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From Tradition to Competition: The Negosiation Process of Cultural Identity in Traditional Dancesport Choreography at National Competitions

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Abstract: Traditional dance performances in traditional dancesport competitions present a fundamental tension between efforts to preserve cultural identity and the need for sport standardization. This study aims to examine how coaches and athletes negotiate traditional cultural values with technical-competitive requirements in the process of choreography creation. Using a qualitative, case study-based approach, this study analyzes three cases of national choreographers who created traditional numbers for the 18-25 year old dancesport category. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, performance observations, and analysis of video documentation of practice sessions over a six-month period. Data analysis was conducted thematically using the theoretical frameworks of cultural hybridity (Bhabha) and embodiment (Csordas). The findings reveal three negotiation strategies used: (1) structural adjustments in the form of simplification of complex movement patterns; (2) expressive modifications through adjustments in energy intensity and tempo; and (3) semiotic restructuring while maintaining certain elements of cultural identification. This research has implications for the development of an assessment framework that is more sensitive to cultural authenticity in dancesport competitions and provides practical recommendations for choreographers in creating choreographies that meet competitive criteria while maintaining cultural values.

Keywords: Traditional Dancesport, Competitive, Sports, Cultural Identity

1. INTRODUCTION

Dancesport is a combination of sport, art, and cultural expression (Dai et al., 2024). In recent decades, dancesport has experienced rapid growth and gained recognition as a sport requiring technical, physical, and artistic skills (Riding, 2013). In Indonesia, traditional dancesport emerged as a fusion of traditional dance rooted in ethnic identity with a competitive sport system that emphasizes standardized technique, movement effectiveness, and objectivity in judging (Anwar et al., 2024).

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The growth of traditional dancesport in Indonesia reflects the process of dance sportification, in which traditional movements are adapted and reconstructed to suit the demands of competition without losing the cultural character inherent in their origins (Dai et al., 2022). In this context, traditional dancesport choreography must be derived from the roots of traditional ethnic dance and then standardized for competition—including movement structure, duration, energy intensity, and legibility of floor patterns (Suhaya et al., 2024).

In the context of traditional dance, the negotiation mechanism between cultural identity and competitive requirements can be explained through a combination of embodiment and cultural hybridity theory. Embodiment theory places the athlete's body at the center of experience and meaning-making, where social and cultural values are absorbed and expressed through movement activity (Csordas, 1990). On the other hand, cultural hybridity theory explains that the interaction of two distinct value frameworks does not create a single dominant entity but rather constructs a third space that generates innovative forms (Kraidy, 2002).

However, there is a gap in the literature regarding how the negotiation process between cultural identity and competitive demands occurs practically in the process of choreographic creation. Most previous studies have focused on the theoretical aspects of dance sportification or historical-comparative analysis, without in-depth exploration of the concrete strategies used by choreographers and athletes in adapting traditional movement for competition. Furthermore, the integration of cultural aesthetic elements, modern dance sport methods, and sportsmanship mechanisms in shaping choreographic design remains poorly documented (Wu & Fu, 2025). Therefore, this research is crucial to fill this gap.

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do choreographers adapt traditional dance movements to meet the judging criteria for dancesport competitions?
2. How are elements of cultural aesthetics integrated into competitive choreographic structures without losing their ethnic identity?

With these goals, it is hoped that this study will provide theoretical contributions to enrich the concepts of cultural hybridity and embodiment in the context of traditional dance sportification, as well as practical contributions for dancesport practitioners in developing choreography that harmonizes cultural and competitive demands.

2. METHOD

This paper employs a qualitative method with a case study design, aiming to intensively explore the negotiation mechanisms that give rise to hybrid choreography in traditional dance as a product of negotiations between cultural identity and competitive needs. Qualitative methods were chosen because the research emphasis is not on evaluating the number of movements, but rather on exploring the significance, innovative processes, and situational

and subjective patterns of choreographic decision-making (Creswell, 2014).

This study adopts an insider research approach, positioning the author as a reflective participant actively involved in the mechanisms of choreographic innovation. The author experienced the creative process as an athlete in the 2025 PORPROV (regional) and the 2025 KEJURNAS XV (national) competitions, thus having direct access to the cultural-competitive negotiation process in choreography. To mitigate potential subjective bias, the author's reflections were guided by a systematic observation structure, visual recordings, and verified through the perspective of the coach as an independent party. This position facilitates the acquisition of embodied knowledge, which is not achieved through external observation alone (Csordas, 1990).

