

Hand gestures and hidden meanings: Exploring the semiotics of Balinese legong dance

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Abstract - The primary aim of this study is to analyse the layers of symbolism embedded in the Legong dance of Bali. Rather than seeing Legong as simply “traditional dance,” this research investigates its deeper meanings – particularly how gestures, facial expressions, and costume are entwined with cultural myth and identity. The study also seeks to understand how these symbolic forms maintain cultural relevance for Balinese communities in contemporary times. Data collection involved observing Legong performances both live in Bali and through online recordings, ensuring a broad perspective on variations and consistencies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with dancers, instructors, and cultural practitioners, focusing on how symbolism is taught, experienced, and understood. Informal participation in dance workshops provided an insider’s perspective on the embodied aspects of Legong symbolism. Detailed field notes were maintained, complemented by informal conversations that sometimes occurred in less formal settings like temple grounds. Every movement – from a delicate hand flick to intense, controlled eye movements – serves as a signifier within Balinese storytelling. Dancers are trained to communicate complex narratives about deities, conflict, courtship, and heroism through nonverbal cues. The use of ornate costumes, heavily jewelled headdresses, and vibrant fabrics reinforces the mythic quality of the characters portrayed. Even details like finger extensions and golden crowns contribute to the representation of supernatural or historical figures. Symbolism in Legong is sustained via a mixture of formal instruction and communal participation.

Keywords: Legong dance, symbolism, movement, semiotics, cultural heritage, preservation

1. Introduction

Culture is, without a doubt, the bedrock of human society. It shapes identity, fosters communication, and promotes social cohesion among its members. Within the Indonesian archipelago, Bali stands apart as a region boasting remarkable depth and diversity in its cultural heritage. Among its most vibrant traditions lies the realm of dance – an artistic expression that also functions as a vehicle for ritual, social connection, and the transmission of ancestral values (Eiseman, 2011).

One particularly iconic dance form is Legong, a classical Balinese dance that epitomizes grace, discipline, and technical complexity. The name “Legong” blends the root “legyang,” meaning flexible or elastic, with “gong,” referencing the traditional Balinese gamelan instrument.



Consequently, Legong may be interpreted as a dance marked by flexible, graceful physical movement that is intricately linked to the rhythms of gamelan accompaniment (Wijanarko, 2023).

Historically, Legong's roots can be traced back to the 19th century and the opulent courts of Bali. As recorded in the Babad Dalem Sukawati, Legong originated from a dream vision experienced by King Dewa Agung Made Karna of Sukawati. Inspired by the sight of two celestial maidens dancing, the king commissioned the creation of masks and choreography to bring the vision to life. This formative version, known as Sang Hyang Legong, would eventually evolve into Legong Keraton, the courtly refinement of this art (Wijanarko, 2023).

Traditionally, Legong is performed by pre-adolescent girls who undertake rigorous physical and artistic training from an early age. Hallmarks include highly articulated finger movements, expressive eyes, precise footwork, and elaborate facial expressions. The dance is almost always accompanied by the Gamelan Semar Pagulingan, a melodic and ceremonial ensemble beloved for its rich, nuanced sound ([Ubud.id](https://ubud.id), n.d.). While Legong's origins are linked to royal palaces, the art form has spread widely – performed now in temples, public festivals, and for both local and international audiences.

Despite its deep significance, Legong faces substantial obstacles in the present era. Forces such as globalization, rapid societal shifts, and diminishing interest from younger generations threaten its continuity. Moreover, as the dance is featured increasingly for tourists, it risks a loss of authenticity and depth, potentially losing touch with its spiritual and artistic roots (Picard, 1990). This situation requires a careful re-examination of Legong's philosophical, historical, and socio-cultural foundation to ensure its vitality and relevance in contemporary cultural life.

This study carries significance for several interrelated reasons: cultural preservation, Artistic Appreciation and Educational Value, Modern Relevance and Adaptation, Sustainable Cultural Tourism, and Strategy Formulation for Preservation.

- **Cultural Preservation**

- Legong embodies both the cultural and spiritual values of Balinese society.
- By analysing its symbolic meanings, philosophical aspects, and artistic techniques, this research aids in the long-term preservation of an essential facet of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage.
- Understanding Legong's deeper meanings supports efforts to maintain and transmit Balinese culture to future generations.

- **Artistic Appreciation and Educational Value**

- Detailed study of Legong's choreography, mudras (hand gestures), costumes, and musical accompaniment provides instructive resources for artists, teachers, and students in the performing arts.
- Such documentation supports not only appreciation, but also the practical training and development of future practitioners.

- **Modern Relevance and Adaptation**

- Examining Legong's historical evolution and contemporary adaptations reveals pathways for traditional art forms to maintain relevance amidst changing societal realities.
- This research explores how Legong navigates modern influences – balancing innovation with reverence for tradition.

- **Sustainable Cultural Tourism**

- Legong, alongside other Balinese dances, is a central attraction for cultural tourism.
- This study assesses ways in which Legong can promote sustainable tourism – where community benefit coincides with preservation of cultural authenticity.
- By learning from current practices, strategies can be devised to prevent the commodification and superficial presentation of Balinese dance.



- **Strategy Formulation for Preservation**

- By identifying pressing challenges and emergent opportunities, the study offers actionable strategies for the continued development and effective transmission of Legong in modern society.
- Proposals aim to reconcile modernization with the retention of Legong's artistic and spiritual essence.

Exploring Legong's multifaceted legacy reveals not merely an aesthetic treasure, but an ongoing process of cultural negotiation, resilience, and renewal.

Wijanarko (2023) presents an in-depth exploration of the legend surrounding King Sukawati's dream, tracing how this visionary experience catalysed the emergence of the classical court dance, Legong Keraton. This work underscores the intricate relationship between myth and the intentional cultivation of cultural practices, revealing how narratives imbue art forms with enduring symbolic significance. Anggarawati (2023; Dewi et al., 2020) approach Legong from a linguistic and semiotic perspective, meticulously identifying 48 lexicons associated with specific bodily movements and expressions – encompassing hands, feet, eye movements, neck articulations, and the fan. Their study provides a systematic framework for understanding the distinct movement vocabulary embedded in Legong. Importantly, their technical classification illuminates the depth of embodied knowledge inherent to Balinese dancers and underscores how codified gestures communicate meaning within performance.

