relationship between the soul (inner depth), mind (analytic power), and body (practical health) must be the basis in building a relationship between the world of education and the arts. Thus, affirming intercultural experiences that can make educational institutions the right context for learning, and for understanding human existence as global citizens. It is important to point out the hermeneutic strategy to embrace more contemporary forms of practice and how to understand practice based on the intentions and the idea of the artist (Atkinson, 2002, p. 35).

The aesthetic value presented by *Dana Dana Bolmong* contains an orientation of extrinsic meaning and value that actually opens its intrinsic aspect which was originally hidden. The interpretation towards tradition is dynamic and dialectical, in which the hermeneutical relation allows the students to interpret the work of art, and not retrieve the artist's original meaning. In their own works in creating dance, they are involved in the production of new meaning, which also evoked by their historical, social and cultural positioning. Thus, more than developing skills and technique, they are engaged in a creative dialogue and extension within their local making contexts. The concept of contemporary choreography in Gorontalo is aimed at embracing the essential aspects of tradition, history and the nature of the *Dana Dana Bolmong* material with a new artistic understanding. Contemporary forms are expected to become a hybrid manifestation

that absorbs the intrinsic value of the dance so that its existence moves forward towards new direction. Understanding the contemporary concept itself is achieved through an artistic work process that is not oriented to the final form as a result. The contemporary dance embodies the concept of choreography that presents a continuous unified understanding upon the aesthetic value of traditional dance, so that it becomes contemporary by itself (Sitharesmi, 2019b, pp. 217–218).

The aesthetic codes of the Bolaang Mongondow regional dance can become the forerunner of the dance style at the northern part of Sulawesi. The dance style will be a sympathetic presence for the uniqueness and regional characteristics in multicultural relations and communication. Furthermore, the *Dana Dana Bolmong's* transcendental dimension brings aesthetics into the intrinsic and ontological realm. Such traditional dance's essentials must always be "updated", revived within a fresher breath, one of which is by continuously exploring their development potentials, while still presenting the noble values of cultural heritage that should be preserved. In this way, appreciation of local arts, traditions, and culture can be circular, the end point at the top of the circle is reconstructed and becomes the starting point for the next circular process. And so on.

## CONCLUSION

The aesthetic value of *Dana Dana Bolmong* is presented through the dance component and the form of its presentation, which can only be understood in the context of an aesthetic experience as well. The Bolaang Mongondow community itself is not necessarily able to directly recognize the aesthetic dimension of dance which has been representing the existence of Islam for hundreds of years in this archipelago. Internalizing the aesthetic value of the dance into a creative-based learning of making contemporary dance not only allows the students-choreographers to recognize and understand the existence of this dance. It is also introducing and advocating the aesthetic value of became the main stimulus for the concept of creating dance as well as facilitating the space for the student's creativity. The students can fairly learn on tradition and to actively appreciate the local culture. The aesthetic of *Dana Dana* brings the distinctive features in the forms of choreographic development, enrich the student's experience to produce genuine vocabularies, and embraces new artistic understanding, which can then lead to the transcendental realm of creativity.

Through the studio process, although only halfway through due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the students have been able to recognize and identify each component of the movement that will soon become a solo dance piece. The students are also able to give meaning to the term "contemporary", which refers to an understanding of the sustainability for every creative work process. The work



involves relational aspects amongst individuals within the cultural background. This will be more understood by the end of the process when the final product is successfully achieved. The creation does not have to be in the form of a ready-made, or a product intended for aesthetic performance on a conventional stage. However, the concept of choreography will still be accountable. The creative process itself will be the principle of the validity of the basic competencies to be obtained in the learning achievement plan. In addition, the manuscript of the work that is included will also be a complement to the validation, not only to be worthy of being called “scientific”, but rather to train the students, these young aspiring choreographers, to be able to explain the background, beliefs, artistic tendencies, and way of life from which the idea of creating dance comes from. Through this, students are able to underline that the mind and body is a holistic unity that makes a person both dancing and thinking critically and reflectively.

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