

# Similarities Between Stylizations of the Dance Movements of Gending Sriwijaya with the Reliefs in the Borobudur Temple, Indonesia

Treny Hera<sup>1</sup>, Agus Cahyono<sup>2</sup> Malarsih Malarsih<sup>3</sup> & Eko Sugiarto<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctoral Program of Art Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>2,3</sup>Department of Drama, Dance, and Music, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Department of Fine Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding email: [aguscahyono@mail.unnes.ac.id](mailto:aguscahyono@mail.unnes.ac.id)

Received	Reviewed	Revised	Published
23.11.2023	10.12.2024	28.01.2024	31.01.2024

<https://doi.org/10.61275/ISVSej-2024-11-01-25>

## Abstract

Borobudur is an International cultural heritage site approved by the UNESCO. Reliefs on the walls of the Borobudur Temple have similarities with the dance symbols used often in the Indonesian dance movements. In fact, *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movements appear to stylize the reliefs of the Borobudur Temple into dance movements. This research examines this phenomenon.

The research was conducted at Magelang in the Borobudur Temple in Palembang, South Sumatera. Data was gathered by observation through site visits to the Borobudur temple. They focus on reliefs depicting dance and Buddha statues and on the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movements and documentation. Still photography was used. They were analyzed by using interpretative descriptive analysis.

Findings show that the gestures similar to the aesthetics of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movements exist on the reliefs symbols. They appear as a manifestation of religious, social, and cultural practices of the region. They also show that acculturation of Palembang culture have manifested in the reliefs, Buddha statues, and the stupas at Borobudur. The relationship of the reliefs at the Borobudur Temple to *Gending Sriwijaya* dance can be seen as an iconic representation of Buddhism during the Sriwijaya Kingdom. This has influenced the dance movements in Palembang.

**Keywords:** Borobudur, Buddha, Reliefs, Dance symbols

## Introduction

Borobudur is a phenomenal Buddhist temple and a symbol of Indonesia. It is a masterpiece of the Buddhists and has aesthetic, cultural, artistic, architectural, and spiritual values. It stands as the sacred stupa and is used as a place of worship. Traditional stories exist behind the making of the Borobudur, which articulate the rules and orders that have existed and have been used as a guide to show the relationship between components to create a structured temple architecture. The structured arrangement of the temple has high artistic and spiritual values as the symbol of human life and life after death (Yatno, 2020). This temple as a symbol

of Buddhism has become one of the declared World Heritage Sites of UNESCO. Accordingly, the government has legitimized the temple management through the Law No. 11 of 2010 related to Cultural Heritage. There, the temples are categorized as the sites managed by the government. Borobudur is thus the art of the Buddhists and has aesthetic, cultural, artistic, architectural, and spiritual values. The art containing aesthetic values arise as a reflection of one of the dance arts in Palembang, in the South Sumatera Province.

History of *Gending Sriwijaya* represents the previous history during which cultural values and doctrines of the society of Palembang has manifested. As Prameswari (2022) points out, Borobudur Temple is a phenomenal historical heritage and a symbol of glorious Indonesian culture and history. Interestingly, there exists a significant relationship between dance movements and the reliefs of the Borobudur temple. It has manifested in both the name and the movement.

In fact, as Hera (2016) points out, it arises from the movement of a religious leader who was obligated to spread the goodness of all the aspects. The Borobudur movement shows in three directions of the temple: namely the right side, the front side, and the left side. Indeed, it has become a specific movement in South Sumatera called the *flick* motion, and symbolizes the human feelings: happiness, sadness, goodness, or evil.

This paper examines the similarities between the gestures present in the reliefs and the movements in dance. Its aim is to explore the relations that exist between the gestures present in the reliefs of the Borobudur temple and *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movements.

Its objectives are:

1. To interpret the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance as a traditional dance that has historical values. It is necessary to use meaningful symbols by village communities who live and develop in an area, especially in the city of Palembang, South Sumatra.
2. To interpret the similarities of the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movements which stylize the Borobudur temple reliefs into a dance form.

## Theoretical Framework

### Dance Symbolism

According to Djajasudarma (1999) symbols have an indirect relationship with reality. Geertz (1973) says that symbols are material objects, events, actions, utterances and human movements that mark or represent something else or everything that has been given meaning, understood and shared in a community group. Symbols in human life play an important role, because with symbols, people can express one's ideas, thoughts or intentions to other people. Symbols, whether in the form of objects or words, are a medium of communication in human life to express thoughts or ideas.

According to Hadi (2007), a symbol system is something created by people and conventionally used together, regularly. They give an understanding of the nature of people: a framework full of meaning to orient themselves to others, to the environment, and in itself. It is indeed a product and dependency in social interactions. Cassirer (1990) says that people are animal symbolicum, meaning that symbolic thinking and symbolic behavior are human characteristics and all human cultural progress is based on these conditions. Starting from the understanding that humans beings are symbolic animals, it can be said that people cannot be separated from the symbols, because what people do are symbols for themselves and others. This is as same as the statement of Berger (2010) who says that semiotics is a system of signs associated communications with a focus on the attributes of signs that are iconic, indexical and symbolic.

### Stylized Dance Movements

Stylization in dance is a processing of natural forms. Thus, it is possible that from the results of this processing, a new and stylized form is born, but still reflects the original form.

Stylization is the processing of dance movements through the process of sorting them out, and smoothing them until they become beautiful (Elia et al., 2023). According to Marwanto (2007), dance movements used are not everyday movements, but movements that have undergone stylization, refinement and distortion.

The source and starting point for the expression of dance as an art is not limited to the composition of movements alone, but primarily to the human being himself and his interrelationship with his environment, the past environment and the future environment. If it is related historically, the stylization of the reliefs and Buddha statues in the Borobudur temple into the Gending Sriwijaya dance movements is a reflection of the formation of dance choreography in which the arrangement of the hand movements has many similarities with the reliefs and Buddha statues in the Borobudur temple. This is also reinforced by the lyrics of the Gending Sriwijaya dance song, which sounds like this:

*Borobudur...  
Candi Pusaka Zaman Sriwijaya...  
Saksi Luhur...  
Berdiri Tegak Kokoh Sepanjang Masa...  
Memasyurkan Indonesia di Benua Asia...  
Melambangkan...  
Keagungan Sejarah Nusa dan Bangsa...*

Choreology theory interprets the motion of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance that stylizes the relief of Borobudur temple into dance motion. Choreology is a way to recognize dance including the position of individuals in gender culture, social organization, and economic activity. In fact, chronology theory can be identified by local style and splitting in a large space of freedom to deepen the problems of stylization of the Borobudur temple into the dance movement of *Gending Sriwijaya*. Using an ethno-choreology approach, the background of the origin of the dance, the function, values, and cultural concepts of the dance could be identified. Moreover, the disciplines integrated on dance can be explored through ethno-choreology theory (Wahyudi, 2021).

This theory is also similar to the ideas of Putra (2000) who says that in analyzing art, one can focus on two types of study: the textual and the contextual. Contextual study is what sees the phenomena of art as an independent text that put the phenomena in a broader socio-cultural context of the society. Textual studies of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance describe the structure of it, while contextual studies reveal the socio-cultural conditions of the community related to the ideas and the concept choreographer to stylize the reliefs of the Borobudur temple into a reflection of dance movements. They are intended to provide educational values through symbols to interpret the value of life between human relationships with God, people with people and people with Nature.

