



## Exploration of the Repentance Aspect of Pwahaci Dance in Seren Taun Ritual in Cigugur, West Java

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### Abstract

Repentance shows man's awareness of his weakness before God. As weak creatures, humans should communicate with God to be grateful for the goodness given and also ask God for help. The provision of help from God to humans is depicted as beautiful, like a mother's love for her child. This research uses a qualitative approach with the main focus on the meaning of the Pwahaci dance repentance in the seren taun ritual in the Cigugur Kuningan community in West Java. Data collection was done by observation, interview, and literature study. The data obtained was then reduced to make it more focused, and an in-depth analysis was carried out using Hans Urs Von Balthasar's religious aesthetic perspective. The results of the data analysis are then presented in the form of scientific writing. The result of this research is that the figure of Dewi Pwahaci is understood as an intermediary between humans and God. Communication is done through a sacred dance, the Pwahaci Dance. This is manifested in the form of meditative Pwahaci dance movements full of truth, goodness, and beauty.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Dance has long served as a profound medium for expressing spirituality and repentance across diverse cultural and religious traditions worldwide. From the whirling dervishes of Sufi mysticism to the sacred temple dances of Bali, choreographed movement transcends mere aesthetic performance to become a corporeal prayer. This kinesthetic theology bridges the human and the divine. This universal phenomenon reflects humanity's perennial quest to embody transcendence, to make the invisible visible through the language of the body [1]. In Christian art history, Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam" (1512) in the Sistine Chapel captures this yearning: the nearly-touching hands of God and Adam symbolize both separation and connection, suggesting that the relationship between humanity and divinity requires mediation [2]. Similarly, dance traditions worldwide function as such mediators, transforming theological concepts into sensory experiences that engage the whole person—body, mind, and spirit [3], [4].

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Despite the rich spiritual traditions embedded in indigenous performance arts, particularly in the Global South, these expressions are often marginalized from formal theoretical analysis within academic discourse. Indigenous wisdom systems, such as those found in Nusantara (the Indonesian archipelago), possess sophisticated theological and philosophical frameworks. Yet, they are frequently dismissed as "folklore" or "cultural practice" rather than recognized as legitimate sources of theological reflection [5], [6]. This epistemic violence stems from colonial legacies that privileged Western systematic theology while devaluing local knowledge systems. Consequently, there exists a critical need for analytical frameworks that can honor the integrity of indigenous spirituality while enabling cross-cultural dialogue [7], [8]. The challenge lies not in imposing foreign theoretical structures onto indigenous practices, but in finding resonances—conceptual bridges that allow mutual illumination without erasing cultural specificity.

In the village of Cigugur, Kuningan Regency, West Java, the Pwahaci dance performed during the *Seren Taun* (harvest thanksgiving) ritual ceremony exemplifies a unique convergence of aesthetics, ecology, and theology. This sacred dance narrates the story of Dewi Sri Pwahaci, the Goddess of Fertility. It embodies the Sundanese cosmivision rooted in *Pikukuh Tilu* (Three Pillars): *Silih Asih* (mutual love), *Silih Asah* (mutual learning), and *Silih Asuh* (mutual care) [2], [9], [10]. Unlike performative dances meant for entertainment, Pwahaci dance functions as a liturgical act—a prescribed ritual that can only be performed during specific ceremonial contexts, carrying profound religious significance [11]. The dance movements, costumes, musical accompaniment, and ritual context collectively create a multisensory experience that transforms abstract theological teachings into lived, embodied knowledge. Here, the agricultural cycle, ethical principles, and divine relationship are woven together in a choreographic narrative that speaks to both cosmic order and human repentance [12].

Existing scholarship on sacred dance in Indonesia has explored various dimensions of religiosity and cultural expression. Studies have examined repentance in Batak traditional dance [13], Sufi dance as a healing medium [14], theological elements in Sob Lor tradition [15], and Sufi educational values in whirling dervish dance [16]. However, a critical gap remains: few studies have systematically analyzed the metaphysical-aesthetic dimensions of indigenous Indonesian dance using cross-cultural theological frameworks. Specifically, there is insufficient exploration of how the aesthetic structure of ritual dance transforms ethical-theological teachings into a sensory experience of repentance and divine encounter. While these dances clearly embody profound spiritual content, the mechanisms by which aesthetic form mediates theological meaning (how beauty becomes a pathway to truth and goodness) remain underexamined. This analytical deficit reflects the broader marginalization of indigenous aesthetic theology within academic discourse.