Winata (2018) broadens the inquiry by examining the symbolic layers underlying Legong's costumes, gestures, and musical accompaniment. He emphasizes the profoundly religious and philosophical roots of the dance, showing its role as a living articulation of Balinese Hinduism's values and worldview. This perspective demonstrates how Legong, beyond its surface artistry, is invested with spiritual resonance, ritual function, and social identity.

Picard (1996) introduces a critical discussion on the commodification of Balinese dance in the context of tourism. He argues that, although tourism can serve as a vehicle for cultural promotion, it frequently risks diluting the sacred aspects of the performance – transforming it into entertainment rather than religious or social ritual. This commercialization is portrayed as a double-edged sword: while it extends the global visibility of Balinese traditions, it can also fundamentally alter the original intent and intrinsic value of the art form.

Davies (2008) offers an extensive historical analysis of Legong, charting its evolution in relation to both indigenous tradition and external influences, such as colonialism and modernization. His comprehensive approach situates Legong as a dynamic cultural practice, continually adapting to – and shaped by – Bali's shifting social and political landscape. Vickers (2011) examines the redevelopment of Bali's tourism industry and its impact on traditional arts. He demonstrates how economic imperatives guide the ways in which Legong and similar forms are interpreted, presented, and sometimes reimaged. While Vickers provides meaningful insights into the economic dimensions of this process, a limitation is noted in his relatively narrow focus on commercialization, at times neglecting the nuanced cultural shifts and negotiations occurring alongside these economic pressures.

Jenkins (1978) delves into topeng, a vital form of Balinese masked dance-drama, with particular attention to its narrative structure and role in conveying complex cultural histories. While his analysis effectively captures the drama's functionality and storytelling capacity, it stops short of exploring the profound symbolism and ritual significance that masks and their performance hold for practitioners and audiences. Siegel (1991) explores the concept of liminality in Balinese dance, emphasizing the transformative aspects of ritual performance. He highlights how dance not only expresses but also generates threshold experiences for both participants and viewers. Though influential, Siegel's reliance on Western theoretical frameworks attracts critique for insufficiently engaging with indigenous conceptions of liminality, risking interpretive gaps and potential misunderstandings of the local context. Ariyanto (1985) conducts a thorough investigation of



gambuh, tracing its historical trajectory as a foundational source for many Balinese dance forms. His study illuminates the intricate relationship between narrative tradition and choreographic development; yet, it would benefit from further exploration of how gambuh is evolving within contemporary performance settings and responding to present-day cultural currents. Artaud (1976) provides a provocative Western theoretical lens on Balinese theatre, positing it as an ideal exemplar for ritualistic performative practice. However, his interpretation is critiqued for projecting Eurocentric concepts onto non-Western traditions, a move that risks obscuring indigenous meanings and diminishing analytical depth with respect to the local context.

Collectively, this body of scholarship underscores the complex, multifaceted character of Balinese dance and theatre. Legong, topeng, and gambuh are situated at the intersection of myth, ritual, technical artistry, social structure, and global exchange. The challenges of commercialization and external interpretation highlight the ongoing negotiations required to preserve cultural integrity while adapting to changing economic and social realities. Further research that foregrounds indigenous Balinese voices and contexts will be essential for a more nuanced and holistic understanding of these enduring performance traditions.

Davies (2007) presents a substantial analysis of Balinese aesthetics, with a particular interest in how visual and performative arts intersect within ritual contexts. This work serves as a robust investigation into the aesthetic underpinnings of Balinese culture. Yet, while offering deep insight into ritual complexity, Davies's approach may not fully consider the agile, responsive relationship between art and performance, especially as they adapt to shifting socio-political realities in Bali. It would be fruitful for future research to address how artistic forms are not static but evolve with – and sometimes push back against – larger historical forces.

Bandem and deBoer investigate the classical Balinese dance-drama gambuh, providing a thorough account of its structure and enduring function within tradition. Their musicological approach is richly detailed, illuminating the musical foundations of the dance. Nevertheless, by maintaining a narrow focus on gambuh's formal features, their work sidesteps other critical vantage points – such as social context, performance innovation, and how this dance interacts with broader changes within Balinese performance culture. Hood's (2020) research critically engages with Balinese music-dance traditions, emphasizing the intertwined nature of these art forms and their collective shaping of cultural expression. Hood's analysis is comprehensive, yet there remains room for further unpacking how the fusion of music and dance operates within the social sphere and the implications this has for both performers and audiences. Deeper consideration of these performative and social dimensions could offer a more nuanced understanding of Balinese aesthetics in everyday life.

The legong dance stands at the heart of debates over Balinese tradition's future. Davies (2006) assesses the evolution of legong, openly questioning whether recent transformations are revitalizing or eroding the form's authenticity. This examination is both nuanced and critical, but it arguably assumes that contemporary influences only degrade tradition. Such an assumption overlooks the adaptive, dynamic character of cultural practices. It is essential to recognize that modifications in tradition can represent organic, creative responses to modern pressures rather than mere loss.

Stepputat centres attention on kecak, highlighting its status as both a ritual practice and a creative production. The analysis positions kecak as a marker of cultural hybridity, reflecting Bali's ongoing negotiation with modernity. However, further reflection on how commercialization and tourism have impacted kecak's ritual elements would greatly strengthen the discussion, bringing to light the compromises and innovations resulting from these influences. In reviewing *Kaja and Kelod: Balinese Dance in Transition*, Mitoma offers a discerning critique of Bandem and deBoer's navigation between tradition and innovation. While Mitoma's analysis is insightful with respect to changes in formal structure, it tends to overlook the broader socio-cultural consequences – how these transformations affect community identity and local perceptions regarding ritual and art (Mitoma, 1985). Picard (1990) investigates the impact of cultural tourism on Balinese performance, noting the tension between authenticity and adaptation when traditions become “products” for visitors. The



examination is valuable in revealing tourism's disruptive influence, but it could go further by considering how local performers exercise agency or subvert these commodifying pressures through alternative performances or negotiation with external expectations.

Bandem's (1976) exploration of the iconic Barong performance highlights its historical significance and its role in forging social bonds. The analysis grounds understanding of Barong in ritual and cohesion but lacks engagement with how contemporary societal changes have altered or recontextualized Barong performances. Addressing modern adaptations or reinterpretations would offer greater depth. Djelantik-Soejoto (2005) reviews *Balinese Dance, Drama and Music*, providing a useful survey of key genres. However, the assessment could be more critical – especially regarding the book's treatment of gender, power, or other social dynamics inherent to performance practices.

