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THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF KEMBANG URA DANCE IN THE SIDAKARYA MASK TRADITION: AN ETHNO-AESTHETIC STUDY

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The Kembang Ura Dance is a contemporary work reinterpreting the flower-scattering ritual of the Sidakarya Mask, a vital component of Balinese Hindu ceremonies. This study examines how ritual actions are transformed into aesthetic choreography without losing spiritual depth or profaning sacred symbols. Employing a qualitative method with ethno-aesthetic and ethnochoreological approaches, the research analyzes the dance's structure, creative process, and significance. The findings reveal that the dance transcends mere movement; it articulates symbols of purification, universal compassion, and ritual blessing. These meanings are embedded in its choreographic structure, vintage-inspired costumes, and its role as a ritual completer of *Yadnya*. The study concludes that Kembang Ura Dance serves as a model for ritual-based creative dance, successfully balancing modern aesthetics with the continuity of sacred values within the evolving landscape of contemporary Balinese culture.

Keywords: Kembang Ura Dance, Symbolic Meaning, Ethno-Aesthetics, Flower-Scattering Tradition, Sidakarya Mask

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INTRODUCTION

Balinese dance traditions are ontologically entrenched within a sacred-aesthetic paradigm wherein *sundaram* and *siwam* constitute an indivisible unity, framing artistic praxis as *yadnya*, a relational medium bridging human, communal and transcendent realms (Ruastiti et al., 2021a; Rai S. et al., 2023; Sudirga et al., 2024). The dancing body functions as a corporeal semiotic apparatus articulating cosmology, ethics, and spiritual intentionality (Schechner, 2013; Castronova et al., 2009; Ruastiti & Pradana, 2020; Trepte, 2013; Hamera et al., 2011), necessitating an ethno-aesthetic lens to interrogate movement-meaning-context interrelations. Within this framework, the Sidakarya Mask occupies a pivotal locus as ritual completer of *yadnya*, embodying cosmological balance (Geertz, 1973; Turner, 1969; Rai S. et al., 2020), with *kembang ura* operating as a performative signifier mediating visible-invisible worlds while signifying purification, blessing, and compassion (Danesi, 2004; Smith et al., 1997; Ruastiti et al., 2020).

Its contemporary reinterpretation as *kembang ura* dance exemplifies ritual revitalization in modern choreography (Bandem, 2013; Hadi et al., 2018; Rai S. et al., 2023; Sudirga et al., 2024; Pradana, 2018), yet this aesthetic transmutation engenders critical tension. Ritual meaning is actively renegotiated, not displaced, within aesthetic spheres (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Pradana, 2012). Despite this, a scholarly lacuna persists, extant literature privileges classical genres while undertheorizing newly created ritual-based choreographies like *kembang ura* dance through community-grounded ethno-aesthetic approaches (Kaeppler, 2000; Emigh & Manogue, 2024), risking reductionist interpretations that obscure the nexus of sacred symbolism, embodied practice, and contemporary innovation. This study addresses that gap by positioning *kembang ura* dance as a critical case to elucidate how *kembang ura* symbolism is rearticulated through choreographic structure and cultural context.

The main questions are: 1) What form does the *kembang ura* dance take?; 2) How did the *kembang ura* dance come about?; 3) What is the significance of the *kembang ura* dance?. Its novelty resides in synthesizing contemporary creation with ritual symbolism via an ethno-aesthetic framework, thereby contributing to global discourses on: (1) performance ontology. Interrogating epistemological criteria through which choreographic form is apprehended as art; (2) artistic genealogy. Tracing historical-material conditions of choreographic emergence and cultural transmission; and (3) axiological function.

Examining how ethno-aesthetic significance and socio-ritual efficacy are negotiated within evolving performative traditions. Collectively, this inquiry transcends localized ethnography to inform comparative scholarship on ritual-based creativity, embodied epistemologies, and the dynamic interplay of tradition-innovation in contemporary performance cultures worldwide. Conceptually, this study is grounded in three complementary perspectives: ethno-aesthetics, ritual theory, and symbolic anthropology. Ethno-aesthetics is used to analyze the dance's aesthetic form within the local value system of Sidakarya, ritual theory is employed to examine the transformation of flower scattering from ritual practice into dance and symbolic anthropology is used to interpret the meanings embodied in movement and performance structure.

RESEARCH METHOD

Informants were selected through purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement, cultural authority, and experiential knowledge of Kembang Ura Dance and the Sidakarya ritual tradition. They included the choreographer, artistic mentors, customary leaders, and members of the supporting community, because these actors were considered capable of providing relevant, in-depth, and contextually grounded information regarding the form, emergence, and significance of the dance.

Data analysis within this exegesis was effectuated through a descriptive-interpretative regimen artfully calibrated to alchemize raw ethnographic detritus into ontologically unassailable elucidations. Inaugurating the sequence, primordial datasets. Gleaned from performative vigils, profound colloquies, and archival dissections, underwent methodical orchestration. These repositories were thencewinnowed, ontologized, and dialectically arrayed vis-à-vis the probe's ternary fulcra. The phenotypic essence of Kembang Ura Dance, its phylogenetic provenance, and its noetic gravitas amid the eponymous community's habitus. Eschewing reductive technics of empirical stewardship, the analytic trajectory burgeoned into an intentional semiotic peregrination, wherein eidetic cognizance was ceaselessly diffracted through the kaleidoscopic imperatives of investigative aporiae. The hierarchized corpora were subsequently amalgamated with germane secondary archives traversing performing arts, ethnochoreology, ritual ethnology, cultural exegesis, and semiology. This syncretic stratagem proved indispensable, for the undertaking transcended mere phenomenal cartography of the dance to interpellate field-born revelations within panoramic savant dialectics that venerate qualitative ontognosis for plumbing aesthetic, figural, and performative noumena impervious to arithmetical subjugation (Denzin, 2018), conjoined with contemporaneous ontologies construing artistic praxis as efflorescent cultural codices in ceaseless hermeneutic strife (Emigh & Manogue, 2024; Fischer-Lichte, 2008). Mutually effulgent, these empirical and adventitious luminosities impelled the hermeneutic arc from insular descriptive tableaux to axiomatically fortified apprehensions.