#### Dance movements

Movements in dance appear in two forms: pure and meaningful movements. According to Hadi (2007), pure movement can add artistic values to dance. Movement is an expression of the dancer's body that has meaning. According to Masrurroh (2022), movements in dance embody symbols which can then be translated into certain meanings. As Wibowo (2013) says every dancer's body always has space as being constituted of negative space and positive space and creates an imaginary space without realizing it.

These symbols have meanings and refer to many things: both individuals and phenomena. According to Sahar (2019), symbolic theory is only a theoretical perspective among other explanations. This is known as symbolic theory which was born from the social anthropology tradition that developed in England, pioneered by Victor Turner.

As Kowal (2019) says, universality of the symbolism of Buddhist architectural objects is clearly visible from the history of Buddhist architecture in the East, along with its ease in adapting to local culture in its forms of expression. This is close to contextualism, which is based on local aesthetic patterns. The *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movements were created after the song *Gending Sriwijaya*. Therefore, dance movements depict the lyrics of the song which was created out of longing for the Srivijaya kingdom. The arrangement of the dance movements is adapted to the lyrics of *Gending Sriwijaya*.

The relief forms in the Borobudur temple have been then stylized and developed into the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance form. Thus, if it is said that there are similarities. It is true because every symbol of the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movement has indeed been derived from the Borobudur temple.

## Literature Review

Kasmahidayat, et al. (2021) show that Sriwijaya Gending Dance whose value can still be "lived" in the present life become the basic capital of the community or art actors to continue their lives in the future. According to him, *Gending Sriwijaya* dance whose value can still be "lived" in contemporary life become the basic capital of society or art actors to continue their life in the future).

The relief stylization found at the Borobudur Temple has inspired the *Kama Nilakandi* dance choreography, which has been inspired by the *Kinara Kinari* reliefs found in several places in the Borobudur Temple. This includes the Awadana relief row (north door, under the Lalitawistara relief, the first aisle of Borobudur Temple), and the *Gandawiyuha* relief row (south door, second aisle). As the source of inspiration based on the *Kinara Kinari* story, the dance director is interested in making a dance work with the theme of eternal love that is visualized in the form of group choreography using five female dancers and one male dancer.

Alfaruqi says that

"This artwork is titled *Kama* in Sanskrit means love. While *Nilakandi* is a dark sky blue color (sapphire blue) which often interpreted as a symbol of love, power, wisdom, loyalty and eternity"

According to Alfaruqi (2020)

"this dance is a story of the eternal love of a pair of inseparable creatures named Kinara and Kinari, who takes care of each other, loyal to each other and live in harmony until one day they were separated for one day. Then, the two of them looked for each other as a sign of loyalty until finally the two of them met again. This work is based on the movements of the Hindu-Buddhist tradition which has been then explored as its interpretation".

The stylization of Borobudur temple relief becomes dance movements, analyze the meaning of symbols in ritual activities which are interpreted through visualizations found in Borobudur temple. The Borobudur temple building is focused on the hand movements of Buddha statues, the mudras and the existence of buildings in the form of stupas in Borobudur temple, which will later obtain meaning through interpretation of symbols relate to the statues and reliefs on Borobudur Temple buildings. The visual are interpreted in the context of dance symbols and perceive the similarity between the shape of the dancer's hand with the hand of the Buddha statue on the reliefs at Borobudur Temple.

As Kowal (2019) said studies Buddhist symbolism of the architectural form, reliefs and sculptures which requires particular protection created on the basis of regional patterns and local Javanese culture of everyday life. This temple is one of the most perfect examples of translation of Buddhist cosmology and symbolism into an architectural form.

Then, it can be interpreted the relationship between the reliefs of Borobudur temple which are focused on mudra movements and buildings of the stupas seen from the meaning and claims on behalf of the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movements, the mudra movements, Borobudur movements, and stupa movements will use three dimensional understanding of the meaning of the Victor turner symbol (Sahar, 2019) used to find out the symbolic meaning of *Gending Sriwijaya* as the icon of Palembang, South Sumatera .

Symbols are part of the sign universe, therefore there are three main factors in the use of signs, *stimulants* are objects of events, qualities or relationships that can be seen and used as signs, *references* are things represented by signs, in the form of things related to human experience, in the form of abstract ideas or thoughts, information and perception (Sahar, 2019). As we see to all the events that exist in six movements of the Borobudur statue mudra and the structures contained in the reliefs of Borobudur temple are focused on the movement of mudras and stupa buildings.

This is functional for a community, moreover the creators have a perception in maintaining the continuity of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance as an iconic dance and perceive the birth of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance influenced by the needs of the Japanese Government formed on the meeting of their own needs, welcoming guests with dance performances. Choreographers at that time stylized the reliefs and Buddha statues in Borobudur temple making a system formation to maintain Buddhist values to correlate the needs of society at that time through dance. Then interpreted into the context of symbols textually, as for contextual studies related to the existence of the Sriwijaya Kingdom which became a Buddhist kingdom that was established in the 7th century and centered in Palembang. The purpose of this study is to interpret the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movement which stylized the reliefs of Borobudur temple into dance form.

### **Research Methodology**

This research employs qualitative case studies of reliefs and Buddha statues in the Borobudur temple buildings in Magelang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The study is related to reliefs depicting dance and Buddhist statues in the Stupa. It interprets the Gending Srwijaya dance movements to stylize the reliefs of Borobudur temple into dance form. The Borobudur Temple was chosen as the object of research because it is one of the temples that has a definite connection with the history of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance which reflects Buddhism through dance movements.

The data were gathered by observation and documentation. Still photography was used. Observations made at Borobudur Temple in December 2022 focused on reliefs depicting dance and Buddhist statues in the Stupa. The researchers observed the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movement in Palembang City, South Sumatera to obtain data related to the interpretation of movements that stylized the reliefs of Borobudur temple as a working idea on August 2023. Data analysis in involved interpretaions of the meaning of dance symbols (Arifin, 2015). Data analysis was conducted by interpretive descriptive methods. The results of the analysis are in accordance with the theory of choreology.

### **The Case Study: Borobudur Temple**

Borobudur Temple as a wonder of the world is an inspiration in expressing historical values of fine art and dance. Sriwijaya Gending Dance Performance is a Media of Innovation to develop a cross-cultural local economy

Borobudur with the patterns of temple buildings and carvings show Javanese patterns in the mid-8th century AD. According to Suhaeni (2008), the relief in the Southeast corner has writing classified as ancient Javanese and is a transition from Pallawa script in India. In fact,

the Borobudur Temple is used as a place of multidisciplinary learning and used also as a place of pilgrimage and Buddhist rituals.

The temple is surrounded by various facilities that support the tourists to enjoy the beauty of international cultural heritage and increase tourists' insight in learning the history and culture of the Borobudur Temple (Prameswari, 2022). The manager of the temple tourist park area has supplied a sign system in helping employees to monitor tourists not to crowd. This sign system can be divided into two: a general sign system and a health protocol sign system. They are quite effective.

The Borobudur heritage site is chosen as a cultural *saujana* by a network of Indonesian activists and academics. “*Saujana budaya*” is a new term that serves as a translation of the international heritage concept of “cultural landscape”. The concepts of cultural heritage, empower supporters of cultural heritage, thus giving them more choices in the field. Therefore, translation is an act of political defiance, which is a critique of the government's narrow approach to cultural heritage. It also seeks to change cultural heritage management practices, making them more inclusive and sacred and spiritual. According to Andujar (2020), the religious heritage of the Hindu-Buddhist syncretic tradition is associated with the Borobudur Temple and the surrounding region.