Data collection was conducted over a 6-month period (January–June 2025) spanning three stages: (a) preparation and training prior to the 2025 PORPROV; (b) the 2025 PORPROV competition; and (c) preparation and competition for the 2025 KEJURNAS XV. The types of data collected included:

1. Video documentation – Video recordings were conducted during 12 training sessions (each 3 hours long) and 2 competitions. The videos were used to analyze choreographic changes from stage to stage.
2. Semi-structured interview transcripts – Interviews were conducted with 3 key informants: (a) athlete (the author himself, with guided reflection); (b) 1 traditional dance coach with over 10 years of experience; and (c) 1 national dancesport judge. Interviews were conducted after the competition to understand the decision-making process.
3. Field notes – Researchers took observation notes after each practice session, documenting interactions, choreography discussions, and decisions made.
4. Technical documents – Choreography scores, competition scores, and traditional dancesport judging guides were used as supporting data.

Data analysis used thematic analysis techniques based on the Braun and Clarke (2006) framework, which includes six steps: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of the transcribed text; (2) generation of initial codes based on cultural-competition negotiation patterns; (3) search for themes by grouping codes into broader categories; (4) review of themes to ensure internal cohesion; (5) defining and naming final themes; and (6) reporting findings using direct citations from the data. Coding was conducted manually and verified through triangulation of data sources (videos, interviews, and documents).

To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study employed several verification techniques: (a) member checking – Interview transcripts and research interpretations were returned to informants for verification; (b) triangulation – Data from various sources (videos, interviews, documents) were compared to ensure consistency of the findings; and (c) reflexivity – The researcher documented positions and potential biases in a reflection journal and discussed the findings with research colleagues.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of traditional dancesport as a sport discipline based on movement art reveals dynamics that are not only related to performance elements but also include the process of value negotiation between cultural identity and the system of competition requirements (Premelč et al., 2019). In choreographic practice, the interaction between dance heritage and sporting rules creates a dialectical arena that positions athletes as key actors in the negotiation (Suhaya et al., 2024). Furthermore, the focus of this discussion will emphasize the mechanism of choreographic negotiation between cultural identity and competition requirements in traditional dancesport choreographic compositions as a finding of the writing.

Negotiation Mechanisms Between Cultural Identity and Competitive Demands in Traditional Dancesport Choreography

1. The athlete's body as a converging platform for traditional arts and competitive sport in traditional dancesport

Traditional dancesport is a type of choreographic activity that emerges through the interaction between dance and competitive sports (Suhaya et al., 2024). In this context, the elements of beauty and cultural identity embedded in traditional movements have been shown to actively influence each other, based on technical norms, evaluation rules, and competition requirements (Gritsenyuk R., 2021). The interaction of these two fields makes traditional dancesport not only a means of cultural expression but also an arena for choreographic negotiation, resulting in mixed forms in movement composition and presentation (Ujang Maulana Yusup, 2024). Standardization in traditional dancesport competitions systematically establishes patterns and requirements that must be met by all participants, thus impacting the choreography creation process. Studies of competition assessment mechanisms reveal that technical criteria, such as technical quality and harmony, generally demonstrate a higher level of reliability than artistic elements. However, the lack of clarity in technical definitions and evaluation standards leads to varying interpretations by judges and bias in judging (Sato, 2022). The process of movement development through to competitive presentation is influenced by the movement assessment structure in dancesport events, which not only serves as an evaluation framework but also functions as a structural pressure (Pavleski, 2020).

In traditional dancesport, this structural pressure encourages athletes to harmonize each movement component, such as technique, tempo, and pattern arrangement, to meet objective assessment formats. However, this often involves ignoring or modifying elements of traditional cultural aesthetics for the sake of competition (Sofron & Țifrea, 2022). Consequently, a hybrid movement process emerges, where traditional cultural elements are recombined with the demands of competition, transforming the event not merely into a fusion of forms but also into a strategy for adapting to competition regulations. This integration adapts all forms of choreography in a tangible way within the body, as the athlete's body serves as a space where technical demands and cultural manifestations are contested through routine performative practice (Citrawati et al., 2025).