This research aims to conduct an intercultural dialogue between Western systematic theology and local Nusantara wisdom through the medium of Pwahaci dance, specifically asking: How does the aesthetic structure of Pwahaci dance transform the teachings of *Pikukuh Tilu* into a sensory experience of repentance based on a theological aesthetic framework? To address this question, this study employs Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, specifically his trilogy of *The-O-Logy: Truth* (Theo-Logic), *Goodness* (Theo-Drama), and *Beauty* (The Glory of the Lord). Balthasar's framework is uniquely suited to this analysis because it challenges the post-Enlightenment divorce between aesthetics and theology, asserting that beauty is not mere decoration but a fundamental transcendental property through which divine glory is revealed [17]. His approach allows us to examine how the visible forms of dance (choreography, costume, music) mediate invisible theological realities (repentance, divine relationship, cosmic harmony). This research represents an effort toward decolonizing theological thought by demonstrating that indigenous wisdom systems possess their own sophisticated aesthetic theology worthy of rigorous analysis.

Simultaneously, it proposes a new theoretical syncretism—not as cultural appropriation, but as genuine dialogue where Western and Nusantara traditions mutually illuminate each other, enriching both theological understanding and cultural appreciation.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design with an interpretive-hermeneutical approach, seeking to understand the complex phenomenon of Pwahaci dance as a theological-aesthetic expression by analyzing its parts and the meanings embedded within its performative structure [18]. The research is descriptive-analytical in nature, combining ethnographic fieldwork with critical theological analysis. The study was conducted in Cigugur village, Kuningan Regency, West Java, over a period of six months from June to November 2024, encompassing both preparation periods and the actual Seren Taun ritual ceremony. The temporal scope allowed for in-depth observation of ritual preparation, performance, and post-ritual reflection within the community.

This research utilizes Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, specifically his trilogy of *The-O-Logy: Beauty (The Glory of the Lord)*, *Goodness (Theo-Drama)*, and *Truth (Theo-Logic)* as the primary analytical framework. The application of Swiss Catholic systematic theology to analyze Sundanese indigenous beliefs requires careful epistemological justification to avoid theoretical imposition or cultural appropriation.

The choice of Balthasar's framework is grounded in several crucial epistemological bridges between his theological aesthetics and the Pikukuh Tilu system of Sunda Wiwitan: First, Balthasar's emphasis on beauty as the primary mode of divine revelation resonates profoundly with Sundanese cosmology, where harmony (*silih asih*), wisdom (*silih asah*), and care (*silih asuh*) are not abstract principles but are experienced and transmitted through aesthetic forms (dance, music, poetry, and ritual). Both systems reject the post-Enlightenment dichotomy between rational knowledge and aesthetic experience, insisting instead that truth is apprehended through beauty. Second, Balthasar's concept of "form" (*Gestalt*) as the visible manifestation of invisible divine glory parallels the Sundanese understanding of dance movements as *rupa* (visible form) that reveals *rahsa* (inner spiritual essence). In both frameworks, the sensory-aesthetic dimension is not merely illustrative but constitutive of theological meaning. Third, Balthasar's *Theo-Drama* emphasizes the participatory nature of divine theology that happens in action, in lived performance, not merely in propositional statements. This aligns perfectly with the ritual character of Pwahaci dance, where theological teachings of Pikukuh Tilu are not preached but enacted, embodied, and experienced communally. Fourth, both systems maintain a cosmic-ecological dimension: Balthasar's theology of creation celebrates the glory of God manifest in nature, while Sunda Wiwitan's agrarian spirituality in the Seren Taun ritual honors the sacred interdependence of humans, land, and divine providence. Thus, this research does not impose Western categories onto indigenous wisdom; rather, it seeks genuine intercultural dialogue where Balthasar's systematic articulation provides an analytical vocabulary to make explicit the sophisticated aesthetic theology already present, though differently expressed in Sundanese ritual practice. Conversely, Pwahaci dance challenges and enriches Balthasar's Eurocentric framework by demonstrating how theological aesthetics operates in non-Christian, agrarian-ecological contexts.