### ***Gending Sriwijaya***

Inheritance of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance and educational values at Putri Rambut Selako Art Studio Palembang City shows that *Gending Sriwijaya* dance has potential motion and values that need to be preserved and inherited. Art education in the studio is one of the efforts to inherit traditional dance. Issued by Sanggar which includes two aspects of inheritance, the learning process involves enculturation and performance as socialization activities. They are supported by environmental aspects of student potential, aspects of teacher methods and evaluation of learning to achieve educational goals as an inheritance process. In fact there are values inherited by students through traditional art education at Putri Rambut Selako Art Studio. Researchers classify the values inherited from the Putri Rambut Selako Art Studio. They include:

- 1) Knowledge Value
- 2) Attitude Values
- 3) Assessing Skills (Sari Dyah, 2019).

The Sriwijaya Gending Dance Performance as a media for cross-culture based local economic development innovations shows efforts to create a basic model to determine the synergy of sophisticated cross-cultural-based local wisdom. It involves penta helix mapping, highlighting Sriwijaya Gending dance research as a medium for regional economic growth. Ten role models are used as construction model variables; lotus motif as business development branding; *Gending Sriwijaya* dance history as academic branding, and movement pattern as community branding to develop cross-culture based local economy (Kasmahidayat, 2021).

### **Introduction to the Case Study**

Indonesia is a country that has cultural diversity and has experienced various historical periods (Rukayah, 2023). Traditional Javanese architecture maintains its connection with Nature (Trisno, 2020). The concept of space in Java is similar to the Buddhist concept (Trisno, 2020). This can be seen at the Borobudur.

Borobudur temple building is decorated with 2,672 relief panels and 504 Buddha statues (Anggotra, 2023). A relief serves as a depiction of an event, be it a religious event, or a depiction of a form of great tradition in the society (Liliwari, 2007). In the reliefs arranged on the walls of Borobudur temple, there are kinds of ornamental storytelling and there are three kinds of storytelling pictures. There are also pictures displaying dance movements on the panels of the Borobudur temple as follows.

1. Panels that tell stories with long stories (*Lalitavistara, Gandavyuha, Gandavyuha Bhadracari*)
2. Panels that tell a story with a short story (*Jataka-Avadana*)
3. Panels encrusted with a single storytelling image (*Karmawibhangga*) (Achmadi, 2020).

Reliefs have been used also as a medium for delivering information in the past that connects the interests of the community regarding kinds of activities and lessons related to a sacred doctrine from the monks and pandhitas with the interests of the ruler (king). Then, there is also a form of art tradition that is still related to the tradition of setting 'sima'. There are depictions of this art tradition shown in the relief of *Karmawibhangga* with figures of people carrying musical instruments and dances (Kusuma, 2020). The dance image that appears on the relief is an inspiration in arranging the movements.

Moreover, there are also statues that have become the inspiration in making dances. Arca in Sanskrit means the physical embodiment of a god worshipped by the devotees: the people who devoted or worship (Maulana, 1977). Arca is not only a work of art, but sculpture itself has an important role in worship activities as bound by a number of provisions of the relevant religious sect (Arifin, 2015).

The figures arced on the Borobudur temple are *Dhyani Buddha, Manusi Buddha, and Boddhisatva*. There are 504 statues. This study discusses the statue of the *Dhyani Buddha* statue. The symbols of Buddha's journey is depicted in the form of temple architecture with the concept of a *mandala*. The architectural form of the Borobudur temple is made in the form of a large stupa terrace (*terrace-stupa*) with ten stories. Borobudur Temple is a symbol of a giant *mandala* made three-dimensional. Bernet-Kempers (1976) says that judging from the floor plan, this temple consists of a combination of circle, square, and staircase shapes.

In fact, Borobudur temple is a symbol of *mandala* (Tanudirjo, 2018) which is an intricate pattern composed of squares and concentric circles symbolizing the cosmos or the universe commonly found in *Wajrayana-Mahayana* Buddhism. According to the building plan, the architectural form of Borobudur Temple is a single temple building form. This form is a manifestation of the concept of *Vastu Purusha Mandala* which is a book of guiding building temples or holy places.

## Findings and the Discussion

### Visual Form of the Borobudur Temple and the Dance Movement

According to Muafani (2021), the shape of the Borobudur temple is an inculturation of the stepped *punden* as a characteristic of Nusantara architecture. Casparis, the Dutch archaeologist has said that the name Borobudur comes from the word "*Bumi Sambhara Budhara*". However, this name is the name of a temple mentioned in the *Sri Kahulunan* Inscription (824 AD). Casparis equates the temple or the monastery mentioned in the *Sri Kahulunan* inscription with the Borobudur temple (Maryanto, 2007).

*Poerbatjaraka* and *Stutterheim* argue that the name Borobudur comes from a combination of the words *Boro* and *Budur*. *Boro* comes from the Sanskrit "*Vihara*" which means temple complex (*Bihara*) or dormitory, while *Budur* in Balinese is the same as "*Beduhur*" which means top. Thus, the name Borobudur means dormitory or *bihara* (temple complex) located on a hill (Maryanto, 2007). It can be said that Borobudur is a Buddhist place of worship, where the hearts and minds of the onlookers are focused to the creator. Nevertheless, it has also given rise to some stylisations in a dance form.

Dance is a part of performing arts that has two main components, the verbal and the nonverbal component. While the aural can capture the verbal, visual sense is able to capture the non-verbal component in dance. The motion of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance, which is dominated by representative movements includes Borobudur movements, stupa movements, and *tafakur* movements inspired by the Borobudur Temple as a heirloom temple during the Sriwijaya

Kingdom era. It is suggested that the stylization of statues and reliefs at the Borobudur Temple depict dance movements. For example, the value of life depicted in the hand shape of the Buddha statues and visualized reliefs resemble dance movements.

Sriwijaya Gending Dance is one traditional dance created to commemorate the Sriwijaya Kingdom. It functions as a means of performance in welcoming guests. The relationship between the name of motion and the Borobudur Temple is that the temple was a heritage temple during the Sriwijaya Kingdom Era symbolizing the guidance of the Holy Gautama Buddha Sakti since the Sriwijaya period was influenced by the Hindu and Buddhist doctrines.

Buddhism divides the universe into three elements called Tri Dhatu. Cosmographically the arrangement of the Borobudur temple depicts these aspects as follows.