Figure 1. Intensive Training Process

In the context of the intersection of sport and art in dancesport, the dancer's body becomes the central point that bridges the two realms. This view aligns with the concept of embodiment, which states that understanding movement is not merely cognitive, but "ingrained" in the physical body through continuous training routines. In the context of dancesport, intensive training sessions are a fundamental requirement to support athlete stamina. Below are several physical training treatments carried out by the author to support the athlete's physique, which are adapted to the needs of traditional dancesport choreography.

Table 1. Elements of Physical Exercise

Set	**Description of Physical Elements**
5 rounds	**Run**, included in the warm-up series to increase athletes' endurance in completing the choreography
1 set PP (end to end, reversible)	**Jengkeng Tanjak,** a physical exercise that athletes must do to improve the quality of traditional forms and train leg strength
	Trecet, is a traditional movement that is processed into a form of physical exercise to train leg strength
5 set (10 reps/set)	**Sit Up-bergulir-Sit Up,** one of the physical exercises that athletes must do to train core (abdominal) strength
2 set (50 reps/set) 30 second	**High-Knee Drill,** one of the physical exercises that athletes must do to train endurance and leg strength
	Kayang, one of the flexibility exercises to support the athlete's body flexibility based on choreography needs, while also training the abdominal muscles
5 minute	**Tanjak,** is a traditional movement that is executed using time calculations that aims to train leg endurance
1 minute	**Frog *Pose*,** one of the flexibility exercises to support the dancer's form when doing tanjak

Through this training program, physicality is not only honed physically, but also develops movement awareness, sensitivity to dance partners, and precise performance control.

Furthermore, embodied capabilities in movement interactions, such as feeling and synchronizing with a partner, are also developed through a series of exercises that can be progressively improved (Ravn, 2016). Furthermore, intensive training has the potential to form "body memory" and movement patterns that serve as the foundation for expertise in both dance and sports (Leyva, 2025). Therefore, the body of a dancer/athlete is not merely a driving force, but also the core of the intersection between the worlds of art and sport.

2. Cultural identity as a value that is negotiated, not eliminated

In the realm of classical performing arts, including the phenomenon of traditional dancesport, cultural identity does not simply disappear when faced with external influences such as modernization or competition requirements, but rather, it continues to be contested through the movements and significance of choreography embodied by cultural actors. Other research indicates that classical dance functions as a crucial medium for reflecting on and shaping the meaning of community identity, where movement patterns and dance compositions not only convey beauty but also strengthen a sense of social connection and continuity, even though the practice faces the challenges of changing social conditions (Smith, 2018). For example, in research on the function of traditional dance as a means of forming and strengthening cultural identity, classical dance is used to strengthen a sense of group identity in situations of population displacement, demonstrating that cultural practices can survive and be innovatively reinterpreted without losing their roots when adapting to new conditions (Smith, 2018). Therefore, the process of negotiating cultural identity in traditional dancesport choreography is an active effort that allows cultural values to be maintained and adapted simultaneously through movement practices, rather than simply being replaced or eliminated by competition norms.

Figure 2. Dancesport Choreography

The image above shows dancers forming a stacked vertical formation, with one dancer standing on the shoulders of another. This pattern is no longer part of traditional dance, but rather incorporates acrobatic lifting techniques, often seen in cheer dance performances. However, the hand and footwork motifs of each dancer still incorporate traditional (Balinese) elements. This visual depicts a traditional movement vocabulary wrapped in a dancesport competition format that combines modern competitive acrobatic techniques with traditional movement aesthetics. Each dancer is

divided with a different focus: the dancer on top focuses more on the head (expression) and hand movement motifs, while the dancer on the bottom focuses on the shape of the feet, with their hands holding the feet of the dancer on top to maintain balance. The balance and body control seen in this scene demonstrate the physical training techniques typical of competitive dancesport, while integrating modern athletic control with the symbolic style of traditional dance. In the concept of competitive traditional dancesport, these movement motifs not only display traditional values but also rely on power, difficulty level, and synchronization.

One example of the form of choreography composed in dancesport shows that the cultural identity interpreted through the style/ethnicity of traditional regional dance is not eliminated, but is a value that is negotiated with the assessment system in competitive sports so that the traditional values and their elements are maintained in the entire dancesport choreography.