Data collection employed multiple triangulated methods as recommended by Sugiyono [19], recognizing that data collection techniques are the most critical step in research: Participant Observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, documentation, and literature study. Data analysis followed a multi-stage process: data reduction, thematic coding, hermeneutical analysis, and cross-cultural dialogue. data validation: triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### *3.1. Historical-Ideational Context: Repentance as Central Theological Concern*

The Sunda Wiwitan faith community in Cigugur emerged from a complex historical trajectory of spiritual resistance and theological synthesis. Founded by Kyai Madrais (b. 1832), the movement evolved through four leadership periods: from Kyai Madrais himself, through Prince Tedjabuana, Prince Djati, to the current custodianship under Djati Kusumah's lineage with corresponding shifts in organizational nomenclature (from PACKU to AKUR) and ritual designation (from Nutu to Seren Taun). However, what remained constant across these transformations was not organizational structure but the ideational core: the Pikukuh Tilu teachings (Ngaji Badan, Iman Kana Tanah, Ngeblat Ka-Ratu-raja) as a systematic theology of repentance.

The historical context that necessitated repentance as a central theme was rooted in the colonial and post-colonial disruption of the Sundanese cosmological order. Kyai Madrais conceived his spiritual teachings amid Dutch colonial domination and the subsequent erosion of indigenous wisdom systems. The invocation of Dewi Pwahaci (the fertility goddess who mediates between cosmic abundance and human cultivation) was not merely agricultural symbolism but a theological statement about human dependency and divine providence [20]. The Myth of Dewi Pwahaci became the narrative vehicle through which the community acknowledged their existential insufficiency: humans cannot generate life (fertility, harvest, sustenance) autonomously but must recognize their position as recipients of divine grace [21].

Critically, the transformation of this myth into choreographed form under P. Djati Kusumah's leadership represented an epistemic shift from doctrinal instruction to embodied liturgy. The Pwahaci dance, performed exclusively during the Seren Taun ceremony (held annually on 22 Rayagung in the Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal Building), became the primary site where repentance was not preached but enacted, felt, and experienced through the kinesthetic language of Sundanese movement. This ritualization of repentance through aesthetic form corresponds remarkably with Balthasar's insistence that divine revelation occurs not primarily through propositional theology but through form (Gestalt) the visible, sensory manifestation of invisible divine glory [22].

#### *3.2. Choreographic Deconstruction: The Kinesthetic Translation of Pikukuh Tilu*

To understand how Pwahaci dance transforms abstract theological concepts into sensory experience, we must perform a detailed choreographic deconstruction that reveals the semiotic layers embedded in specific movements.

##### *3.2.1. Ngaji Badan: Corporeal Self-Examination Through Meditative Gesture*

The first pillar, Ngaji Badan (studying/examining the body), is choreographically manifested through a series of deliberate, meditative hand movements that engage what Sundanese tradition calls the panca indra (five senses). The dancer's hands move in symmetrical patterns (right and left hands sequentially touching the nose, both ears, and both eyes) in a ritualized gesture of sensory purification.

This choreographic sequence is not an arbitrary decoration but a kinesthetic theology that operates on multiple levels:

Semiotically, each touch represents the acknowledgment of sensory organs as potential sites of moral contamination. The nose (smelling), ears (hearing), and eyes (seeing) are the primary portals through which worldly temptations enter human

consciousness. By physically touching these organs, the dancer performs an act of corporeal confession, recognizing that envy (*dengki*), spite (*sirik*), and hatred (*benci*) often enter through what we perceive.

Phenomenologically, the slow, meditative quality of these movements induces a state of heightened bodily awareness in both performer and observer. The dancer's concentration on each gesture creates what Merleau-Ponty might call "reversibility," that is, the body simultaneously touching and being touched, subject and object collapsing into lived experience. This aligns precisely with Balthasar's claim that God reveals Himself "in a form that humans can explore and understand while living in the world" [23]. The abstract concept of Ngaji Badan, which is self-introspection and purification of the pakumpulan tanah hurip (the assembly of earthly living spirit), becomes a tangible reality through choreographed touch.