In their study of female performers in Balinese topeng, Coldiron et al. (2015) illuminate crucial gender dynamics in a male-centric tradition. This intervention is significant, yet the discussion would directly benefit from a more intersectional approach – taking into account class, caste, and other identity dimensions in addition to gender, which collectively shape the experiences and opportunities of female performers. Davies and Korsmeyer (2013) analyze how standards of beauty and youth merge with Balinese ideas of femininity, particularly within legong. Their account elaborates on the aesthetics of legong, but is arguably limited by an over-reliance on Western benchmarks for beauty. A more locally-grounded analysis might yield richer insights into how beauty is truly understood and performed in the Balinese context. Dunbar-Hall's (2008) investigation into 1930s legong training provides valuable historical data, exposing the rigor and discipline of Balinese music and dance pedagogy. To extend this analysis, it is important to explore how such training contributed to the rise of a professional class of dancers and what this shift meant for the preservation or transformation of tradition. Putra's (2011) extensive study probes the multifaceted relationship between Balinese practices and Western influence, especially as they relate to identity in an age of globalization. While the account addresses tensions and challenges, it could be enriched by examining not only the pressures exerted by the "West" but also the local mechanisms of resistance, adaptation, and agency that define the character of Balinese modernity.

Stepputat (2001) analyzes the transformation of the Kecak dance within the framework of Balinese cultural tourism. The work contributes meaningfully to the discourse on how Kecak has shifted from a sacred ritual to a commercial tourist performance. There is, however, space for more critical analysis regarding the tension between safeguarding cultural heritage and embracing commercial opportunities. This balance between preservation and commercialization is a persistent issue in global heritage discussions, often raising pressing questions about agency, authenticity, and economic necessity for local performers. McIntosh (2025) provides a nuanced conclusion to her study on children's dance in Bali, exploring the nuanced power dynamics threaded through performance practices. While the work does foreground children's roles, it could be expanded by further investigating how variables such as gender, class, and other socio-cultural factors inform children's participation and experiences in dance. Understanding children's agency and the external influences they face is vital. Taking into account intersections of social identities could reveal more about the ways in which children experience discipline and creative expression in Balinese performance.

This earlier study details how young dancers are trained within Balinese dance studios, focusing on pedagogical methods and challenges. While insightful, the analysis could benefit from a stronger attention to the impact of globalization on dance education and the ways young dancers grapple with cultural identity (McIntosh, 2014). As global influences permeate local cultural practices, young dancers may experience conflicting expectations – to maintain tradition, yet adapt for new audiences. Better understanding these dynamics would deepen our knowledge of cultural transmission. The 2025 work also delves into how community, discipline, and control shape Balinese dance education. While the study spotlights hierarchical structures, more attention could be given to



the agency of the children navigating and sometimes resisting these norms. Shifting the analytical focus to children's strategies for adaptation or resistance would add complexity to studies of pedagogy and cultural continuity.

Returning to Kecak, Steputat (2021) provides careful analysis of its conversion to a performance for tourists, but gives limited attention to local perspectives about authenticity and economic impact. Including voices of local practitioners and audience members could highlight the complex negotiations involved in presenting traditional arts in globalized contexts. Youngerman (1975) sets forth a broad anthropological framework for dance research, interpreting dance as simultaneously cultural practice and embodied performance. Still, the work leans heavily on theory, with limited illustration from case studies such as Balinese traditions. Integrating ethnographically rich material from specific cultural practices would ground broader theoretical claims and clarify their implications.

Steputat (2021) traces Kecak's path from religious ritual to lucrative attraction. The work offers a valuable chronology but could press further into social consequences for participating communities. Examining how commercial adaptation changes intra-community relationships, economic dependencies, and cultural meanings would provide a fuller picture. Catra (2022) charts performing arts patronage in Bali, particularly the impact of state involvement in cultivating performance traditions. While the work is historically thorough, there's a lack of nuanced discussion of how state control and sponsorship influence diversity and accessibility for less privileged performers. Focusing on 1930s legong dancers, Dunbar-Hall (2008) details the rigor of historical training. While the analysis presents a thorough historical account, it only briefly addresses how modern training has adapted to cultural and social changes.

Steputat (2021) charts the relationship between Sanghyang Dedari and Kecak, linking ritual origins to their present-day roles in tourism. The historical sweep is informative but the analysis could better center the perspectives of present-day practitioners who reinterpret performances in new contexts. Lopez y Royo (2004) investigates the reconstruction of dances through textual sources like the Karaṇas, especially in cross-cultural situations. While theoretically robust, the article is limited by not exploring how these reconstructions function in today's Southeast Asian dance communities. Scholars continue to dissect how traditional dance, particularly Legong, embodies and transmits Balinese cultural inheritance. Ardhana (2019) emphasizes dance's pivotal role in sustaining cultural identity and ritual transmission. Dewi (2023) explores the impact of globalization and commercialization on traditional dance. She argues such forces may erode cultural value, as performances become repackaged for wider consumption.

UNESCO (2011) emphasizes the significance of intangible cultural heritage, highlighting the crucial need for preservation in the face of globalization. Traditional dance forms such as Legong are recognized not merely as performances but as integral aspects of community identity and spiritual tradition. The increased global attention brings about a complex dilemma: heightened recognition can threaten local authenticity. As Legong gains more international visibility, the challenge becomes maintaining its authenticity amidst pressures to adapt or commercialize. The task, essentially, is to strike a balance where tradition stays vibrant and relevant without being diluted.

The discourse around preserving Legong mirrors broader challenges confronting traditional arts worldwide. Scholars (Ardhana, 2019; Dewi, 2023; Hidayat, 2020) consistently point to the necessity of balancing cultural authenticity with the demands of modernity and globalization. While transforming the dance into a performance increases its reach, it risks diminishing its spiritual core and original intent. Technology plays a dual role by both preserving and potentially trivializing these traditions; social media and digital media can foster appreciation or reduce profound traditions to superficial trends. There is an urgent need for approaches that harmonize innovation with authenticity: Ensure that cultural treasures like Legong continue to serve as meaningful expressions of Balinese identity, rather than simply tourist entertainment. Develop strategies that respect tradition while recognizing the inevitability of change.



Lopez y Royo (2003) analyses through historical texts focuses on reconstructing dance from historical documents, using 9th-century Java as a case study. Methodologically rigorous but somewhat detached from contemporary, living dance traditions in Bali. The study's approach may not fully capture the dynamics of a tradition that continues to evolve. Van Duijn (2021) examines Siem van den Hoonaard's satirical metal dance mask, exploring the confrontation between modern innovation and tradition. The researcher provides valuable insights into satire's role in dance but primarily through a Western lens and more engagement with non-Western contexts would enrich the analysis. McIntosh (2025) investigates how emotions, gender expectations, and the environment shape children's performances of Barong dance. Useful in highlighting emotional and gendered dimensions but could delve deeper into the broader social and cultural frameworks influencing these dynamics.