Upon the interpretative plane, theoretical instrumentalities were appropriated not as superfluous conceptual frippery but as pragmatic engines for datum decipherment and the smithing of evidentially fortified rejoinders to epistemic pivots. Ethnochoreology was summoned to vivisect motile frameworks, enactive rhythms, choreographic symphonies, and the chiasmic interplay of corporeal flux and sonic harmonics, harmonious with the maxim that dance embodies a kinetic semiotics moored to societal stratigraphies, cosmogonic narratologies, and diachronic tapestries (Kaeppeler, 2000; Ruastiti et al., 2021). Ethno-aesthetics was enlisted to decrypt endogenous aesthetics of comeliness, effusiveness, and valuational teleologies peculiar to the Desa Pekraman Sidakarya polity, transmuted Kembang Ura Dance from prosaic choreographic schematism into a culturally anastomosed aesthetic apotheosis. The trope of incarnate gnosis reinforced this armature by positing the dancer's soma as a palimpsestic archive and transmissive medium for ritual reminiscences and tropic encipherments (Hamera et al., 2011). Fundamentally, the paramount hermeneutic bastion reposed upon symbol theory and reception theory. The former was marshaled to explicate the figural armory immanent in the dance, gestic signals, choreo-thematic curlicues, petal-dispersal evocations, rite emblems, and manifold performative appurtenances thereby disclosing how Kembang Ura Dance proclaims semiotics of ablution, grace, theophany, and cultural eternity within the Sidakarya lineage. Reception theory, in contrapunto, scrutinized the noetic assimilations, construals, and estimations of these figurae by choreographic visionaries, artistic tutelaries, customary suzerains, and communal confrères. Through this binocular lens, the dance's essence was delineated not exclusively via immanent semiotic husks but via extrinsic horizons of cognition, societal ratification, and cultural hegemony. Bolstering this gloss, ritual and autochthonous cultural doctrines were convened to illuminate the dance's nativity from the reanimated petal-offering liturgy of the Sidakarya Mask heritage, alongside the perpetuation of its figural, pneumatic, and gregarious potencies within Desa Pekraman Sidakarya's ritual sympoiesis—where signification inexorably congeals at the crossroads of sociotopical antinomies and axiological suzerainties (Geertz, 1973; Ruastiti et al., 2021a). The observational meridian was shored by the axiom that participatory enmeshment preeminently seizes enactive penumbrae eluding logocentric capture (Schechner, 2013).

Supplementary to this apparatus, the analytic workflow was abetted by ChatGPT as a subservient computational adjunct, preeminently for facilitating the systematization of qualitative accretions, augmenting philological lucidity, honing thematic perspicuity, and

assaying the integrity of exegetical expositions. Nonetheless, ChatGPT was precluded from fabricating primordial data, confecting empirical artifacts, or supplanting the investigator's adjudicative discernment. All cardinal data emanated solely from the researcher's fieldwork observances, intensive dialogues, and documentary troves, with every construal, classification, and dénouement subjected to the researcher's exacting scrutiny and corroboration. Ergo, no artifice of datum contrivance, adulteration, or synthetic genesis transpired across the inquiry's continuum. Via this stratified analytic palimpsest, theory constituted a semiotic lynchpin vaulting empirical harvest, ancillary lore, figural schemata, receptive topoi, and synoptic cultural tropology, thereby ordinalizing, situating, and scientizing adjudications of each investigative node.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Form of Presentation of Kembang Ura Dance

Kembang Ura Dance manifests as an emergent choreographic artifact, deeply anchored in the floral oblation rites intrinsic to Sidakarya Mask enactments, yet transfigured into a meditative aesthetic paradigm. Its presentational modality eschews verbatim replication of liturgical praxis, favoring instead a tropic metamorphosis whereby ritual semiosis migrates from unmediated rite to incarnate artistic simulacrum. Through the lens of symbol theory, this transposition proves seminal, as the dance forgoes mimetic reenactment of ritual kinesics, electing to resemantify them within a novel performative architectonic. The dancer's soma emerges as a tropic conduit, rendering palpable the axiological cargoes of lustration, benediction, piety, and cultural perpetuity via sensorial immediacy. Within performance scholarship, such configurations constitute liminal arenas of arbitrage between rite and poesis, wherein signification endures artistic refraction to engender an alternate vector of cultural interlocution (Brown, 2003; Alexander, 2004; Drewal, 1991; Ruastiti & G.Y.K. Kharisma, 2020).

In toto, Kembang Ura Dance evinces a polished, ascetic, and ruminative aesthetic vector. The choreographer's abjuration of bombastic dramaturgy betokens a deliberate tropic election: the work solicits not visceral spectatorship via pyrotechnic display, but contemplative immersion. Symbolically, this austerity itself accrues import, emblemizing interiority, sanctimony, and liturgical rigor contra histrionic surfeit. This architectonic tactic resonates with ethno-aesthetic doctrines that situs beauty not in raw sensory amplitude but in the consonance of formal equilibrium, cultural ethos, and collective sensorium (Kaeppler, 2000; Mamvuto, 2014). Reception theory elucidates how such restraint modulates the receptive horizon: audiences are beckoned not to devour the opus as diversionary choreography but to inhabit it as a gradual unfolding of tropic profundity and ambient affect.