Theologically, this movement sequence enacts what Christian mystics might call examen, that is, the daily examination of conscience. However, unlike discursive introspection, the Pwahaci dancer's Ngaji Badan is pre-linguistic and somatic. Repentance happens not through verbal confession but through the body's recognition of its own vulnerability to corruption. This corresponds with Balthasar's Theo-Drama, where human response to divine initiative occurs through action rather than mere intellectual assent.

### ***3.2.2. Iman Kana Tanah: Grounding Transcendence in Locality***

The second pillar, Iman Kana Tanah (faith in the earth/land), is expressed through movements that emphasize verticality and grounding. Dancers periodically lower their bodies, bending at the knees while extending arms downward toward the earth, then rising upward with arms extended skyward. This oscillation between earth and sky is not merely aesthetic but cosmologically significant.

The downward gesture symbolizes acknowledgment of local wisdom (*budaya adat*), the recognition that universal truth is always incarnated in particular cultural-ecological contexts. For the Cigugur community, this means honoring Sundanese language, customs, agricultural rhythms, and ancestral knowledge as legitimate theological sources. The upward gesture represents aspiration toward the divine, but critically, it originates from the grounded position that transcendence does not negate locality but is rooted in it.

This choreographic dialectic between earth and sky embodies what Balthasar calls the "analogia entis" (analogy of being), the Christian principle that the finite world bears analogical resemblance to the infinite God [2]. Similarly, Sunda Wiwitan theology maintains that rupa (visible earthly form) reveals rahsa (invisible balth spiritual essence). The dance movement makes this abstract metaphysical principle sensorily intelligible: we see and feel the connection between earth and heaven enacted through the dancer's body.

### ***3.2.3. Ngeblat Ka Ratu-Raja: Choreographing Cosmic Balance***

The third pillar, Ngeblat Ka Ratu-raja (adhering to the flat/just ruler), is perhaps the most choreographically complex. According to Basuki Nursaningrat's exegesis, Ratu-raja operates across six levels: duality (day-night, male-female), trinity (desire-feeling-thought), quaternary (hands and feet), quintuple (five senses), human characteristics (*cara-ciri manusia*), and national characteristics (*cara-ciri bangsa*) [24].

Choreographically, this multidimensional balance is expressed through symmetrical bilateral movements, so that whatever the right hand performs, the left hand mirrors. This bilateral symmetry is not mere aesthetic preference but a kinesthetic argument about cosmic justice. The dance posits that perfection (*kasampurnaan*) is achieved not through

hierarchical elevation but through equitable distribution that is *ratu nu ngarata* (the ruler who flattens) and *raja nu ngajagat rata* (the king who makes the world flat/just).

When the dancer's right and left hands move in perfect synchrony across the sensory organs (nose, ears, eyes), the choreography visually demonstrates the principle *pisahna henteu ngajadi dua, tunggalna henteu ngahiji* (when separated they don't become two, when united they don't merge into one). This is a profound statement about non-dualistic unity (difference without separation, unity without erasure), remarkably similar to Balthasar's Trinitarian theology, where persons remain distinct yet co-inhere in perichoretic unity.

The aesthetic result is a dance that looks balanced, feels balanced, and means balance. Form and content collapse into each other. This is precisely what Balthasar means by theological aesthetics: beauty is not decorative but constitutive of truth. The dance doesn't merely illustrate the concept of cosmic balance; it enacts and embodies it, allowing participants to experience *Ngeblat Ka Ratu-raja* as lived reality rather than abstract doctrine.

### ***3.3. Balthasar's Trilogy and Sunda Wiwitan: Critical Dialogue***

#### ***3.3.1. Truth (Theo-Logic): Pikukuh Tilu as Revealed Knowledge***

In Balthasar's trilogy, Truth represents the Theo-Logic, which is the inner rationality of divine revelation that demands human response through faith. The first moment of Balthasar's framework finds its parallel in the *Pikukuh Tilu* teachings of Sunda Wiwitan. However, a critical question emerges: Can indigenous wisdom transmitted orally across generations be considered "revealed truth" in the Balthasarian sense?