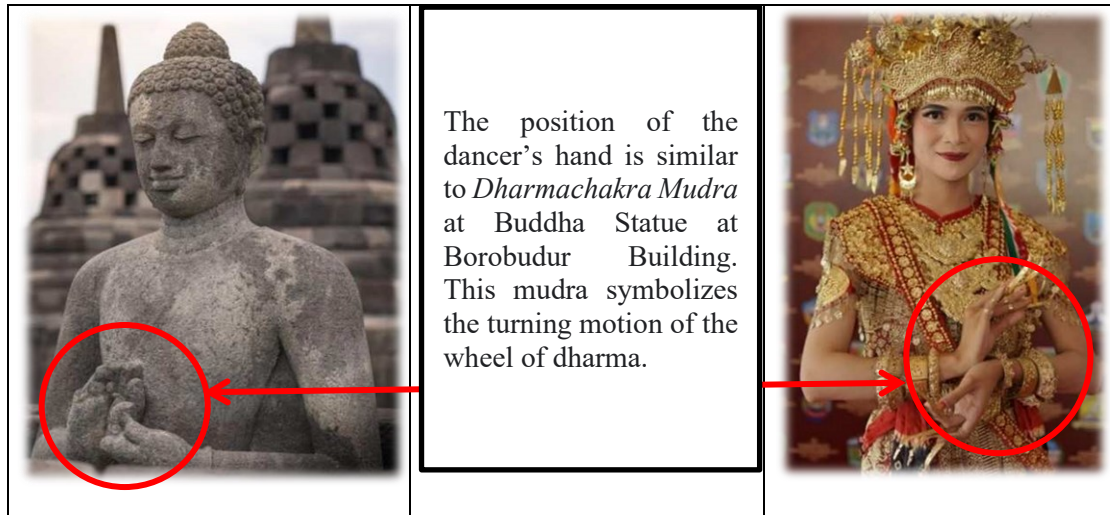
1. The element of Lust (*Kamadhatu*), as the foot of the temple,
2. The element of motion (*Rupadhatu*), as the body of the temple, and
3. The intangible element (*Arupadhatu*), as the head of the temple.

Based on the fact that Buddhism identifies three aspects of the universe as Dhatu, *Gending Sriwijaya* dance artists correlate the meaning of this dance with the stylization of the Buddha statues with its motions. The meaning of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance contextually is to commemorate the Sriwijaya Kingdom which made Borobudur temple as a heritage temple as a witness to the glory of King Syailendara. Therefore, it has interpreted similarities between several motions. the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance with hand shapes on Buddhist statues as well as Borobudur temple reliefs as the reflection of life doctrines contained in the temple building. For example, in the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance, there is a Mudra movement whose dancer's hand shape resembles the hand of a Buddha statue in the Borobudur temple building. *Mudras* are hand positions often used in Buddhist practice to evoke a state of mind.

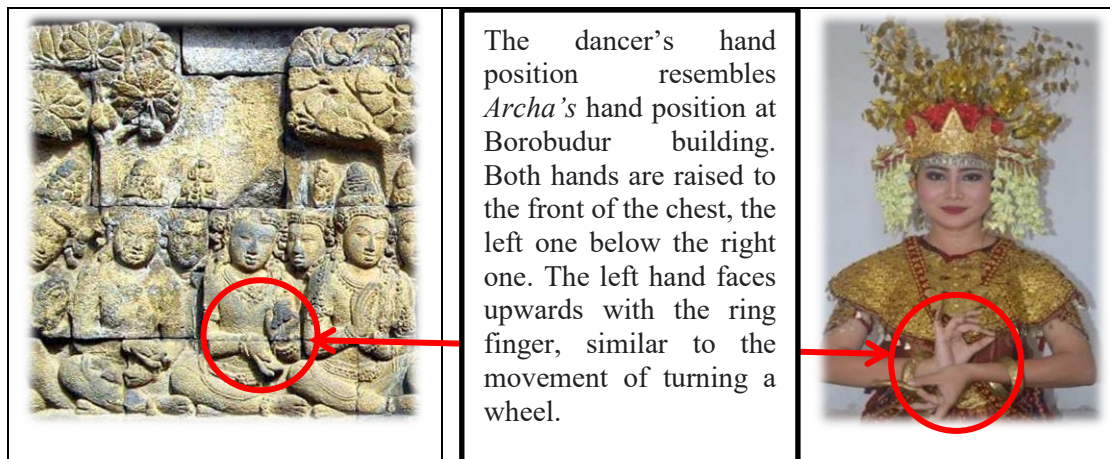
Figure 1 shows Dharmacakra Mudra on a statue in Borobudur. It is seen that both hands are raised to the front of the chest: the left one below the right one. The left hand is facing up with its ring finger, like the motion of turning a wheel. In the Fig 1 on the right, it shows the shape of the hand movements of *Gending Sriwijaya* dancers resembling the shape of the hands of Dharmachakra Mudra tapa buddha. Mudra movements in *Gending Sriwijaya* can be seen as it bring together the two parts of the wrist with the middle finger and thumb touching, and the other finger standing upright.

Equally, there is a similarity in the pattern of dance movements during transition to the count forming a circle, and the floor of the Arupadhatu terrace. Indeed, the elements of the floor plan depict this circularity. The symbolic meaning of this circular floor shape is Man's spiritual journey up to enlightenment. This journey is based on Mahakaruna's deeds of goods and always spreads love towards all His creatures. As can be seen, this mudra symbolizes the motion of turning the wheel of dharma.





**Fig. 1:** *Dharmachakra Mudra* (Left) and Movement of the Dancer's Hands in *Mudra* position (Right)  
Source: Authors

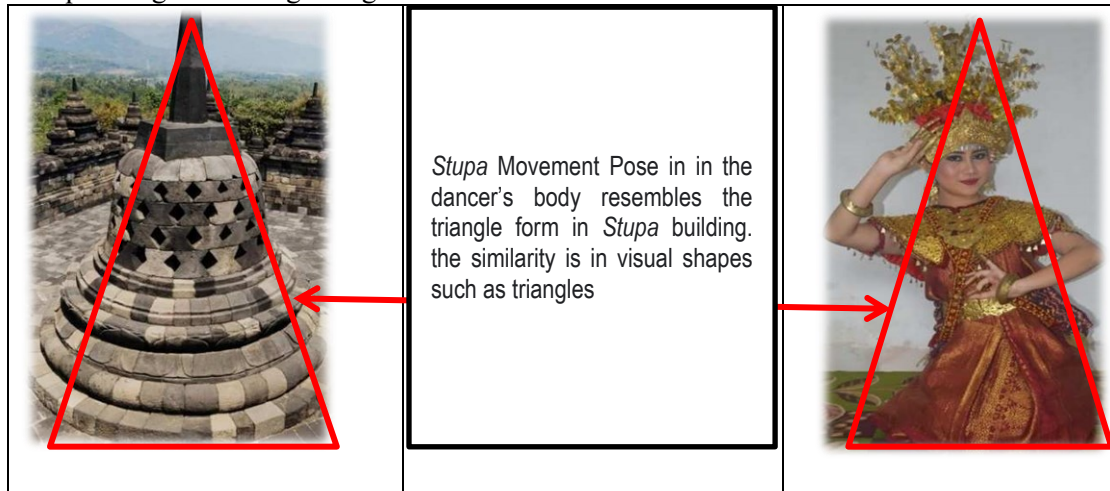


**Fig. 2:** *Mudra* Hand Movement on the relief (Left) and Movement of the Dancer's Hands in *Mudra* (Right)  
Source: Authors

In the Figure 2, the relief of Borobudur temple seems like a hermit. This relief is part of the story of Prince Sudhana participating in an archery competition. The dancer on the right is posing a mudra motion. There are also similarities in the shape of the hands of *Gending Sriwijaya* dancers and the reliefs in the Borobudur temple building. The figure above shows the motion of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movement looking like the shape of a hand on a relief on the Borobudur temple building. The relationship between these two images in terms of the meaning between dance and the source of ideas comes from the Borobudur temple.

The relationship between Borobudur dance movements and the temple also lie in its meaning. As required in trying to improve quality of life, especially to achieve the success of life for people, it is also accompanied by prayer. Thus, the efforts made remain within the corridors of religious practices of the society. In this case, people balance the worship and effort (Saputra, 2016). In this sense, Borobudur movement is an expression of the activities to perfect the effort and prayer. There is also a stupa movement of motion as inspired by the name of the

Stupa of the Borobudur temple. As can be seen, the stupa is formed by rhombic open case holes and quadrangles forming triangles.