Here are four concise research problems based on the topic of Balinese dance, particularly focusing on Legong: (1) The Impact of Globalization on Legong Dance Preservation, (2) Role of Cultural Tourism in Shaping Legong Dance, (3) The Evolution of Legong Dance in Modern Performance, (4) Symbolism and Movement in Legong Dance. These research problems provide a focused, structured approach to examining the shifting dynamics surrounding Legong dance in Bali. Preserving traditional roots while engaging contemporary audiences and global influences remains a complex, ongoing challenge for all stakeholders involved.

2. Method

2.1 Type of Research

This research employs a qualitative approach as its primary foundation, further enriched by incorporating quantitative elements. Prioritizing qualitative methods enables a holistic and nuanced exploration of Legong dance, focusing on uncovering the symbolic significance, artistic uniqueness, and rich cultural resonance embedded within the dance. The qualitative aspect seeks to interpret the underlying meanings, philosophical concepts, and the uniqueness that makes Legong dance a vital part of Balinese expression.

Qualitative emphases central objective is to interpret and analyse the symbolic, cultural, and aesthetic features of Legong dance based on direct observation and interpretative analysis. Particular attention is given to the dance's movement vocabulary, ritual significance, and its function within Balinese society. The approach is especially suited for identifying deep cultural and philosophical values expressed through movement and narrative.

Quantitative methods supplement the qualitative focus, aiming to provide objective, measurable data—specifically concerning public perception and the popularity of Legong dance within both local and broader audiences. This is implemented through the distribution of structured questionnaires designed to gauge public awareness, appreciation, and attitudes towards Legong dance. The integration of both qualitative and quantitative data (mixed-methods approach) ensures a more comprehensive and robust understanding of the subject matter, enhancing both the depth and validity of findings.

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection utilizes a multipronged strategy to achieve triangulation and enhance the reliability of research findings. The following techniques are applied observation, document analysis, and questionnaire.

Direct, in-person observation is conducted during live Legong dance performances, allowing the researcher to closely observe the physical nuances, facial expressions, and interactions between dancers and the audience. The immersive nature of this approach enables the collection of contextual details and subtle behaviours that written sources alone cannot capture. Comprehensive review and analysis of a range of relevant documentation—both historical and contemporary—including: Academic articles and scholarly books, Archival documents and records, Dance scripts and Visual media (photographs, video recordings, etc.) The objective is to trace the evolution of Legong dance



and to understand the various meanings and cultural associations attributed to different dance elements over time. Structured questionnaires are administered to a targeted selection of the general public and individuals interested in Balinese traditional arts. These instruments generate quantitative data reflecting current levels of awareness, appreciation, and perception of Legong dance. Survey findings offer a means to contextualize Legong's contemporary relevance and societal resonance.

2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

A range of **analytical techniques** are applied to interpret the collected data, facilitating a multidimensional understanding of Legong dance:

- **Historical Analysis:** The evolution and transformations of Legong dance are traced across different periods, examining how political, social, and cultural changes have impacted the dance's form, function, and role within Balinese society. This analysis provides a grounded historical framework for understanding the contemporary status of Legong.
- **Semiotic Analysis:** The research applies semiotic theory to interpret the symbolic language of Legong dance, focusing on hand gestures, body movements, and other performative signs. By decoding these signs, the study uncovers deeper philosophical and spiritual messages embedded within the choreography.
- **Narrative and Thematic Analysis:** Special attention is devoted to the storylines and thematic content communicated through the dance. Analysis explores how movements and gestures function not merely as aesthetic expressions, but as narrative tools—conveying emotion, story, and cultural meaning.
- **Thematic Categorization and Pattern Recognition:** Qualitative and quantitative findings are organized into thematic categories to facilitate the identification of recurring patterns, relationships, and overarching themes. This process aids in revealing how symbolic, artistic, and cultural components interact within the context of Legong dance.
- **Cultural and Contextual Analysis:** The research situates Legong dance within its broader cultural milieu, emphasizing the influence of Balinese Hinduism, collective beliefs, and mythological storytelling. Consideration of these elements is essential for fully appreciating the dance's meaning and ongoing relevance.
- **Triangulation:** To reinforce the credibility of research findings, data from observations, document reviews, questionnaires, and expert interviews are systematically cross-verified. This process ensures consistency and reliability across different data sources, ultimately contributing to a robust and multidimensional analysis.

Through this structured methodology, the research provides both a nuanced appreciation of Legong dance's cultural significance and a critical assessment of its contemporary role in society.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Historical Origins of Legong Dance

Legong dance first emerged in the palaces of Bali during the late 19th century, primarily serving the entertainment needs of the royal court. According to accounts, a prince from Sukawati, while recovering from illness, envisioned a mesmerizing performance featuring two maidens dancing gracefully to enchanting gamelan music. This dream ultimately materialized as the creation of the Legong dance (Vickers, 2011). The development of Legong was significantly shaped by Gambuh, an older form of Balinese dance-drama. Gambuh is known for its elaborate and extended narratives, numerous characters, and highly complex movements. Legong refined these traditional elements, paring down the lengthy stories into a more focused performance that prioritized intricate movements and expressive storytelling.

Royal palaces (*puri*) played a pivotal role as centres of Legong development: Dancers received meticulous, rigorous training within palace grounds, which ensured the consistent preservation and enhancement of the dance form. The system of palace patronage fostered



intergenerational transmission of skills and knowledge, resulting in a lineage of highly skilled performers (Davies, 2008). Initially, Legong possessed strong sacred connotations and was predominantly presented as part of religious rituals and ceremonies. Over time, Legong transitioned towards a more secular role, becoming a popular form of entertainment. Despite this shift, the dance maintains aspects of its original spiritual essence. This evolution is indicative of the broader, dynamic nature of Balinese cultural practices, which adapt to changing contexts while preserving core elements.