Balthasar's Catholic framework assumes a specific mode of revelation: the *Logos* (Word) made flesh in Christ, mediated through Scripture and Tradition. Sunda Wiwitan operates differently: truth is revealed through ancestral transmission (the lineage from *Kyai Madrais* through subsequent leaders), mythological narrative (the *Dewi Pwahaci* myth), and ritual enactment (the *Seren Taun* ceremony). Yet both systems share a fundamental epistemological commitment: truth is not discovered through autonomous reason but received as a gift.

For the *Cigugur* community, *Pikukuh Tilu* is not subject to empirical verification or rational critique—it is accepted and believed (*percanten*) as the foundation for daily life and ritual practice. This acceptance does not stem from blind dogmatism but from experiential validation: generations have lived according to these teachings and found them conducive to individual flourishing and communal harmony. In Balthasarian terms, this is the *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding)—not faith versus reason, but faith as the necessary condition for authentic understanding.

Critical tension: Balthasar's truth is ultimately Christocentric—all truth converges on the person of Jesus Christ. Sunda Wiwitan's truth is cosmocentric—it centers on the harmony between humans, nature, and the divine, mediated through *Dewi Pwahaci*. The question is whether these two frameworks can dialogue without one colonizing the other. This research proposes that the bridge lies in both systems' shared commitment to truth-as-relationship rather than truth-as-proposition. Both reject the Enlightenment reduction of truth to objective factuality, insisting instead that truth emerges in the encounter between divine initiative and human receptivity.

### ***3.3.2. Goodness (Theo-Drama): Repentance as Active Participation***

The second moment, Goodness, corresponds to Balthasar's Theo-Drama—the understanding that theology unfolds through dramatic action where God acts upon humanity and humanity responds. The Seren Taun ceremony, with Pwahaci dance as its aesthetic centerpiece, is precisely such a theo-drama.

The ceremony's core is gratitude (*syukur*), which is thanksgiving for the fertility and harvest bestowed by Dewi Pwahaci. But gratitude here is not passive appreciation; it is active repentance. The Cigugur community acknowledges that agricultural abundance is not the result of human mastery over nature (the modernist hubris) but a gift requiring reciprocal responsibility. This reciprocity is enacted through the elaborate ritual preparations, the communal offerings of agricultural produce that decorate the ceremony, and the dance performance itself.

The concept of Dewi Pwahaci as Mother deserves particular theological attention. The research data suggests that for the Cigugur community, Dewi Pwahaci functions like "a mother to the hurip of the pakumpulan tanah" (the life-force of the earthly assembly). This maternal imagery invites comparison with the figure of Mary in Catholic Mariology.

In Catholic theology, Mary is Theotokos (God-bearer) and Mediatrix; that is, she mediates between divine transcendence and human need, making God's goodness accessible and approachable. Similarly, Dewi Pwahaci mediates divine fertility to human cultivation. Both figures embody receptive agency: Mary's fiat ("let it be done unto me") and the Cigugur community's ritual submission to Dewi Pwahaci's providence both represent human acknowledgment of dependence on divine initiative.

However, critical differences must be noted to avoid facile syncretism. Mary is a human who is, albeit uniquely graced, whereas Dewi Pwahaci is divine (a goddess, though subordinate to the supreme God/Gusti). Mary mediates Christ (the Logos); Dewi Pwahaci mediates cosmic fertility. The comparison works functionally (both are maternal mediators) but not ontologically (their metaphysical status differs).

Socio-religious implications: Recognizing these parallels without erasing differences allows for dignified intercultural dialogue. For the Cigugur community, understanding their devotion to Dewi Pwahaci as structurally analogous to Catholic Marian devotion validates their practice as sophisticated theology rather than primitive superstition. For Catholic theology, encountering the Pwahaci devotion challenges Eurocentric assumptions about how divine mediation operates, opening space for a more pluralistic understanding of God's self-revelation.