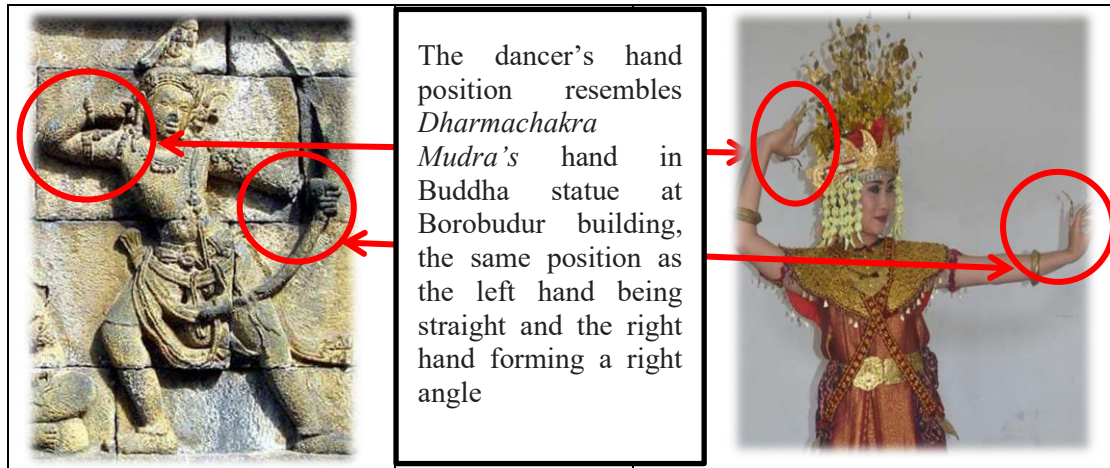
**Fig. 3:** *Stupa* (Left) and *Stupa* Movement Phase (Right)

Source: Authors

In the Figure 3, the dancer is posing the stupa motion and stylize the shape of the stupa that looks like a triangle. The shape of the *Gending Sriwijaya* dancer's motion is the front view while the stupa motion pose, which is with the position of the right hand to the upper side to the right elbow and the left hand to a straight line while forming a triangle resembling a stupa shape.

The symbolic meaning of the rhombus openwork pit is related to the philosophy of the level of perfection. The symbolic meaning of the rectangular openwork hole is related to a simpler philosophy than the rhombic shape which is still relatively large. The symbolic meaning of the stupa of Buddhist cosmology is formed by the universe or *Mandala*. The universe formed is due to the fusion process of five cosmic elements called *Pancadathu*. According to Darmayuda (2020) these elements consist of: earth (prithvi), water (apas), fire (agni), air (vayu), and space (akasha). As it is considered as the meaning of *Stupa* movement in *Gending Sriwijaya* dance, it relates to people who are required to always think first before acting. This demand is intended to every effort made by people to bring benefits both to themselves and others (Saputra, 2016).

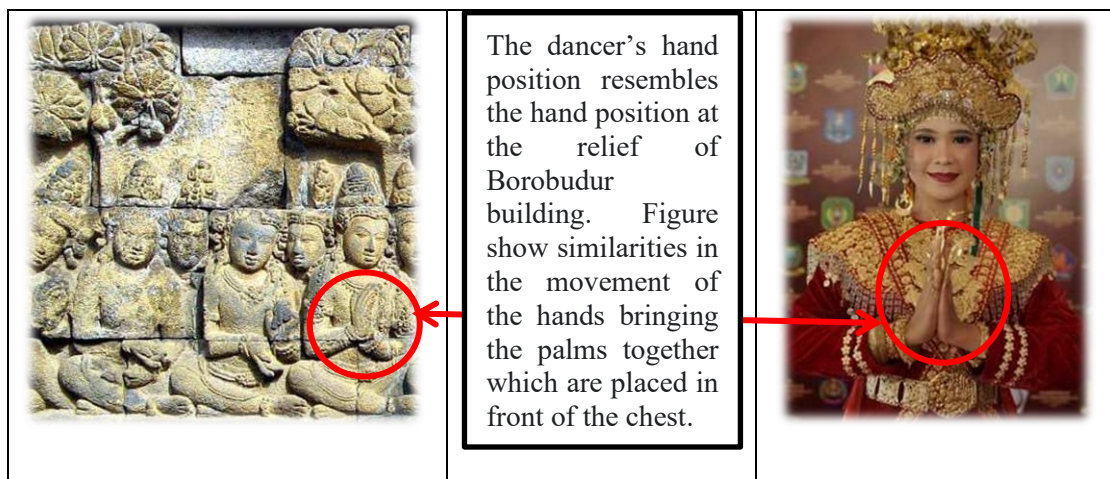
Another motion stylization of the reliefs in the Borobudur temple is the *Siguntang Mahameru* movement. *Siguntang Mahameru* is the name of the highest hill in the city of Palembang. This is a place to perform Buddhist religious ceremonies.



**Fig. 4:** Relief of Prince *Sudhana* shooting archery (Left) and *Siguntang Mahameru* Motion Phase (Right)

Source: Authors

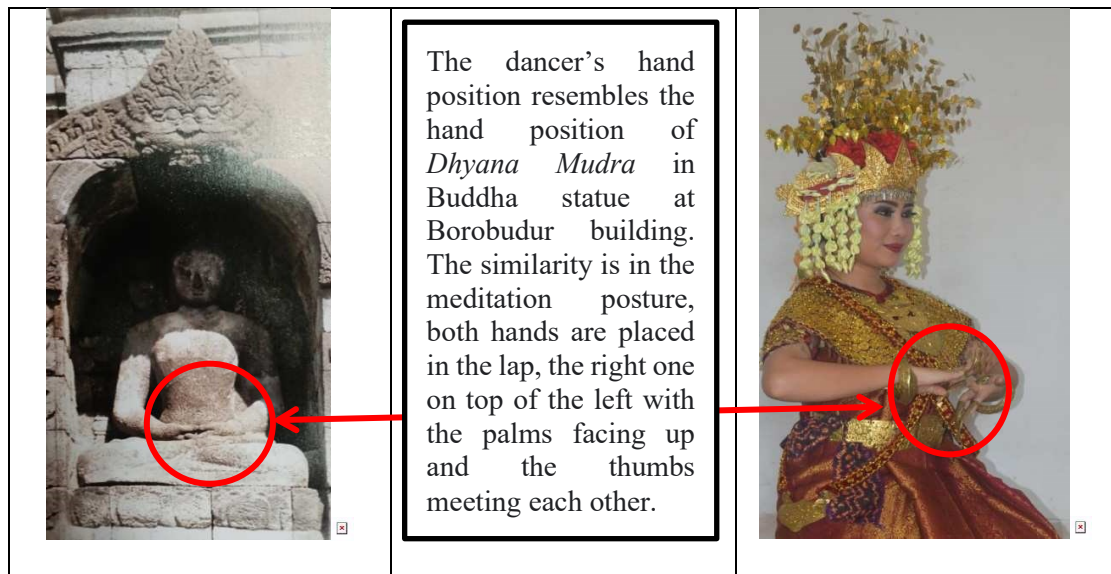
As seen in the Figure 4, the relief visualizes the story of Prince Sudhana while participating in an archery competition as one of the conditions for him to get his wife, Manohara. Again, Sudhana managed to win the competition and he reunite with his wife. This relief is part of the relief which tells the love story of Suddana and Manohara. Suddana is a half-man-half-bird Kinari. In the shape of *Siguntang Mahameru's* motion, the front looks like archery, the left hand straight to the side and the right hand is in a right side right upward elbow while pulling an arrow. If it connects to the relief of the story above, the naming of the *Siguntang Mahameru* movement in *Gending Sriwijaya* dance is that human beings must always surrender to the Almighty. On this, the Fatwa of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II says that "be your position for policy and say regularly" (Nawiyanto, 2016). As seen everywhere, Man's evil deeds has made him wretched, with material possessions, honor and unlimited power. It is impossible to calm regret in a despotic heart and eventually fall into destruction that cannot be good anymore (sevenhoven 1971).