3. Creative process: athletes as the main medium of the choreographic negotiation process

The creation of this choreography began with the author's participation as a participant/athlete in the 2025 Provincial Sports Week (PORPROV) held in Malang on June 23, 2025. The author was directly involved as an athlete who participated in the entire series of intensive training, programmed by the Surabaya city branch training center (Puslatcab), which collaborated with the athlete's club/studio, as a facilitation provider during the training. The training program was held for 6 months from January 2025 to June 2025. This training program did not focus on creating dancesport choreography alone, but also emphasized physical training to support the athlete's stamina and physique. The artistic creation process involving dance costumes to the properties used, was made by the athlete's personal initiative which was also assisted by the coach. The author won a gold medal at the 2025 PORPROV competition in Malang, this immediately caught the attention of the Chairman of IODI, Mr. Andreas, to recommend the author and his partner to compete again at the XV IODI National Championship (KEJURNAS) in Jakarta on August 31, 2025, with the Traditional Dancesport Pro competition number. The coach and athlete made a joint decision to bring back the PORPROV choreography at the KEJURNAS competition in Jakarta. Of course, this choreography experienced slight changes from the previous choreography as a form of new strategy which was then adjusted to the level of competition being participated in. In preparation for the KEJURNAS, the coach and athlete decided to add sport techniques to this choreography as a new touch from the previous choreography.

Figure 3. PORPROV & KEJURNAS Competition 2025

According to the applicable competition regulations, participants are required to present a new choreography that contains a blending of 3 dance style elements that exist in Indonesia, and the ones chosen are Baris Dance (Bali), Cirebon Mask (West Java), and Singo Ulung (East Java). The three ethnic regions are then executed through stages of exploration, improvisation, and composition while still paying attention to competition standards. The creation process produces a hybrid choreography that complies with competition regulations. The following is a descriptive explanation of the process of creating traditional dancesport choreography in choreography theory according to Sumandhiyo Hadi (2012), which goes through three stages including; exploration, improvisation, and composition, as follows:

A. Exploration

In the initial exploration phase, the coaches and athletes began exploring several movement motifs derived from relevant traditions. Simultaneously, they identified elements that could be further developed, both in terms of spatiality and movement dynamics. Based on the agreed-upon ethnicities (Bali, West Java, and East Java), athletes conducted video appreciation sessions on YouTube to observe and explore all forms of the traditional styles, including movement, expression, strength, and the dancers' bodies.

Meanwhile, the coaches emphasized that observation alone is not sufficient for athletes to master everything. This is because the athlete's body plays a crucial role in creating dancesport choreography.

Figure 4. Motion Exploration Process

Similarly, according to Marwan M. Kraidy (2002), who outlined the perspective of the theory of embodiment, which is central to choreography creation, including its application in dancesport, embodiment theory positions the athlete's body as the center of experience and the formation of significance, where social and cultural values are absorbed and expressed through movement activity. Therefore, the athlete's bodily experience with traditional dance movements and forms is crucial for the exploration phase. At this stage, the coach will observe and assess the athlete's understanding of traditional movements before blending them with sporting techniques.

B. Improvisation

Entering the improvisation stage, dancers/athletes are free to experiment by varying the quality of movement. Modifications can include changes in tempo, level, accentuation, or even extending the

range of body lines. This allows the choreography to appear more dynamic and less monotonous. At this stage, athletes play a full role in negotiating movements, ensuring they are proportioned appropriately to their own bodies. Often, even ranges of movement considered difficult by athletes become something to be pursued and mastered. It's not uncommon for athletes to be required to step outside their comfort zone to achieve more than what other dancers typically do.

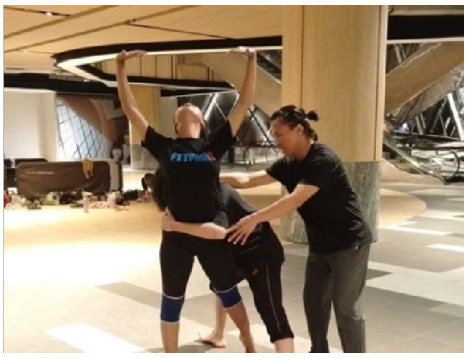

Figure 5. Motion Modification

This stage provides athletes with creative and innovative space to develop choreographic forms that not only rely on movement but also consider tempo, level, volume, balance, strength, and more.