The dance's structural morphology unfolds linearly and teleologically from serene prefatory ambiance, through a medial dominion of floral dispersal semiotics, to a valedictory contemplative equipoise. This teleology echoes ritual teleodynamics, privileging procession over paroxysmal apex. Ritual anthropology discerns herein analogs to Turner's pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal junctures (Turner, 1969), albeit transmuted into modulations of kinetic timbre, rhythmic cadences, and tropic saturation sans overt ceremonial mimesis. Symbol theory decodes this progression as choreographic inscription of rite passage: inception sacralizes the semiotic arena, climax catalyzes metamorphosis, and denouement reequilibrates via reflexive closure. Reception theory illuminates its non-narrative orchestration of perceptual attunement, guiding spectators not through diegetic pursuit but through affective acclimation via pulse, iterance, and milieu aligning with Fischer-Lichte and Jain's (2008) insight that rite derived spectacles exalt autopoietic transfiguration over mimetic dramatics.

Kembang Ura Dance's kinesic lexicon privileges understated gesturality, suffused with pliant, disciplined, and exquisite Legong inflections. The floral scattering trope reigns as axial

seme, reiterated and variegated across metric variance, vectorial orientation, and spatial strata. Ethnochoreology frames such iterance not as rote formalism but as embodied reinforcement of signification (Kaeppler, 2000). Symbol theory parses the recurrent dispersal as choreographic nexus of multiplex ritual semes lustration, oblation, benison, and cosmic karuna evoking not mere praxis but a holistic cosmogony linking somatic agency, hallowed topography, and numinous beyond. Orientational facings, manual gradations, and metronomic restraint semiotize sacral intentionality. Thus, the dancer's physique functions as optic orison, with embodied performance studies explicating its role as generative locus for semiotic production, repository, and propagation (Hamera et al., 2011). Reception theory posits that motif recurrence anchors interpretive constancy, inducting viewers affectively into its emotive and noetic core.

The habiliment and cosmetic schema of Kembang Ura Dance consciously evoke archaic or canonical patina, demarcating alterity from modernist aesthetics fixated on luster and epidermal ostentation. Chromatic palettes, tactile weaves, and silhouettes exalt spareness over sumptuosity. Ethno-aesthetics construes attire not as mere adornment but as axiomatic signifier of valuational compass (Van Damme, 1996). Symbol theory gleans from this visual penury indices of humility, sacral gravity, and liturgical fealty, buttressing the opus's repudiation of ornamental vulgarity. Cosmetic design prioritizes subdued devotionality over histrionic persona, amplifying choreographic ritual ambience. This accords with tenets that in traditional arts, vestment and maquillage comprise integral semiotic nodes stabilizing holistic purport (Amirulloh & Badaruddin, 2024). Reception theory avers that these optics precondition cultural cognition. Canonical hues summon interpretive frameworks of veneration and continuity, obviating novelty or sensationalism. Thus, costume and cosmetics transcend visual adjuncts to steer communal exegesis toward Kembang Ura Dance as aesthetic resuscitation of ritual anamnesis, buttressed by cultural warrant. The ensuing depiction delineates Sidakarya Mask as the primordial tropic fount for Kembang Ura Dance's genesis.



Figures 1. the Kembang Ura Dance

(Documentation: Galih, 2025)

The sonic substrate of Kembang Ura Dance eschews hegemony as a dramatic propulsor, functioning instead as a tropic and affective matrix that undergirds the opus's ruminative ethos. Its equable metricity, modulated amplitudes, and deliberate auditory currents redirect perceptual focus from histrionic fervor toward the incremental revelation of signification via kinesic unfoldment. Symbol theory posits the music not as ancillary to somatic praxis but as an acoustic semiotics co-constitutive of the liturgical ambience wherein the dance's purport resides. The sonic parsimony symbolically amplifies topoi of interiority, sanctimony, and pneumatic asceticism, thereby synchronizing auditory timbre with the semantic nucleus of its progenitor floral dispersal heritage. Performance ethnomusicology

construes such sonics as architects of rite ambience rather than chariots of melodramatic surfeit (Frishkopf, 2011; Rai S. et al., 2023; Sudirga et al., 2024). Reception theory elucidates this orchestration as a modulator of interpretive horizons: spectators are not impelled toward suspensive crescendo but inducted into vigilant audition and reflexive complicity, wherein semiosis accretes via tonal persistence, sonic austerity, and ceremonial penumbra.

The emergent dramatic ambience thus inclines toward introspection and contemplation, antithetical to theatricality, expressivity, or agonistics. Dramatic frictions in Kembang Ura Dance derive not from opposition, alacrity, or apogee but from the languid aggregation of tropic potency. Symbol theory renders this ambience consequential, denoting a transposition of dramatic impetus from extrinsic kinetics to intrinsic reverberance. Dramatized herein is not intersubjective strife but the profundation of liturgical cognizance through aesthetic morphology. The dance thereby erects a tropic dramaturgy wherein quiescence, temperance, and graduated advance semiotize spiritual focalization and ceremonial probity resonant with Balinese rite arts' conflation of aesthetic encounter, pneumatic telos, and somatic piety (Ruastiti et al., 2021; Schechner, 2013). Reception theory avers that this contemplative milieu preconditions cultural apprehension: audiences are emplaced not as spectacle devourers but as exegetes cohabiting a communal tropic domain. Semiosis emerges not via explicit récit or affective exhibition but through incremental discernment of ritual tonality, tropic restraint, and devotional grain.