**Fig. 5:** Relief When paying respects to Prince *Sudhana* (Left) and *Siguntang Mahameru* Motion Phase (Right)

Source: Authors

At a glance, the reliefs carved on the Borobudur Temple on the top position of the hands while praying, bringing together the two palms in front of the chest while saluting or worshiping have similarities with the shapes of the hands in the reliefs with the motion of movement of *Gending Sriwijaya* dancers who are posing for prayer or respect. They both bring together the two palms in front of the chest. The meaning of hand gestures like this is respect for fellow human beings since the position of the hands is in front of the chest parallel to the body. However, if the position of the hands is on the head, respect is reserved for the creator. This depicts the sequence of a story; some only serve a decoration of all the story reliefs. The interpretation of the movement in *Gending Sriwijaya* on reliefs and statues of the Buddha statues in the Borobudur Temple intend to reveal the historical value of Borobudur temple as a heritage temple during the fame of the Sriwijaya Kingdom due to the gending dance choreography sourced from the oral stories of the dance artists.

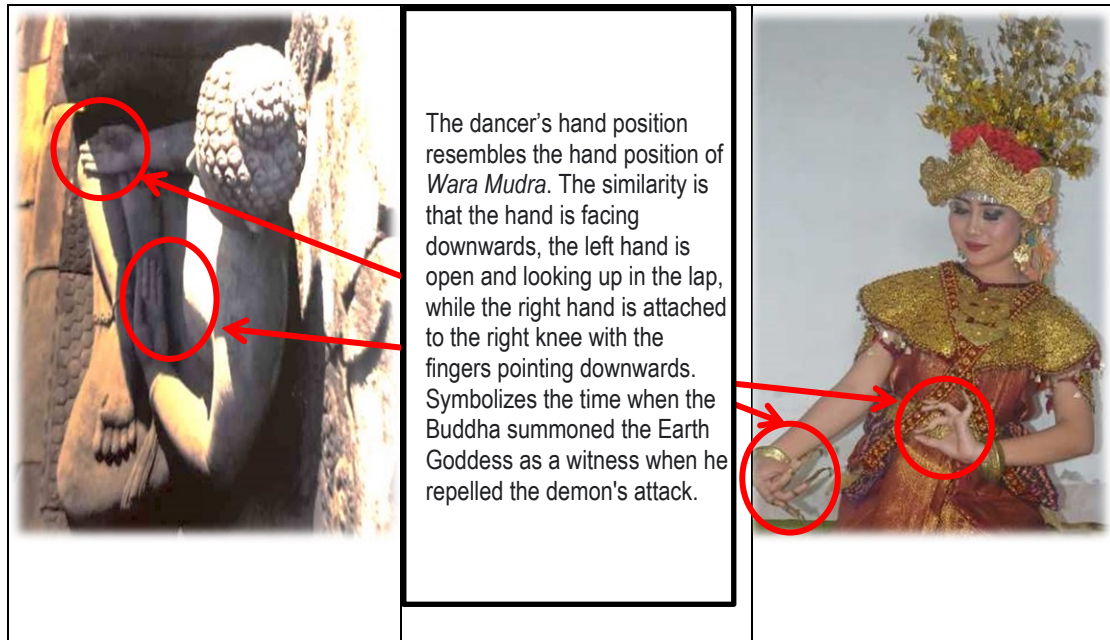


**Fig. 6:** Dhyana Mudra hand gestures (Left) and *Tafakur* Movement Phase (Right)

Source: Authors

In the Figure 6, Mudra Dhyana's hand gestures depict a semedi attitude, both hands placed on the lap. The right one is above the left one with the palm looking up and the two thumbs meeting each other, on the Buddha statue. The detailed movements of the statue at the Borobudur Temple visualized into one of the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movements stylized into *Tafakur* movements, has imitation on the head, body, and hands. The shape of the dancer's hand resembles the shape of a relief. The beauty of the visible movement shows that *Tafakur* is contemplation.

*Tafakur* is a movement taken from the way we surrender to the Almighty. This activity is conducted at the time of prostration and surrender to the Creator. Many conformities and surrender on beliefs will bring good consequences. As Sevenhoven (1971) says if one acts on the basis of sound and careful mind, every new and desired rule will occur thanks to God's help.

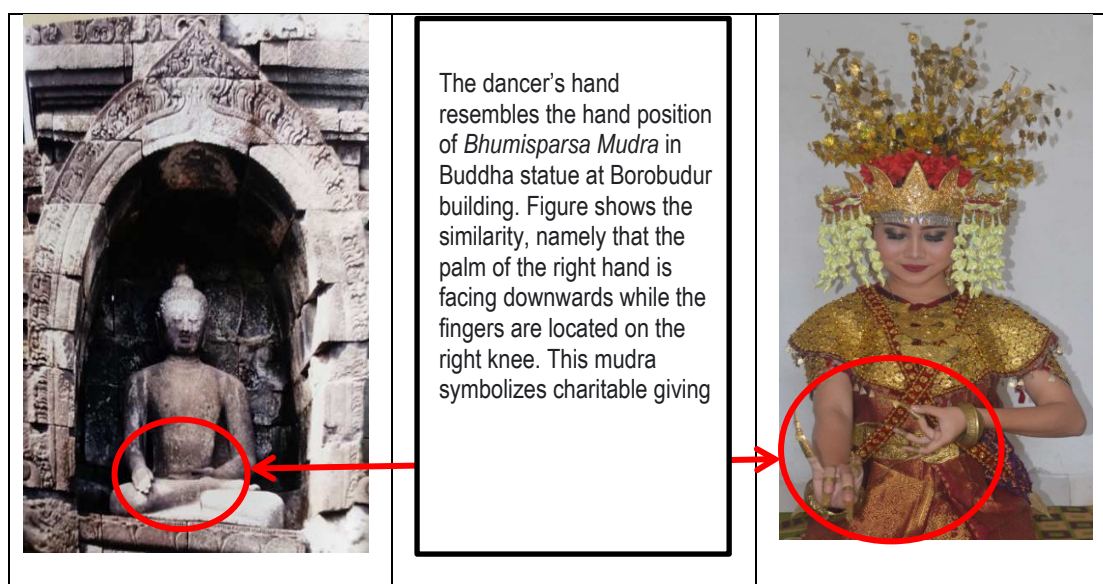


**Fig. 7:** *Wara Mudra* Hand Gestures (Left) and *Wara Mudra* distillation movement phase (Right)

Source: Authors

In the Figure 7, the picture of *Wara Mudra* Hand Gesture, can be seen in the right palm facing up while the fingers are located on the right knee. At a glance, the shape of the hands of *Gending Sriwijaya* dancers resembles the hand movements of *Wara Mudra* on Buddha statues. *Wara mudra* symbolizes charitable giving.