3.1.2 Evolution of Form and Function

Traditionally, Legong's choreography was linked closely to the royal courts, with each movement meticulously crafted to highlight the elegance and discipline of the elite. In recent decades, the choreography has undergone significant changes, responding to evolving artistic sensibilities and broader societal shifts. Modern choreographers such as I Wayan Balawan and Made Darta have been instrumental in integrating new movements and gestures, making the performance more dynamic and visually engaging (Gamelan, 2018). These innovations often include fusion elements from global dance forms like contemporary ballet and modern dance, reflecting ongoing adaptation to international audiences while honouring traditional roots (Stepputat, 2021).

The rise of tourism and the globalization of Balinese culture have necessitated these adaptations. As performances increasingly cater to both local and international spectators, there is a conscious balance between retaining traditional elements and introducing innovations to engage broader audiences. Traditionally, Legong was accompanied by a specific configuration of gamelan instruments, including gender, rebab, and gongs. The music was matched directly to the dancers' gestures and movements. Over time, gamelan accompaniment has been expanded and enriched: Modern performances frequently incorporate additional instruments such as suling (flute) and gangsa (keyed metallophones), which serve to enhance the musical texture (Vickers, 2009). There has been a marked increase in rhythmic experimentation, with composers adopting syncopated rhythms and complex time signatures—a departure from traditional Balinese meters (Widiada, 2015). These changes serve both artistic and practical functions: Aesthetically, they create a more immersive auditory experience that complements the visual aspects of the dance. Practically, the expanded and flexible music arrangement allows Legong to adapt to new performance contexts, particularly for the growing international and tourist audience. The evolution of Legong's musical accompaniment thus mirrors larger trends in the globalization and ongoing transformation of Balinese performing arts (Picard, 1990).

Legong Dance originated from Bali's royal courts, influenced by earlier forms like Gambuh, and has undergone significant transformation in both its choreography and music. The transition from sacred ritual to widely accessible performance art reflects both cultural dynamism and the response to international interest. Continuous innovation in movement and musical style, driven by changing audiences and global influences, ensures that Legong remains an enduring and adaptive feature of Balinese cultural heritage.

Traditionally, Legong performers were adorned in highly symbolic and ornate costumes. These featured golden crowns, impressive headdresses, and meticulously embroidered textiles. Costume design was not merely decorative but served as an emblem of social status, reflecting the dancer's place within Bali's caste system (Davies, 2007). The meticulous detail in attire and accessories underscored both the dancer's role within the performance and broader Balinese aesthetic ideals. In present-day practice, Legong costumes display a fusion of classic and contemporary elements. Iconic features such as golden jewellery and vibrant silk fabrics remain central to the visual aesthetic. However, designers frequently incorporate synthetic fabrics and lighter materials to enhance comfort and durability—an especially practical adaptation for frequent performances, particularly those oriented toward tourists (Bandem & deBoer, 1978). There is visible experimentation with patterns and embellishments, reflecting the influence of global fashion as well as the growing desire to keep the tradition vibrant and relevant. Costume modifications have not



only addressed practical issues for performers – such as reducing the physical burden during long performances – but have also contributed to the evolution of Balinese textile arts. These changes indicate that Legong is not a static tradition but a living, adaptive art form.

The approach to makeup within Legong has likewise shifted. Historically, the makeup was intricate and bold, with heavy red and black hues to powerfully emphasize dancers' eyes and lips. The intention largely focused on creating dramatic, stylized expressions visible from a distance in large temple or court settings. In recent performances, makeup is used more dynamically to support the psychological portrayal of characters and to enrich the emotional intensity of the dancers' facial expressions (Siegel, 1991). This adjustment mirrors broader changes in performance aesthetics, where eliciting emotional resonance has become increasingly significant.

These developments in both costume and makeup highlight not just innovations in style but the inherent adaptability of Legong. The continued weaving of traditional motifs with modern materials and design sensibilities illustrates how the dance maintains its heritage even as it engages contemporary expectations and the demands of the international stage (Dibia, 2012). Ultimately, such evolutions ensure that Legong remains both culturally authentic and globally relevant, demonstrating its enduring vitality within Bali's artistic landscape.

Historically, Legong was intimately linked with the royal courts of Bali. Performances were exclusive, reserved for elites and often entwined with palace rituals or religious observances. The dance played a role in reflecting the refinement, power, and spiritual devotion of the court, reinforcing both social hierarchy and sacred tradition. The surge in cultural tourism throughout Bali profoundly altered where and how Legong is performed (McIntosh, 2014). Today, it is not uncommon for the dance to be staged in resorts, community gathering spaces, and at festivals designed for local and international visitors. This transition has democratized access to Legong, allowing far more people to witness and appreciate its artistry. Performances are now widely attended by tourists who are eager for authentic cultural experiences, significantly expanding the traditional audience.

The new context of performance raises important questions about authenticity and commercialism. With Legong increasingly tailored towards the expectations of global audiences, concerns have arisen regarding the dilution or commodification of traditional meaning (Stepputat, 2021). Certain ritualistic or spiritually significant elements may be scaled back or adjusted for entertainment-focused presentations. Nevertheless, this expanded exposure has generated tangible benefits. The dance has gained substantial international recognition, attracting scholarly attention and institutional support for preservation. Legong's increased visibility ensures its continuity, even in the face of rapid social change and globalization (Vickers, 2009). The integration of Legong into contemporary cultural and tourism circuits has helped solidify its position as a central symbol of Balinese identity.

The transformation of Legong's performance context demonstrates its resilience and flexibility as an art form. While debates continue over authenticity versus adaptation, the fact remains that Legong persists as a living expression of Balinese heritage – negotiating its past while engaging with a global audience.

3.1.3 Legong in the Modern Era

The preservation of Legong, a dance of remarkable intricacy and historical significance in Bali, has become a focal point of both cultural anxiety and dedicated action. This concern is hardly unfounded. In the contemporary landscape, where the forces of modernization often manifest as a relentless push to cater to tourism, the threat of cultural dilution looms large. Institutions – including dance schools and cultural organizations – have responded by systematizing Legong, recording every detail from minute hand gestures to subtle bodily movements, with the express purpose of safeguarding the dance's identity against the commodifying tendencies of performance for foreign audiences.

These efforts, while often construed as rigid or restrictive, emerge from an acute awareness that even minor adjustments for entertainment's sake may erode the traditions that imbue Legong



with its unique cultural value. Particularly within the context of commercialized performances – such as those staged in hotels and resorts, optimized for social media and international spectatorship – the risk of losing the spirit underlying the dance becomes especially pronounced. Standardization, therefore, operates as both a protective shield and a declaration; it is, in effect, a collective assertion that tradition is not to be carelessly modified in pursuit of immediate appeal.