The triadic hermeneutic of wiraga, wirama, and wirasa unveils Kembang Ura Dance's paramount virtue in the equilibrated synthesis of corporeal technics, rhythmic coherence, and expressive profundity. Wiraga manifests in lucid, disciplined, and exquisite kinetic rendition; wirama in the consonant interplay of gestural phrasing and sonic escort; wirasa in serene somatic demeanor, regulated vigor, and intentional concentration. Symbol theory elevates these beyond technocratic metrics to tropic barometers of cultural worth: wiraga emblemizes somatic discipline, wirama consonance and taxis, wirasa sacral affect's interiorization. The dancer's physique thus transcends virtuosic ostentation to incarnate a valorized performative ontology, affirming the *wiraga-wirama-wirasa* paradigm's perdurance for glossing neoteric Balinese dance poiesis tethered to rite-cultural sensibility (Soedarsono, 1999). Reception theory explicates their fusion as the locus of communal validation: esteemed not isolated prowess but the confluence of technical finesse, liturgical equipoise, and emotive authenticity.

Wirasa attains especial salience in Kembang Ura Dance, eschewing vehement affective effusion, mimetic faciality, or hypertrophic extension for postural disposition, energetic stasis, and modulated sentiment flux. This intimates that in rite-derived choreography, pathos internalizes as focalized concentration and pneumatic vigilance, per ritual aesthetic inquiries (Emigh, 2009). Symbol theory decodes this tempered pathos as inherently significant: serenity indexes interior devotion, equilibrium ethical and liturgical rigor. Reception theory posits audience discernment of wirasa as hinging not on patent emotives but on cultural acuity to parse understated embodiment as theophanic immanence. Ergo, wirasa constitutes a convergence of tropic armature and collective hermeneutics, legible solely within interpretive communalité.

Djelantik's triad of appearance, content, and presentation discloses Kembang Ura Dance's integral coalescence of visual morphology, tropic ideation, and enactive instantiation. Appearance inheres in understated kinesics, unadorned vestment, subdued cosmetics, and temperate sonic scaffolding. Content in tropic notions of lustration, benison, and cosmic empathy drawn from Sidakarya Mask floral rites. Presentation in dancers' pious bearing, serenity, and amplified ritual perspicacity (Djelantik, 1999). Symbol theory illuminates this trinity as relocating beauty from phenomenal superficialities to the symbiotic nexus of visible, signified, and enacted. Each perceptible facet integrates into an encompassing semiotics, rendering performance efficacious through rite anchorage. Reception theory accounts for

cultural intelligibility and aesthetic suasion. The opus registers not as mere formal delectation but as semantically cogent rite whose warrant accrues from tropic-performative consilience. Kembang Ura Dance's pulchritude thus resides in the symphonic rapport of form, purport, ambience, and apprehension a sine qua non of aesthetic triumph in traditionary reinvention that safeguards rite anamnesis sans cultural estrangement (Kaeppler, 2000).

2. Process of Developing the *Kembang Ura* Dance

The process of developing the flower-scattering tradition in Kembang Ura Dance does not occur as a mechanical transfer from ritual to stage, but rather as a selective and reflective process of cultural transformation. The flower-scattering practice, which originally functions as a ritual action within the Sidakarya Mask ceremony, is translated into the medium of dance through the reworking of movement, rhythm, and performance structure. In performance studies, such transformation is understood as recontextualization, namely the relocation of symbolic practices into a new context without severing their connection to original meanings (Schechner, 2013; Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

This transformation is not intended to represent ritual actions literally, but to articulate their symbolic essence through the dancer's body. The flower-scattering movement in *Kembang Ura* Dance can be interpreted as a ritual metaphor, as the choreography transforms acts of offering into aesthetic practices that are visually and emotionally perceptible in performance. This process demonstrates that ritual meaning is not static. It may shift in medium without losing its symbolic function, as long as its core values are preserved (Turner, 1969).

In this context, Kembang Ura Dance illustrates that ritual-based creative dance is not a form of secularization, but rather a strategy for the continuity of tradition. Through dance performance, the symbolic values associated with flower scattering are not reproduced in their original ritual function, but re-presented in an aesthetic form that may reinforce cultural understanding among dancers and local audiences. Several studies published in internationally reputable performing arts journals emphasize that the transformation of ritual into creative art can strengthen cultural memory, provided that the process is conducted consciously and grounded in traditional ethics (Bell, 1997; Emigh, 2009).

Nevertheless, this transformative process inevitably involves negotiation between sacred values and the demands of stage aesthetics. Kembang Ura Dance occupies an intermediary space between ritual and performance, requiring the choreographer to establish clear boundaries between artistic freedom and adherence to sacred values. This negotiation is evident in the choice of restrained movement quality, controlled tempo, and the deliberate avoidance of excessive dramatic effects. Such an approach corresponds with Fischer-Lichte's (2008) argument that ritual-based performances tend to prioritize the intensity of experience rather than visual spectacle.

This negotiation is further reflected in the decision to maintain *symbolic simplicity*. Rather than introducing decorative elements that might obscure meaning, Kembang Ura Dance foregrounds the repetition of the flower-scattering movement motif as the core symbolic focus. Repetition functions as a mechanism for reinforcing symbolic meaning rather than as empty reiteration (Schechner, 2013). In this way, stage aesthetics do not negate sacredness, but instead serve as a medium for articulating ritual values in artistic language.