The repentance enacted in Pwahaci dance is active rather than passive precisely because it demands ongoing ritual participation. The community does not simply acknowledge weakness abstractly; they perform their dependence annually through the Seren Taun ceremony. This performance is not theatrical pretense but liturgical reality—the community becomes what it enacts. In Balthasarian terms, this is theo-dramatic participation: humans entering into the drama of divine love, not as passive spectators but as responsive actors.

### ***3.3.3. Beauty (Theo-Aesthetic): Form as Divine Self-Revelation***

The third moment, Beauty, represents Balthasar's distinctive contribution: the recovery of aesthetics as a primary theological category. Balthasar argues that modernity's separation of art from religion has impoverished both—religion became overly rationalistic (focused on doctrinal truth) while art became trivialized (mere entertainment or emotional

manipulation). His project seeks to reunite truth, goodness, and beauty in an integrated theological vision.

The Pwahaci dance exemplifies this integration precisely. The dance is beautiful—its meditative movements, sacred poetry (*kidung*), and gamelan accompaniment create an undeniably aesthetic experience. But this beauty is not ornamental; it is salvific. Through the beauty of the dance, participants encounter the truth of Pikukuh Tilu and the goodness of divine providence simultaneously.

Balthasar's key concept is "enrapturing form" (*reissende Form*)—beauty that seizes us, demands our attention, and transforms us through encounter [25][10]. The Pwahaci dance functions precisely as such an enrapturing form. Observers report that witnessing the dance induces a solemn, liminal state where ordinary time suspends, and participants feel themselves in the presence of the sacred. This is not psychological manipulation but aesthetic revelation: the form of the dance mediates the divine glory (*kabeh-kabeh*) of Dewi Pwahaci.

Critically, Balthasar insists that beauty includes the tragic. Christian beauty is centered on the cross—the paradox of divine love revealed through suffering and death. Does Sunda Wiwitan theology accommodate this tragic dimension? Partially. The Pwahaci myth contains elements of cosmic struggle: the goddess must labor to bring forth fertility, and humans must toil in agricultural work. The dance movements' meditative slowness and solemn gravity suggest not triumphalist celebration but humble acknowledgment of the fragility of life. Harvest depends on factors beyond human control (weather, soil fertility, cosmic rhythms) and can be withdrawn at any moment. This precarity infuses the beauty of the dance with a subtle, tragic undertone: gratitude mixed with awareness of perpetual dependence.

However, unlike Christianity's once-for-all crucifixion and resurrection, Sunda Wiwitan operates within a cyclical temporality—the annual return of planting and harvest, reflected in the annual *Seren Taun* ritual. This cyclical rhythm is less eschatologically tense than Christianity's linear movement toward final consummation. Whether this constitutes a fundamental theological incompatibility or simply different expressions of the same human condition (finitude seeking transcendence) remains an open question for further dialogue.

### ***3.4. Theoretical Proposition: Pwahaci Dance as Active Aesthetic Repentance***

#### ***3.4.1. Based on the foregoing analysis, this research formulates the following scientific proposition:***

Pwahaci dance constitutes a model of active aesthetic repentance that negotiates the boundaries of human weakness with divine transcendence through cosmological harmony. In this model, repentance is not a one-time verbal confession but an ongoing embodied practice where the choreographic structure transforms abstract theological teachings (Pikukuh Tilu) into sensory-kinesthetic experience, enabling participants to acknowledge existential insufficiency and participate in cosmic regeneration simultaneously.

#### ***3.4.2. This proposition makes several specific claims:***

Repentance as Active Performance: Contra passive models of repentance as mere remorse, Pwahaci dance proposes repentance as ritual enactment. The community annually performs its dependence on divine providence, making repentance a constitutive practice rather than an occasional occurrence.

**Aesthetic Mediation of Theology:** The dance demonstrates that complex theological concepts (self-examination, faith in locality, cosmic balance) can be translated from discursive to kinesthetic modes without loss of meaning—indeed, with an intensification of experiential impact.

**Negotiation of Weakness and Transcendence:** The proposition highlights the dance's dialectical structure. It does not simply affirm human weakness (which would lead to fatalism) nor does it assert human autonomy (which would deny divine sovereignty). Instead, it negotiates the relationship: humans are weak but capable of ritual participation; divine transcendence is absolute but accessible through aesthetic forms.