Yet, it must be recognized that artistic expression is rarely static. Even amid comprehensive efforts to codify Legong, practitioners invariably interject their own interpretations and sensibilities. The phenomenon of regional variation is particularly illustrative here: Ubud, Sanur, Denpasar – each region in Bali presents its own iteration of Legong, distinguished by unique costumes, musical arrangements, and even choreography. This regional diversity is far from a threat; rather, it attests to the vitality and adaptability of the tradition. Legong, in this sense, operates less as a static relic and more as a living, evolving tapestry, wherein each locality reimagines the canon according to its own aesthetic and social contexts. Such pluralism need not dilute the form's essence; if anything, it strengthens Legong by fostering continuous dialogue between preservation and innovation. This patchwork of styles epitomizes the broader dynamism characteristic of Balinese performance culture, illustrating that tradition, to endure, must remain responsive to its environment.

In recent years, this process has been further amplified by the emergence of contemporary choreographers who are willing – indeed, eager – to push the boundaries of Legong. Innovations range from the introduction of novel narrative elements and choreography to the incorporation of modern dance movements that would likely have startled earlier generations. Nevertheless, these artists frequently retain Legong's core iconography, ensuring that the resulting works both honour and update the tradition. These acts of creative adaptation serve a dual function: culturally, they help Legong avoid becoming an object of mere touristic consumption, relegated to the status of a “living fossil”; socially, they rekindle interest among younger generations and global audiences, positioning the dance as relevant and compelling amidst global artistic currents. The continual negotiation between fidelity to tradition and receptivity to novel influences is not always without tension, but it is precisely this negotiation that has prevented Legong from ossifying into irrelevance.

Of course, the relationship between Legong and the tourism industry is both potent and ambivalent. As one of Bali's most recognizable cultural exports, Legong enjoys near-ubiquity in hotels, resorts, and formal cultural venues. This popularity has tangible benefits for local communities: increased financial investment, expanded employment opportunities, and greater institutional support for education and training. Performances are characterized by heightened spectacle – elaborate costumes, dramatic staging, and energetic musical accompaniment – all designed to enhance the experience for an international, and often uninitiated, audience. Yet, this commercial success is not without its detractors. Some Balinese artists and scholars express concern that the spiritual and ritualistic dimensions of Legong are being sacrificed, replaced by a superficial, tourist-oriented version that lacks depth and authenticity. The core dilemma here is clear: an over-emphasis on accessibility and entertainment may ultimately strip Legong of its cultural meaning, while excessive rigidity risks alienating new generations of performers and viewers.

In addressing these complex dynamics, numerous local actors – including community organizations, traditional dance experts, and education advocates – remain deeply invested in maintaining the integrity and relevance of Legong. Their efforts often combine rigorous pedagogy with advocacy for meaningful public engagement, seeking to ensure that the dance continues to function as both a living art form and an enduring cultural symbol. Contemporary initiatives frequently articulate a sense of pride, and even resistance, asserting ownership over Legong and demanding that outside audiences engage with it not merely as exotic entertainment but as an expression of Balinese heritage with profound social and spiritual underpinnings.

The contemporary trajectory of Legong within Bali's cultural tourism embodies both the resilience and adaptability of this storied dance form. Through a complex interplay of preservation strategies, regional reinterpretation, and innovative creativity, Legong persists as a dynamic art form,



responsive to both internal and external pressures. The sustained challenge lies in negotiating authenticity and innovation—striking a delicate balance that ensures Legong’s survival as both a treasured tradition and a vibrant, evolving facet of Bali’s broader cultural landscape.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Technical Aspects of Legong

The eye movements in Legong, referred to as *seledet*, stand out as one of the hallmark technical elements distinguishing this dance from others. The rapid, side-to-side gestures are not simply ornamental; rather, they form a core part of Legong’s expressive power. Seledet serves both narrative and emotional roles: The eyes act as vehicles for conveying the character’s internal states. They actively guide the audience’s attention to significant moments or changes in the story. Shifts in gaze can signal transitions between emotions such as joy, sorrow, or anger, thereby deepening the audience’s understanding of the narrative.

Mastering seledet requires extensive training. Dancers must: (a) Develop precise coordination to switch directions of gaze at high speed. (b) Maintain this eye work in tandem with the rest of the body’s choreography. (c) Execute rapid and controlled eye gestures while remaining in character and sustaining the wider dramatic effect.

Seledet is intimately woven into the dance’s symbolic fabric. Different characters express themselves through unique qualities of eye movement: Divine or regal characters often utilize slower, more measured eye motions, communicating authority and grace and mischievous or flirtatious figures may rely on quicker, lighter seledet for a playful effect.

When performed skilfully, these eye movements do not simply complement the performance—they heighten its atmosphere, infusing the dance with mysticism, intensity, and immediacy.

The hand gestures, known as *mudras*, constitute another vital technical component of Legong. Each gesture or hand position has prescribed symbolic meaning. Mudras represent aspects of the story—including natural phenomena, divine beings, mythological figures, and a wide spectrum of human emotions.

Through precise mudras, dancers are able to communicate nuances of the narrative: A single hand gesture might symbolize grief, joy, anger, or other complex emotions. By layering different mudras, dancers construct multi-dimensional visual storytelling that eliminates the need for spoken words.

Proficiency in mudras requires: Fine motor control and dexterity, as the shapes are often intricate. Deep familiarity with the symbolic system underpinning each gesture. The ability to seamlessly integrate these gestures into the full body movement, maintaining dramatic and visual coherence.

Mudras serve not only to depict external actions but also to reflect the character’s psychological and emotional landscape: For instance, a dancer may begin with clenched hands to depict tension or preparation for conflict and then gradually open them to signify achievement or resolution. The hands interact with both the body and face to convey a character’s internal journey. The interplay between mudras, body movement, and facial expression in Legong is central to its impact: This integrated system allows for a complex, almost poetic form of communication. The visual and emotional cohesion achieved transforms the dance from mere performance into an immersive narrative art form.

The mastery of seledet and mudras is indispensable to Legong’s unique expression. These technical aspects allow the dance to communicate complex stories and emotions without verbal language, elevating Legong into a multidimensional and immersive form of theatrical art. The Legong dance is distinguished by a meticulous choreographic structure, organized into a sequence of stages that uphold both narrative and thematic integrity. Each component of the performance has its own function, contributing to an overall dramatic arc rooted in traditional Balinese storytelling. The following section outlines these key stages, with additional commentary to offer further insight into the artistry and symbolism at play.