The role of the choreographer constitutes a key factor in this development process. The choreographer acts not only as an artistic creator, but also as a *cultural mediator* who bridges ritual tradition and contemporary artistic expression. The choreographer's knowledge of the Sidakarya Mask ritual context and the customary ethics of the Sidakarya community forms the primary foundation for every artistic decision. In performing arts scholarship, such an artistic

role is understood as that of a *cultural agent* bearing responsibility for the continuity of symbolic meaning (Hamera, 2011).

The socio-cultural milieu of Desa Pekraman Sidakarya serves as a critical substrate for the genesis of the Kembang Ura Dance. As a customary entity upholding the Sidakarya Mask tradition, the village furnishes a symbolic ecosystem wherein ritual-based choreographic innovation becomes legible. As mentioned by Putu Parama, choreographer of the Kembang Ura dance art 03/15/2025 in South Denpasar :

“...No, not a direct copy at all. In the Mask ceremony, flower scattering is a sacred act. Done quickly during the trance, to purify and offer to the gods. It's part of the real ritual, with the pemangku and barong present. For the dance, I had to rethink it completely. I slowed it down, made the gestures softer and more flowing, like Legong but with deeper meaning. The hands open slowly, petals fall gently. This way, it's not pretending to be the ritual, but showing its heart: purification, blessing, devotion. If I copied exactly, it would lose the feeling on stage. Stage needs beauty that people can feel inside, not just see..”

Putu Parama, the choreographer, posits that the floral dispersion motif was not conceived as a mimetic reproduction of ritual praxis. Rather, the sacred enactment underwent aesthetic transfiguration, mediated through tempo modulation, gestural refinement, and fluid kinetic texture to facilitate the stage-bound articulation of intrinsic values, namely purification, blessing, and devotion. This indicates that the dance functions via symbolic transposition, preserving ritual significance at the semantic level while altering its performative manifestation. Consequently, Kembang Ura Dance is best conceptualized as an aesthetic hermeneutic of ritual symbolism rather than a direct extension of ceremonial practice. However, definitive claims regarding communal legitimation necessitate empirical substantiation from customary or ritual authorities.

3. Symbolic Meaning of Kembang Ura Dance

Kembang Ura Dance produces symbolic meanings that do not operate on a single interpretative layer, but function as a *system of signs* linking the body, ritual, and Balinese cosmology. From ethno-aesthetic and symbolic anthropological perspectives, the meaning of dance is not solely attached to movement forms, but emerges from the relationship between bodily action and the belief systems that surround it. Accordingly, Kembang Ura Dance should be understood as a symbolic practice that articulates ritual values through an aesthetic language collectively experienced and internalized (Geertz, 1973; Kaeppler, 2000).

These symbolic meanings are primarily concentrated in the flower-scattering (*kembang ura*) practice that forms the core of the choreography. Within performance studies, ritual symbols translated into dance do not lose their semantic power; instead, they undergo *intensification* through repetition, spatial organization, and the quality of bodily presence (Schechner, 2013; Fischer-Lichte, 2008). Thus, flower scattering in Kembang Ura Dance operates as a *performative symbol* that generates meaning through aesthetic experience rather than mere visual representation.

The symbolic reading of the flower-scattering action should be grounded in interview evidence. As the choreographer explained, the gesture was not conceived as a literal reproduction of ritual practice, but as an aesthetic transformation intended to convey purification, blessing, and devotion. As mention Putu Parama, choreographer of Kembang Ura Dance, interview, March 15, 2025, South Denpasar :

“...in the ritual, flowers are not just decoration. They are part of the offering, a way of expressing respect and purity before the sacred presence. In the dance, I did not want to copy the ritual exactly, but I wanted the audience to feel that same sense of blessing and devotion. That is why the flower-scattering movement is slow, soft, and careful, as if the body is offering something, not merely showing beauty..”

These data suggest that the movement operates symbolically through an embodied relation between the human performer, the floral medium, and the sacred values attached to offering. In this sense, the action may be interpreted as articulating a form of relational harmony rather than simply functioning as decorative choreography. In Balinese Hindu cosmology, flowers are positioned as sacred media symbolizing sincerity of intention and selfless offering. The act of scattering flowers represents the human aspiration to distribute well-being and virtue across the cosmos. Symbolic actions function as mechanisms for binding collective ethics within religious communities (Bell, 1997; Turner, 1969).

Within the context of Kembang Ura Dance, this meaning of universal compassion is articulated through gentle movement qualities, outward-oriented spatial directions, and controlled tempo. The dancer's body does not express individual emotion, but rather embodies an attitude of giving that is transpersonal in nature. Embodied performance perspectives suggest that such bodies function as media of value transmission, in which compassion is not verbally articulated but enacted through movement practice (Hamera, 2011).

Actions as characteristic of the liminal phase, during which individuals and communities undergo status transformation through ritual symbolism (Turner, 1969). Interview data substantiates that the symbolic resonance of floral dispersion in Kembang Ura Dance is anchored in the choreographer's understanding of ritual purification and oblation. Thus, the gesture constitutes an aesthetic reconfiguration of sacred symbolism rather than a mimetic reproduction of ritual liminality. As mentioned by Putu Parama, choreographer of the Kembang Ura dance art 03/15/2025 in South Denpasar :

“..In the ritual, flowers embody cleansing and sacrifice. I wanted this performance to mirror that spirit of sanctity and devotion, yet express it through a fresh creative lens rather than a direct imitation of the rite itself..”.