Indeed, the shape of the hands of *Gending Sriwijaya* dancers resembles the hand movements of *Wara Mudra* on Buddha statues. Syntotamatically, Borobudur Temple for Buddhists is a place of dharmayatra as the activity of visiting holy places increases confidence. It is connected to the history of the creation of the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance related to a brief description of the Cultural Works of gending dance. It depicts the fame of the Sriwijaya Kingdom in ancient times whose purpose was to welcome the great guest, Muhammad Syafi'i. However, the creator of the gending dance had received the inspiration from the majesty and the kingdom of Sriwijaya and has longed for it. Even the actual creator of the lyrics and movements did not live during the Sriwijaya Kingdom.



**Fig. 8:** *Bhumisparsha Mudra* Hand Gestures (Left) and Flower Sowing Movement Phase (Right)  
Source: Authors

In the Figure 8, *Bhumisparsha Mudra* Hand Movement appears with the hand facing down. The left hand is open and looking up on the lap, while the right hand is attached to the right knee with the fingers pointing down. The dancer's hand gesture is seen sprinkling flowers downward, with the hand position facing down. The left hand opens in front of the chest, and the right hand is straight forward with the hand position facing down as if sprinkling flowers. It means sprinkling the goodness on the earth and practice the teacher's doctrine. *Bhumisparsha Mudra* Hand gesture symbolizes the moment the Buddha summoned the Earth Goddess as a witness when she fended off a demon attack.

These movements reflect Buddhist doctrine visualized in the Buddha statues found in the Borobudur Temple. They are related to the name of the Borobudur *stupa* and *Mudra* and are only interpretations of motions and figurative words that symbolize the heirloom temple in the Sriwijaya era.

## Discussion

### Interpretation of *Gending Sriwijaya* Dance Movement at the Borobudur Temple

The meaning of this symbol relates to Buddhism. According to Buddhism, Man's ultimate goal is to attain nirvana, the union of the holy spirit with the universe, free from the cycle of birth and death (Reincarnation). Thus, the giant *stupa* located at the top of the Borobudur temple is a symbol of *Mandala* or a symbol of the universe. Based on the design of a temple, it always follows the design rules based on the beliefs it holds. According to Yusran, et al. (2021) two temple's concepts that existed in Indonesia when the days of the empire that is *Vastu-Purusha Mandala* (early/purist) and *Tantrayana*, the difference between the two is in the temple arrangement system which is central and linear, examples of temples in Indonesia that embrace the *Vastu-Purusha Mandala* concept, for example, are Borobudur Temple, Sewu Temple, and Prambanan Temple.

This fact shows a relationship between the symbolic meaning of the elements on the *Arupadhatu* terrace from the seventh, eighth, and ninth terrace floors with the philosophical meaning of Buddhism (Darmayuda, 2020).

Based on an interview with Mirza Indah Dewi, a South Sumateran dance figure, human beings have a way of communicating visually, that is, through symbols and signs associated with dance. This is the experienced, knowledgeable artistic spoken language, and written or

textual language sourced from references. In the sense of the interpretation of the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movement, it is intended to commemorate the Sriwijaya Kingdom that was once victorious. During the Sriwijaya Kingdom, Borobudur temple has been built as a symbol of the glory of Buddhism. Thus, there is inspiration on the history related to the naming of the dance movements and the meaning of dance in the life doctrines. This paper argues that both Buddhism which influenced the Sriwijaya Kingdom and Islam which dominated the religion of the people of South Sumatra are doctrines visualized through dance movements. They are the same, being a pious creature of God and becoming a social creature who has ethics.

Spiritual value is an abstract concept considered as important due to the ethical code of life regarding good and bad and right and wrong on the belief in God. In Buddhism, spiritual values are depicted in symbols, both tangible and abstract. Buddhists perceive it as a sacred object (Puja object) where Borobudur symbolizes the existence of the universe. According to Yanto (2020) Borobudur as a visual scripture describes three realms of life, the *kamadhatu*, the *rupadhatu*, and the *arupadhatu*.

Borobudur Temple has shared meanings with *Gending Sriwijaya* dance which depicts the glory of the Sriwijaya Kingdom. Thus, there are two gestures symbolizing Buddha, since the kingdom is the main religion of Buddhism. Borobudur is a visualization of the universe used to meditate the Buddhists. Borobudur Temple, which is a relic of the king Syailendra, originally created to welcome the great guest, M. Syaifei. but the creator drew inspiration from the majesty and glory of the Sriwijaya Kingdom and longed for it even though he was the creator of music. The movements may reflect Buddhism but not entirely, but only figuratively. Through the sign system of the Borobudur Temple, these can be interpreted as a text.

In understanding a text, the integrity of a sentence is a must. To understand the sacred space of the temple, one has to trace it synchronically as a network as it relates between expression and meaning. Borobudur structure is seen in the reliefs on the temple wall sign system. Indeed, it could not exist without meaning as it is contextually connected to the structure of the building into a sacred sign system that allows to reconstruct knowledge. In this discussion, the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movement is interpreted with the stylization of the reliefs and statues of the Borobudur temple.

*Gending Sriwijaya* Dance is a traditional dance to welcome guests. The creator of the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance make it become the first guest-welcoming dance in performing arts in the city of Palembang. According to Syarifie (2013), it has adapted the movements of *Tepak dance*, which at that time had developed in several regions in South Sumatra.

*Gending Sriwijaya* dance is interpreted by the local community as a dance of medium communication to provide life doctrines through movements visualized by the dancers. The choreography of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance has become a conventional welcome dance and has also become an iconic dance of Palembang, South Sumatra. Similar to Tien Kusumawati's Relief dance choreography, it includes the process of idea discovery, and the process of working on exploration, improvisation, composition, and evaluation. The process of finding ideas comes from intuition or inspiration that suddenly comes. Exploration is done by looking for motion according to the pictures of the Borobudur Temple. Improvisation is done by looking for possible types of movements used; composition is done by making an arrangement of several dance movements from several types of movements obtained; evaluation is conducted to assess and select the variety of movements produced (Katungga, 2019). It is argued that the process of creating the Relief dance is inspired by the relief images in the Borobudur Temple. According to Asiati (2016) the variety of motions used is the development of relief images of Borobudur Temple which partly contains meanings.

On panels of the temple designated as a "scene", there are figures in dancing poses. Relating the stylization of reliefs and Buddha statues in the Borobudur temple with the *Gending Sriwijaya* dance has something to do with the king Syailendra during the heyday of Sriwijaya. Research relates to the Temple stylization in dance movements is also conducted

pointing to the source of reference as *Natyasastra*, art rules which have direct implications for the dance techniques. Indeed, there are quite a lot of interesting mysteries to continue to be explored and revealed, as it give us an extraordinary understanding and enlightenment (Wibowo, 2013).

In dancing, after reading the relief, the two-dimensional is transformed into a three-dimensional motion by the medium dancer's body. Moreover, it is realized that actually in the body of each dancer, there are negative spaces and positive spaces where the dancer's body always has space and always raises imaginary spaces unconsciously (Wibowo, 2013). The doctrine of the Buddhist to human beings through the stylization of dance movements means to ask the human beings to always be able to recognize the soul or holy spirit that resides in each of us to teach goodness. Similarly, in *Gending Sriwijaya* dance movement there is the *Tabur movement*, which means that as human beings, one must sow goodness on earth and spread knowledge.