The Pepeson marks the beginning of the Legong performance. Traditionally, the Condong dancer—often a young female—enters the stage alone. This brief yet pivotal segment serves as the opening exposition, acting as a narrative overture. The Condong establishes the emotional atmosphere and thematic direction of the dance. Her gestures and demeanour orient the audience, preparing them for the unfolding story. The Condong's role is foundational, laying the groundwork for later narrative developments. This introductory solo is more than a formality; it signals the importance of ritualized beginnings in Balinese performance traditions (Vickers, 2009).

The Bapang stage begins as the principal Legong dancers enter, shifting the performance's energy and focus. At this point, the performance transitions from exposition to the initial narrative conflict or relational dynamic. Dancers often move in unison, yet with nuanced dialogues of movement that hint at character relationships. The choreography grows increasingly intricate, requiring exceptional technical skill. These interactions set the stage for the main story. The interplay between dancers introduces tension, anticipation, and foreshadows the emotional stakes to come (Stepputat, 2021).

In the Pengawak, the central plot unfolds. This phase constitutes the narrative "heart" of the Legong, featuring both significant character development and plot progression. Movements are notably fluid and expressive, incorporating detailed hand gestures (*mudras*) and nuanced eye movements. These lend depth and subtlety to the portrayal of shifting emotions and pivotal events. The intensity of expression in this segment often reaches its peak, with dancers weaving together gesture, gaze, and rhythm to embody the story's main themes and conflicts (Siegel, 1991). *Pengipuk* typically focuses on duet sequences that highlight intimacy or conflict. The pacing here tends to slow, emphasizing emotional expression over technical complexity. These scenes dramatize romantic attraction, rivalry, or profound emotional connection. The choreography becomes more introspective, often allowing audiences to witness the interior worlds of the characters. Such moments are crucial for creating narrative depth, adding layers of meaning and emotional resonance absent from more action-oriented sections (Picard, 1990). The *Pesiat* marks the climax, where conflict reaches its apogee—physically and emotionally. Dancers engage in aggressive, highly charged movements that depict battle or confrontation. Energy and intensity are paramount. Fast-paced footwork, dramatic poses, and powerful group formations dominate this segment.

This section encapsulates the dramatic high point, where personal or collective struggles within the story are enacted and, ultimately, resolved (Widiada, 2015). *Pekaad* brings the performance full circle. The choreography returns to a more tranquil, harmonious idiom, signifying the restoration of order. Through serene gestures and carefully orchestrated exits, dancers bring narrative closure—often evoking peace, forgiveness, or renewal. This concluding portion reflects broader Balinese values regarding harmony, cyclical time, and ritual purification (Stepputat, 2021). This structured sequence forms not just a visually elaborate spectacle, but a narratively coherent work. Each stage builds upon the last, ensuring the audience is led through a series of escalating dramatic and emotional arcs.

By adhering to this traditionally prescribed framework, Legong upholds its place in Balinese cultural identity. The form's ritualistic and aesthetic discipline is as much about preserving history as it is about providing dynamic, contemporary artistic experiences (Davies, 2007). Ultimately, it is this intersection of precise structure and profound expressivity that allows Legong to function as both captivating performance and living narrative heritage.

3.2.2 Philosophical Aspects of Legong

Legong, much like other major Balinese dance traditions, is fundamentally woven into the spiritual and philosophical ideology of Bali—specifically the indigenous *Tri Hita Karana*. *Tri Hita Karana* literally translates to "three causes of happiness" or well-being, and it is central to how Balinese society organizes its sense of order and spiritual health.

This philosophy emphasizes three essential relationships: (a) Harmony among humans, (b) Harmony between humans and the environment, (c) Harmony between humans and the divine. In



practice, Legong is not merely a form of artistic entertainment, but a spiritual offering – an act of devotion meant to sustain equilibrium in the community and the cosmos. Each component – whether the dancers’ meticulously controlled movements, the hypnotic rhythms of gamelan, or the ritual arrangement of the performance space – serves a unifying philosophical intention. Dancers, often embodying goddesses or sacred characters, are positioned as intermediaries, translating spiritual energy through their choreography. Through these acts, the belief in the sanctity of artistic expression and its place within religious ritual becomes manifest.

The structure of Legong inherently expresses the balance Tri Hita Karana demands; the relationship among dancers, and between dancers and audience, mirrors the web of connection among humans, nature, and gods. The dance becomes a mechanism for recalibrating the balance between good and evil, chaos and order, the tangible world and the intangible realm – an idea that is highly visible during ritual performances (Picard, 1990).

Traditionally, Legong is performed in temples or during religious festivals; its context is always deeply sacred. The costuming – elaborate, ornate, and informed by centuries-old symbolism – serves not just aesthetic function but amplifies the dancer’s connection to the divine. Notably, dancers report a sense of leaving the ordinary self, becoming a vessel for the spiritual forces the dance intends to channel (Siegel, 1991). The performance acts as collective ritual, reaffirming the communal ties to divine powers and to one another, with the arts thus positioned as a central pillar of communal and personal well-being.

Through the practical enactment of Tri Hita Karana, Legong transcends mere artistic value, becoming a living philosophy – a spiritual technology for aligning community, environment, and divinity (Vickers, 2009). The artistic, symbolic, and social aspects of Legong demonstrate the Balinese commitment to art as a form of service to both spiritual and communal health. This approach reinforces a broader understanding: in Balinese culture, art’s highest function is not individual expression or entertainment, but the nurturing and renewal of spiritual bonds and collective values. The performance, therefore, becomes a tool for ensuring ongoing social harmony and spiritual resilience – an essential practice rather than a decorative pastime.

Every gesture in Legong is deliberate, functioning as a visual language that communicates spiritual concepts and mythological narratives. Hand positions carry specific meanings – a raised hand might signal the presence of a goddess, while an open palm can symbolize states of tranquillity or peace. These gestures are not simply decorative, but serve as conduits for meaningful interaction among performer, audience, and divinity. Each position and motion has historical and spiritual resonance, drawing upon centuries of layered associations.

The movement of the eyes – termed *seledet* – is another critical device. These swift, side-to-side gaze shifts represent more than technical prowess; they symbolize heightened perception and divine vision. Through their eyes, dancers are believed to see both the worldly and the spiritual, functioning as conduits for sacred messages across realms. These nuanced visual cues signal dramatic shifts in mood and meaning for the audience, making the eyes crucial in both narrative and ritual dimensions.