Empirical testimonies substantiate that the kinetic motif of floral dispersion within the Kembang Ura Dance eschews literal mimetic reproduction of ritual praxis, prioritizing instead a choreographic transmutation of sacral ethos into aesthetic morphology. Putu Parama's assertion that flowers 'embody cleansing and sacrifice' within the ritual sphere underscores that the movement's semiotic foundation is anchored in codified concepts of purification, oblation, and devotion. Concurrently, his emphasis on articulating these concepts through a 'novel hermeneutic framework' affirms that the performance aims not to replicate the rite's sacred functionality, but to recontextualize its intrinsic valor for theatrical consumption. Consequently, the floral motif functions as an aesthetic restructuring of sacred symbolism. The somatic apparatus serves as the conduit through which ritual semantics are transmuted into stylized kinesthesia. This facilitates an audience encounter with the affective resonance of the sacred while preserving the ontological demarcation between ceremonial action and artistic performance.

Within the choreographic architecture of Kembang Ura Dance, the iterative deployment of the floral dispersion motif serves to amplify the semiotic resonance of purification. Such reiteration transcends mere choreographic variation, functioning instead as a deliberate performative strategy wherein the gesture accrues ritual potency and contemplative efficacy over time. Drawing upon Turner's theoretical framework, ritual symbols are characterized by multivocality, capable of condensing disparate yet related significations within a singular performative act. In this context, floral dispersion signifies purification, benediction, and the consummation of sacred intentionality, all of which are inextricably linked to the semiotic ecosystem of the Sidakarya tradition. These significations are articulated not through dramatic climax, but via a subdued and reflexive performance structure. Schechner's (2013) performance theory elucidates how stylized reiteration facilitates the aesthetic re-experiencing of ritual values on stage, maintaining a distinction from actual ritual praxis. Consequently, the dance operates not as a literal replication of ceremony, but as a performative rearticulation of sacred symbolism, wherein purification,

benediction, and equilibrium are embodied through meditative kinesthesia and restrained closure.

Field data show that Kembang Ura Dance is appreciated not because of technical difficulty, but because of its felt vitality, symbolic coherence, and affective impact on audiences. Informants repeatedly emphasized sincerity, inner concentration, and the ability of the performance to “touch” spectators. As mentioned by Desak, dancer of the Kembang Ura dance art 04/15/2025 in South Denpasar :

“...when I dance, I don't feel like I'm simply demonstrating technique. Instead, I strive for stillness and focus, deeply feeling the meaning behind every movement. Once my heart is fully present, the scattered flowers feel as if they carry a prayer. Usually, the audience grows quieter, drawn into the atmosphere with me..”.

These findings indicate that the dance is valued through qualities closely associated with *taksu*, understood as the emergence of aesthetic-spiritual presence in performance. In Kembang Ura Dance, *taksu* manifests not through virtuosic display, but through the unity of form, meaning, and embodied devotion. The presence of *taksu* signifies that the development of the flower-scattering tradition does not eliminate the spirit of ritual, but rather reactivates it within the medium of dance. Consequently, Kembang Ura Dance can be understood as an aesthetic spiritual practice that sustains the continuity of sacred values within the landscape of contemporary Balinese arts.

Empirical observation elucidates that Kembang Ura Dance privileges choreographic restraint, semiotic coherence, and embodied devotion over technical virtuosity. These stylistic attributes indicate that the work's aesthetic efficacy is predicated upon the ontological synthesis of form, signification, and internalized concentration. In this regard, the performance configuration aligns with the localized epistemology of *taksu*, characterized by the phenomenological unity of choreographic structure, symbolic depth, and somatic sincerity. Consequently, the dance may be conceptualized as an aesthetic reconfiguration of sacred values. However, robust assertions concerning the full reactivation of ritual spirit warrant further corroborative testimonial evidence.

4. Discussions

Ethno-aesthetic studies position dance as an aesthetic system that emerges from the values, norms, and cosmological worldview of the community in which it is embedded. From this perspective, beauty is not understood as a universal category, but as a cultural construct shaped by social, religious, and historical contexts. Kaepler emphasizes that dance constitutes a “structured movement system” whose meanings can only be adequately understood when interpreted through the value framework of the supporting community, rather than through external aesthetic standards (Kaepler, 2000). This approach is particularly relevant in the Balinese context, where dance aesthetics are consistently intertwined with ethics and spirituality.

Within Balinese tradition, the ethno-aesthetics of dance cannot be separated from the principles of *wiraga*, *wirama*, and *wirasa*, as well as the sacred-aesthetic orientation of *siwam* and *sundaram*. Recent studies published in internationally reputable performing arts journals indicate that ethno-aesthetic approaches enable scholars to interpret dance as a form of embodied knowledge, knowledge transmitted through the body and cultural practice (Hamera & Lincoln, 2011; Emigh & Manogue, 2024; Ruastiti, et al., 2021). This framework is employed in the present study to understand Kembang Ura Dance not merely as a choreographic work, but as an expression of the aesthetic and spiritual values of the Sidakarya community.

The tradition of flower scattering in Balinese Hindu ritual has been widely discussed as a symbolic action representing purification, universal compassion, and harmonious

relationships between humans, nature, and the divine. As mentioned by Putu Parama, choreographer of the Kembang Ura dance art 03/15/2025 in South Denpasar :

“...for the dance, I did not copy the ritual literally. I wanted the flower-scattering movement to convey devotion, calmness, and the feeling of giving..”