## Conclusion

This paper shows that the symbols on the Buddha statues and reliefs that were stylized into dance movements have intended to interpret the similarity of doctrines from the Almighty to the human beings as God's creatures and social beings who have life doctrines. *Gending Sriwijaya* dance as a reflection of the song of longing for the Sriwijaya Kingdom symbolizes several reliefs similar to the aesthetics of the *Sriwijaya Gending* dance as a manifestation of the religious values, of the the Buddhist doctrines as a reflection of the influence of Buddhism in the era of the Sriwijaya Kingdom. Social values are related to the relationship on the meaning of the movement symbolized through dance with the doctrines of the lives of fellow human beings as social beings in a way of knowledge and life guidance. The cultural values related to the history of *Gending Sriwijaya* dance relate to the identity of Palembang dance of South Sumatera as a local community culture. It is thus concluded that acculturation of Palembang culture refers to reliefs, statues of Buddha statues, along with *stupas* on Borobudur temple has a relationship with *Gending Sriwijaya* dance as a cultural icon representing the Buddhist doctrines during the Sriwijaya Kingdom. This has had a huge influence on the dance form in Palembang.

## References

- Ahimsa-Putra, H. S. (2000) *Ketika Orang Jawa Nyeni*. Yogyakarta: Galang Press.
- Alfaruqi, M. (2020) Konsep Garapan Tari Kama Nilakandi. *GETER: Jurnal Seni Drama Tari, dan Musik* 5(2), pp.52-60.
- Andujar, A. E. (2020) Heritage Assemblages. The Heritage Site of Borobudur (Indonesia) as a Cultural Landscape. *Social Science Research on Southeast Asia*, pp.125-161.
- Anggotra, P. &. (2023) Deteksi Relief Candi Borobudur Menggunakan Metode Template Matching. *Jurnal Elektronik Ilmu Komputer Udayana*, 12(1), pp.13-22
- Arifin, F. (2015) Representasi Simbol Candi Hindu Dalam Kehidupan Manusia: Kajian Linguistik Antropologi. *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, 16(2), pp.12-20.
- Asiati, S. (2016) *Koreografi Tari Relief Karya Tien Kusumawati*. Thesis. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang.
- Berger, Arthur Asa. (2010) *Pengantar Semiotika: Tanda-Tanda Dalam Kebudayaan Kontemporer*. Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana.
- Cassirer, E. (1990) *Manusia dan Kebudayaan: Sebuah Esai Tentang Manusia*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.
- Darmayuda, I. G. (2020) Makna Simbolik Elemen-Elemen Lantai Teras Arupadhatu Candi Borobudur. *CARAKA : Indonesian Journal of Communications*, 1(2), pp.52-62.
- Hadi, Y. S. (2007) *Kajian Tari Teks dan Konteks*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Book Publisher.



- Hera, T. (2016) Makna Gerak Tari Gending Sriwijaya Di Sanggar Dinda Bestari Kota Palembang. *Sitakara*, 2(2), pp. 48-61.
- Kasmahidayat, Y., Hanafiah, MH, M. & Hasanuddin. (2021) Gending Sriwijaya Dance Performance as an Innovation Media to Develop the Cross-Culture Based Local Economy. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, pp.662.
- Katungga, G. S. (2019) Makna Gerak Tari Tanggai Di Kota Palembang Sumatera Selatan. *GREGET*, 18(1), pp.75-86.
- Kowal, K. (2019) The Borobudur temple: the Buddhist architecture in Indonesia. *Budownictwo i Architektura*, 18(2), pp.5-19.
- Kusuma, T. A. (2020) Komunikasi Visual Dalam Relief Karmawibhanga Candi Borobudur. *PANALUNGTIK*, 3(2), pp.105-116.
- Kusumo Wibowo, A. (2013) Dari Relief Candi Menuju Karya Tari: Sebuah Catatan Kreatif. *GREGET*, 12(2), pp.109-127.
- Liliwari, A. (2007) Dasar-Dasar Komunikasi Antar Budaya. Yogyakarta: Putra Pelajar.
- Marwanto (2007) Upaya Peningkatkan Kualitas Garap Koreografi Anak Melalui Metode Individual Mahasiswa Jurdik Seni Tari FBS UNY. *IMAJI: Jurnal Seni dan Pendidikan Seni*. Vol.5, No. 2, pp.161– 172.
- Maryanto, D. A. (2007) Seri Fakta dan Rahasia dibalik Candi "Candi Borobudur". Yogyakarta: PT Citra Aji Parama.
- Masrurroh, M. D. (2022) Nilai Budaya Tari Mendaik di Lombok Timur : Kajian Semiotika Susan K. Langer . *Jurnal Seni Tari*, 11(1), pp.85-99.
- Maulana, R. (1977) Gambaran Umum Ikonografi Siwa di India dari Sumber-sumber tertulis. Jakarta: Laporan Penelitian FSUL.
- Muafani, A. K. (2021) Makna Bentuk Arsitektur Candi Borobudur Dalam Pandangan Islam. *MUKADDIMAH: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 6(2), pp. 94–213.
- Nawiyanto, D. (2016) Kesultanan Palembang Darussalam. Jember: Jember University Press.
- Prameswari, N. S. (2022) The Sign System at the Borobudur Temple: Effectiveness during the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal of the International Society for the Study of Vernacular Settlements, ISVS e-journal* 9(3), pp.57-74.
- Elia, R., Mayar, F. & Desyandri (2023) Analisis Gerak Seni Tari Pada Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar. *Didaktik : Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD FKIP Universitas Mandiri*, 9(2), pp.3357-3368.
- Rukayah, R. S. (2023) Stilt Style Architecture Surrounding the Old Demak Swamp of Indonesia. *ISVS e-journal*, 10(1), pp.106-121.
- Sahar, S. (2019) Symbolic Culture of Victor Turner's Religious Ethnography Socio Religious. *Journal of UIN Alauddin Makassar*, IV(2), pp.1-12.
- Saputra, M. J. (2016) Tari Tanggai dan Habitus Masyarakat Palembang. *Jurnal Empirika*, 1(1), pp.83-100.
- Sevenhoven, J. V. (1971) Lukisan Tentang Ibukota Palembang, diterjemahkan dengan pengawasan dewan redaksi oleh Prof. Sugarda Purbakawatja. Jakarta: Bhatara.
- Suhaeni, N. (2008) Mengenal Borobudur. Bandung: NUANSA.
- Syarofie, Y. (2013) Tari Sambut di Sumatera Selatan. Palembang: Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi Sumatera.
- Trisno, R. D. (2020) Spiritual Architecture in the Context of Java. *Journal of the International Society for the Study of Vernacular Settlements*, 7(3), pp.40-48.
- Wahyudi, A. V. (2021) Figur Wanita Dalam Tari Kandaga. *Equalita: Jurnal Studi Gender dan Anak*, 3(1), pp. 96-108.
- Yanto, T. (2020) Nilai Simbol Candi Borobudur Dalam Wisata Kapitalis Global. *Sabbhata Yatra: Jurnal Pariwisata dan Budaya*, 1(2), pp.114-125.
- Yusran, YA., Widisono, A. & Antariksa. (2021) *Gapura, Wiwara, and Garbhagriha as a Door Concept in Suku Temple, Central Java – Indonesia. ISVS e-journal*, 8(4), pp.31-44.