**Cosmological Harmony as Soteriological Framework:** Unlike individualistic salvation models, Sunda Wiwitan locates human flourishing within ecological-cosmic balance. Repentance is not escape from the world but realignment with cosmic order—the harmony of earth (*tanah*), community (*bangsa*), and divinity (*Gusti*).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Pwahaci dance operates as a model of active aesthetic repentance wherein theological teachings are transformed from abstract doctrine into embodied, sensory experience through choreographic mediation. Beyond documenting ritual content, the significance lies in demonstrating that indigenous performance traditions embody sophisticated theological and aesthetic systems deserving rigorous academic engagement. The successful application of Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological aesthetics to Sunda Wiwitan spirituality validates intercultural theology as a viable methodology while exposing ongoing needs to decolonize theological scholarship. Balthasar's trilogy of Truth-Goodness-Beauty provided robust analytical vocabulary to articulate the theological integration already operative in Pwahaci dance, particularly his insistence that beauty constitutes divine revelation rather than mere decoration. However, critical limitations emerged: Balthasar's linear eschatological framework conflicts with Sunda Wiwitan's cyclical agricultural temporality; his Christocentric focus does not map neatly onto the cosmocentric orientation where divine (human relationship is mediated through ecological harmony rather than personal savior. These tensions do not invalidate cross-cultural dialogue but demand methodological humility) the epistemological validity lies not in forcing perfect correspondence, but in creating productive friction where traditions mutually illuminate and challenge each other. This research thus contributes to intercultural theology by modeling a decolonial comparative method: engaging indigenous wisdom not as data explained by Western theory, but as a legitimate dialogue partner capable of critiquing and enriching European theological frameworks.

The implications extend to multiple domains. For cultural preservation, recognizing Pwahaci dance's theological sophistication (not as quaint tradition but as complex ritual epistemology) strengthens arguments for safeguarding amid modernity's homogenizing pressures, supporting inclusion in national intangible cultural heritage frameworks and integration into arts education curricula that teach sacred dances as embodied theology. For ritual policy, this analysis empowers the Cigugur community to resist marginalization by providing academic validation of Sunda Wiwitan's theological legitimacy, strengthening their social and legal standing in Indonesia's religiously plural society. For dance studies, the research challenges secular bias that analyzes ritual performance through formalist aesthetics while bracketing religious content, demonstrating that choreographic form and theological meaning are inseparable. For theological aesthetics, expanding beyond a Christian focus to demonstrate Balthasar's insights apply (with modifications) to non-Christian contexts suggests the field might be reconceived as comparative and intercultural rather than confessionally bounded. Methodologically, the analytical model—combining

ethnographic observation with cross-cultural theological hermeneutics is transferable to other sacred dance traditions in the Asia-Pacific region, from Balinese Sanghyang trance dances to Philippine Sinulog festivals, provided researchers seek epistemological bridges without imposing foreign categories violently.

This study acknowledges critical limitations: the researcher's outsider position to both Sunda Wiwitan practice and Swiss Catholic theology introduces inevitable interpretive bias; meanings attributed to dance movements and parallels drawn between Dewi Pwahaci and Mary reflect the researcher's hermeneutical horizon, which may diverge from community insiders' self-understanding. Linguistic slippage in translating Sundanese terms (*pikukuh*, *rupa*, *rahsa*) involves semantic loss requiring future Indigenous-language scholarship. The temporal scope covering [seren taun and hajat lembur] cannot capture long-term ritual evolution. Gender dimensions, ecological theology, and power dynamics in interfaith dialogue remain underexplored, requiring future feminist theological analysis and systematic ecotheology engagement. Despite these limitations, the research ultimately proposes that Pwahaci dance represents a non-Western model of active aesthetic repentance negotiating human finitude and divine transcendence through cosmological harmony—a principle transcending any single religious tradition to address the universal human quest for meaning. As modernity fragments the integration of art, ethics, and spirituality, Pwahaci dance stands as a living counter-testimony where aesthetic form, moral teaching, and religious devotion remain unified, offering global humanity a reminder that weakness acknowledged beautifully can become strength. Boundaries between human and divine can be gracefully negotiated through forms that enchant the senses while transforming the soul.

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