Triangulated empirical data substantiate that floral dispersion within the Balinese Hindu ritual paradigm is conceptualized by custodians not as superficial adornment, but as a practice inextricably linked to oblation, purification, and benediction. Interlocutors underscored that botanical elements function as a conduit for authentic intentionality and sacral directionality. The tradition of flower scattering in Balinese Hindu ritual is understood by practitioners as a symbolic act associated with offering, purification, and blessing. Interview evidence suggests that flowers are treated not simply as ritual ornaments, but as media through which sincerity, sacred intention, and devotional relations are expressed. Consequently, the tradition may be interpreted as articulating a triadic nexus among human agency, natural elements, and the transcendental sphere. Within the choreographic architecture of Kembang Ura Dance, these ritual significations eschew literal mimetic reproduction, undergoing instead an aesthetic transfiguration mediated through kinetic morphology.

From the perspective of ritual anthropology, symbolic actions such as flower scattering function as media for the transformation of meaning, particularly during liminal phases of religious ceremonies (Turner, 1969). Flowers are not only understood as ritual offerings, but also as cosmological symbols that simultaneously embody sanctity and beauty. A cultural semiotic approach further deepens this understanding by conceptualizing flower scattering as a performative symbol, an action that not only represents meaning but also generates ritual effects through practice (Smith et al., 1997; Danesi, 2004). In the Balinese context, the flower-scattering symbol operates as a cultural language collectively understood by the customary community. This framework is essential for interpreting how *kembang ura* in Kembang Ura Dance does not experience a rupture of meaning, but instead undergoes symbolic transformation through the medium of dance.

The Sidakarya Mask represents a ritual figure that occupies a central position within the Balinese Hindu ceremonial system as the completer of *yadnya*. In symbolic anthropological studies, Sidakarya is understood as a “total symbol” that integrates religious, social, and performative dimensions within a single ritual entity (Geertz, 1973). Its presence signifies spiritual legitimacy and the successful completion of a ceremony, rendering it inseparable from the cosmological structure of Balinese society.

Several studies published in internationally reputable performance studies journals emphasize that ritual figures such as Sidakarya function as mechanisms of “ritual closure,” symbolically concluding the liminal phase and restoring cosmic order (Turner, 1982; Schechner, 2013). A consensus among scholars establishes Topeng Sidakarya as an indispensable liturgical component within Balinese Hindu traditions. Characterizes the performance as a definitive signifier of a successful *yadnya*, a sentiment echoed by Consequently, by synthesizing this empirical foundation with Turner’s (1982) notions of liminality and Schechner’s performance theory, one can critically analyze Sidakarya as a sophisticated mechanism of ritual closure. This theoretical framework is employed to examine the symbolic relationship between the Sidakarya Mask and Kembang Ura Dance, particularly in understanding the meaning of flower scattering as part of a system of purification and ritual blessing.

Newly created dances in the Balinese context cannot be understood merely as products of modernization, but rather as spaces of negotiation between tradition and creativity. Bandem (2013) asserts that Balinese creative dance remains grounded in traditional aesthetic structures, even as it introduces new forms and performance contexts. From a global

perspective, this phenomenon aligns with the concept of post-traditional performance, in which tradition is not abandoned but reinterpreted (Fischer-Lichte & Jain, 2008).

Several studies in internationally reputable performing arts journals demonstrate that the transformation of ritual into creative dance does not necessarily result in profanation, but can instead produce reflective aesthetic forms that preserve symbolic meaning (Schechner, 2013). Academic discourse consistently suggests that the evolution of ritualistic elements into novel performance modalities does not inherently necessitate a loss of sanctity. As evidenced by Putra's (2022) examination of *The Dance of Sacred Water*, Balinese cosmological principles regarding holy water can be effectively re-envisioned through contemporary choreography without diminishing their purificatory or ethical essence. This is further supported by Turyati and Widyaningrum (2024), who illustrate that local legends and traditions, such as *Gandasari–Gandawangi* and the *Centong War*, can be adapted for the tourism sector provided the creative process remains anchored in indigenous values. Furthermore, recent research on Sariada et al. (2025) underscores that a performance may simultaneously serve as a ritual, a spectacle, and a vessel for cultural heritage, preserving its sacred integrity through contextual nuance. Within this theoretical framework, the *Kembang Ura* Dance can be analyzed as a ritual-centric creative work that navigates the tension between choreographic innovation and the persistence of traditional sanctity. This framework is applied to interpret *Kembang Ura* Dance as a ritual-based creative dance that seeks to maintain a balance between choreographic innovation and the continuity of sacred values.

The present study is theoretically anchored in an ethno-aesthetic perspective, further enriched by insights from ritual theory and symbolic anthropology. While ethno-aesthetics serves to interrogate the stylistic and aesthetic properties of the *Kembang Ura* Dance in its local context, ritual theory is employed to analyze the transformation of the flower-scattering motif from sacred praxis to artistic expression. Furthermore, symbolic anthropology offers a critical framework for understanding how meaning is embodied through movement and structural performance elements. By synthesizing these diverse theoretical strands, the inquiry moves beyond a superficial formalist account to provide a nuanced interpretation of the dance's spiritual and cultural significance.

The data were subjected to a rigorous analysis centered on an ethno-aesthetic framework, supplemented by conceptual insights from ritual theory and symbolic anthropology. While the ethno-aesthetic component evaluates the artistic form of the *Kembang Ura* Dance in its localized cultural context, ritual theory provides a basis for examining the evolution of the flower-scattering ritual into a formalized dance expression. Furthermore, the application of symbolic anthropology allows for a nuanced understanding of how meaning is embodied through physical gestures and the structural elements of the performance.

The novelty of this study lies in its interpretation of *Kembang Ura* Dance as a *ritual-based creative dance through an ethno-aesthetic approach* that positions the flower-scattering symbol as the central axis of meaning analysis, rather than merely as a choreographic motif. Unlike many studies on Balinese dance that tend to focus on formal description or ritual function, this research emphasizes that the transformation of the flower-scattering tradition from the Sidakarya Mask ritual into *Kembang Ura* Dance constitutes a *conscious, controlled, and ethically grounded symbolic process* that preserves the ritual spirit.