The choreography as a whole is structured to reference mythological episodes, spiritual struggles, or divine attributes. The synchronization of music, movement, and costume forms a holistic ritual language, reinforcing the symbolic intentions embedded throughout the performance. Legong, through its gestural and choreographic complexity, operates not only as staged drama but as a practical means of communication between the human and the divine. The dance’s symbolic lexicon is kept alive through oral tradition and communal practice, making each performance both a unique spiritual event and an act of cultural preservation. By embedding this dense web of symbolism in everyday ritual and communal life, Legong strengthens collective memory and reaffirms the centrality of the arts in mediating between physical reality and spiritual ideals.

Legong, one of Bali’s most renowned traditional dances, is far more than a staged performance for visitors – its symbolism and ritualistic structure represent a living heritage,



anchoring contemporary Balinese identity in ancient mythologies and long-held spiritual traditions. The symbolism deeply embedded within Legong performances acts as a linchpin for preserving Balinese culture. Every gesture, eye movement, and fan flick in the choreography is meticulously crafted, each carrying layers of meaning rooted in mythology, cosmology, and spirituality.

These symbolic movements bridge the gap between modern audiences and Bali's ancestral past. In the face of accelerating globalization and mass tourism, the rich symbolism functions as a cultural filter, protecting Legong from becoming a diluted or commercialized spectacle. The survival of these symbolic gestures and ritual elements is not only a gesture of respect for the past but also an ongoing assertion of spiritual and cultural authenticity. Legong performers, through precise adherence to the symbolic codes of the dance, reinforce a communal identity – the dance becomes a vessel for transmitting values and knowledge across generations. Legong finds philosophical depth in the concept of *Tri Hita Karana* – Bali's traditional principle of harmony between people, nature, and the divine.

This framework transforms the dance into more than a visual art; it is a lived philosophy, enacted through ritualized movement and deep symbolisms. Each performance enables both the dancer and the audience to engage with Balinese cosmology, reinforcing a shared sense of cosmic balance and spiritual belonging. The synergy between narrative choreography and symbolic movement enhances Legong's spiritual potency, turning it into a medium for active spiritual communication and cultural education. Symbolism in Legong is not passive or ornamental; it is actively shaping how communities relate to their spiritual environment and themselves.

In a changing world, as market forces and touristic interests threaten to trivialize traditional practices, Legong's embedded symbolism safeguards its sacred foundations. The continued reverence for symbolic meaning ensures that Legong remains an authentic cultural artifact, rather than simply a tourist commodity. The incorporation of symbolism and underlying philosophy enables Legong to function as a "living bridge," connecting the past with the present. Through careful transmission of gesture, meaning, and ritual, younger generations are able to access the spiritual wisdom and cultural values that form the core of Balinese identity.

In essence, the symbolic language of Legong is indispensable to its endurance and significance. By intertwining ritual, myth, and philosophy, Legong remains a living testimony to the depth and adaptability of Balinese culture. Its ongoing vitality, amidst modern pressures, illustrates the importance of symbolism – not only as artistic ornamentation but as the foundation for cultural and spiritual survival.

Through its elaborate gestures, expressive motifs, and philosophical grounding, Legong continues to transmit the spiritual and cultural DNA of Bali. The dance is not merely a vestige of the past, but an evolving tradition – upholding integrity, fostering community, and guiding Bali through the shifting landscape of globalization and modernity.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion

Legong Dance stands as a quintessential representation of Bali's traditional performing arts. With its combination of intricate hand gestures (*mudras*), expressive facial movements, and complex choreographic sequences, Legong is a testament to the island's sophisticated artistry. Each movement and gesture is heavily laden with symbolic and philosophical significance, mirroring the profundity of Balinese cosmology and spirituality. Central to Legong's meaning is the philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*, which advocates a harmonized relationship among humanity, nature, and the divine. Through this, Legong transcends its role as mere performance – it emerges as a spiritual offering and a living vessel of Balinese cultural identity.

Historically, Legong was a privilege of the palace – performed in sacred rituals and presented as exclusive entertainment for Balinese royalty. Over time, Legong has transitioned from its strictly sacred and exclusive origins to become universally accessible, captivating both local and



international audiences. Despite opening up to the broader public and evolving amidst societal change, globalization, and the rise of tourism, Legong retains its fundamental cultural essence.

There is a noticeable decline in interest among the younger generation, many of whom are drawn to modern, digital forms of expression. The pervasive influence of global culture poses a risk of diluting local artistic uniqueness. The trend toward commercializing traditional arts may threaten the authenticity of Legong Dance. Research highlights that with targeted strategies—including education (both formal and informal), integration into cultural tourism, technology-based documentation, and strengthened community engagement—Legong can thrive as a dynamic cultural legacy. As a cultural tourism attraction, Legong generates meaningful economic benefits for local communities while projecting Bali's distinct cultural identity globally. Effective long-term preservation requires concerted collaboration among multiple stakeholders: government officials, local artists, academic experts, and tourism practitioners.

It is crucial for government agencies, educational institutions, and arts organizations to develop and implement structured Legong Dance education programs. Programs should be firmly rooted within schools, cultural institutions, and sanggar (art studios). Prioritize direct mentorship, with experienced dancers passing knowledge and values to younger generations. Instill understanding of Legong's spiritual, philosophical, and aesthetic dimensions. Artistic innovation should be encouraged within the traditional framework to attract younger audiences and tourists. Experiment with choreography, costume design, or stage production, provided the artistic core remains intact. Innovations should revitalize interest rather than compromise authenticity.

Legong Dance performances should not be reduced to mere entertainment; they must serve as educational attractions. Present Legong at temples or cultural stages, accompanied by interpretive narratives detailing its symbolism and historical background. Educate audiences on the deeper meanings embedded in the performance. Broader campaigns are needed to nurture pride and awareness of Legong as a defining facet of Balinese identity. Organize cultural seminars, exhibitions, school outreach, and community forums. Engage the broader public in meaningful cultural discourse. Preservation efforts should be anchored in collaboration among government, artists, scholars, and tourism entities. Joint action in funding, policy development, research, and public promotion. Foster shared responsibility and commitment to heritage preservation.

Digital tools are vital for documenting, archiving, and disseminating knowledge of Legong Dance to both local and international audiences. Establish online archives, produce video documentation, and maintain active presence on social media. Ensure accessibility for future generations and facilitate global appreciation. By addressing these points, Bali can preserve the Legong Dance as a vibrant, evolving, and authentic cultural heritage—one that remains central to Balinese identity while adapting to the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world.

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