Moreover, this study offers a critical perspective on new creative dances in Bali by demonstrating that innovation is not inherently synonymous with secularization or the detachment from tradition. *Kembang Ura* Dance illustrates that creative dance can function as a medium for sustaining sacred values when its creation is grounded in a deep understanding of customary context, cosmology, and the ritual practices of the supporting

community. In this regard, the study enriches Balinese performing arts discourse by positioning creative dance as a space of negotiation between modern aesthetics and local spirituality.

Another significant contribution of this research is its emphasis on *taksu as an aesthetic spirit* within ritual-based creative dance. Rather than treating *taksu* as an abstract concept, this study conceptualizes it as an indicator of successful integration between form, meaning, and embodied devotion. This perspective contributes conceptually to Balinese dance studies, particularly in understanding how aesthetic and spiritual qualities can remain present within contemporary dance works.

An additional contribution of this inquiry resides in its exploratory focus on *taksu* as a dual aesthetic-spiritual attribute within ritual-centric creative choreography. Transcending its treatment as a mere abstraction, this study situates *taksu* within the observable synthesis of formal structure, symbolic resonance, and embodied devotion inherent in the *Kembang Ura* Dance. While the present discourse is introductory and necessitates more rigorous empirical investigation, such a trajectory provides a viable framework for subsequent research into Balinese performative arts, specifically regarding the negotiation between aesthetic virtuosity and spiritual sanctity within contemporary contexts.

Notwithstanding these insights, the present study is subject to several methodological constraints. Primarily, as the research is localized within a single case study in Desa Pekraman Sidakarya, the findings may lack universal generalizability to the broader spectrum of Balinese ritual-based choreography. Secondly, the analysis is grounded in qualitative data derived from a focused circle of informants, thereby precluding a comprehensive reception study or a comparative communal perspective. Lastly, certain interpretive dimensions warrant further empirical substantiation through extended fieldwork and broader ethnographic engagement. Accordingly, future scholarly endeavors should aim to expand this scope by incorporating audience reception analysis, regional comparative frameworks, and intensive dialogues with customary and ritual authorities

CONCLUSION

This inquiry concludes that the performative structure of the *Kembang Ura* Dance is characterized by a restrained and introspective choreographic framework, prioritizing reflective depth over dramatic spectacle. The deliberate linear progression, nuanced gestural vocabulary, and rhythmic stability, collectively engender a contemplative ritual-aesthetic atmosphere. Such formal attributes underscore a departure from theatrical excess, emphasizing instead a core aesthetic centered on tranquility, symbolic precision, and internal concentration.

Furthermore, the study identifies that the evolution of the flower-scattering tradition within this dance transpires through a selective process of symbolic transfiguration rather than literal mimicry. By recalibrating tempo, gesture, and structural arrangement, the flower-scattering act is recontextualized into a sophisticated choreographic language. This adaptation ensures that ritualistic resonances persist while simultaneously meeting the exigencies of the stage. Consequently, the *Kembang Ura* Dance occupies a liminal space between sacred praxis and secular performance; it functions neither as a direct liturgical reenactment nor as a purely profane artistic creation, but rather as a reflexive form shaped by the continuous negotiation between sacred imperatives and aesthetic innovation.

Finally, the analysis reveals that the primary symbolic meanings articulated namely purification, benediction, and devotional offering are re-envisioned through the persistent motif of flower-scattering. These meanings are manifested not merely through repetitive gestures but through the performance's serene ambiance, its meditative closure, and its

embodied modality. From an ethno-aesthetic perspective, the Kembang Ura Dance exemplifies how meaning in Balinese performance remains inextricably linked to local cultural contexts and ritual precedents. Thus, it represents a ritual-centric creative work that maintains symbolic continuity within a contemporary choreographic vessel.

This study advances scholarship on Balinese dance by demonstrating that ritual-derived creative dance transcends mere formal innovation, functioning instead as a symbolic and aesthetic negotiation between sacred traditions and modern performance practices. Employing an ethno-aesthetic lens, it elucidates the essence of Kembang Ura Dance as an integration of choreographic structures, symbolic allusions, and indigenous cultural values. In so doing, the research enriches discourses on ritual transformation, revealing that the flower-scattering tradition undergoes selective rearticulation—via movement vocabularies, compositional frameworks, and performative ambiance—rather than straightforward transposition from rite to artistry. Ultimately, it furnishes a conceptual framework for examining the persistence of sacred values in contemporary creative dance, eschewing reduction to superficial spectacle.

Practically, this investigation serves as a valuable resource for artists, choreographers, and cultural collectives engaged in innovating Balinese dances rooted in ritual heritage. Its findings affirm that artistic novelty can uphold cultural integrity when anchored in profound comprehension of symbolic connotations, ritual delineations, and localized value paradigms. For arts pedagogy institutions and adat communities, the study emphasizes the imperative of systematic documentation, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and reflexive critique to perpetuate ritual-infused creative endeavors. Thus, Kembang Ura Dance exemplifies a viable paradigm for re-presenting sacred traditions in modern performances, thereby safeguarding cultural continuity and reverence for their ritual origins.

In addition, it is recommended that art education institutions and customary communities actively encourage *systematic documentation and academic research on local creative dances*, particularly those emerging from ritual contexts. Such efforts are essential to ensure that performing arts development is oriented not only toward artistic production, but also toward understanding, preservation, and the transmission of cultural values to future generations.

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