C. Composition

The movement material collected from the previous stage is then reorganized through the composition stage, with the goal of creating a cohesive and coherent choreographic structure. This stage is no less crucial and especially important in dancesport choreography. At this point, the assessment of dancesport choreography is not solely based on aesthetics or visual beauty, but also on technical aspects and applicable competition regulations. To achieve competition standards, coaches must review and evaluate the entire dancesport choreography within the designated timeframe before the competition. This ensures that the training process resembles a competition atmosphere, in accordance with competition regulations regarding three choreography performances: the first mandatory choreography, lasting 45 seconds, followed by a three-minute optional choreography performance, and finally, the final round, which again showcases the optional choreography to determine the winner. In line with this, the training process always adheres to the number of performances outlined in the technical guidelines, requiring three runthroughs as directed by the technical guidelines.

Figure 6. Pre-Competition Training

The runthrough consolidation process is targeted to be completed one month before the match to avoid technical errors so that there is still time for improvements.

4. Creative decision making: maintaining and adapting movement

Entering the stage of fixing the entire choreography is a crucial step, where both athletes and coaches consciously decide whether all movement elements are considered ready, meaning ready to compete. This decision demonstrates the ability to think innovatively and imaginatively applied in designing movements, so that each movement variation is not simply intended to be presented, but through a process of considering the aesthetic value, technique, and cultural context presented. Through a choreographic theory approach, it is explained that the creative process in composing dance movements involves a systematic combination of imagination, instinct, and technical knowledge, where the choreographer/coach evaluates various movement options based on artistic goals and their choreographic role, both to maintain cultural identity and to make updates appropriate to the competition format (Nursyam et al., 2023). As a result, this creative decision is not just about choosing movements, but a form of implementing artistic tactics that directly impact the final form of the resulting choreography, which is of course adapted to the demands of the competition. Therefore, indirectly, the process of creating hybrid choreography in dancesport is not merely a superficial phenomenon of blending/merging traditional movements with sporting techniques, but also goes through various discussions, considerations, and adjustments to the demands of the competition, which then results in a hybrid choreography appropriate to its role.

In the dancesport choreography competed by the author at the XV IODI 2025 National Championship (KEJURNAS), held in Jakarta on August 31, 2025, the dancesport choreography that had already been competed in the 2025 PORPROV competition, held on June 23, 2025, in Malang Raya, was re-presented. Therefore, the initial process of creating this choreography occurred when the author was involved in the PORPROV competition, where the choreography subsequently underwent slight developments to adapt to the level of the competition. The following is a description based on the ethnic scenario in general:

Table 2. Ethnic Dancesport Scenario Description

Figure	Ethnic Description
 Dancesport Choreography - Balinese Ethnic	**Baris Dance (Bali),** the Balinese ethnic group, is the first ethnic group in the dancesport choreography, specifically the Balinese Baris Dance. Baris Dance was chosen as the opening ethnic group in the dancesport choreography because it is considered to have strong traditional values and visual forms that align strongly with its roots.

	Beyond the visual aspect, the decision to place Balinese at the top of the list was made based on the initial presentation, which is often used as a subjective standard for judging judges. Judges often use the initial/opening movements as a guide for subsequent movements, allowing them to read the flow of the dancesport choreography even before the performance is fully completed. Therefore, selecting Balinese as the first ethnic group in the dancesport choreography is considered an excellent choice, as it possesses powerful body expressions, combined with modified sport techniques, which are then combined with the movement motifs of the Balinese Baris Dance, resulting in a more captivating audience.
Dancesport Choreography - West Javanese Ethnic	**Cirebon Mask Dance (West Java),** a West Javanese ethnic group, the Cirebon Mask, ranks second in dancesport choreography. The Cirebon Mask has very distinctive movement characteristics that are inherent to the dance form. One example is the dancer's body thrusts with each movement. The entire Cirebon Mask movement sequence is developed and adjusted to the dancer's strength intensity after completing the Balinese ethnic movements the previous minute. Therefore, each movement chosen is carefully considered by the

	trainer to ensure the intensity of the dancer's form.
 Dancesport Choreography - East Javanese Ethnic	**Singo Ulung (East Java),** is an East Javanese ethnic group well-known in Situbondo Regency. Singo Ulung is the final piece in a choreographed dancesport. The movement motifs in Singo Ulung are nearly identical to those in the Barongsai performance, so the movements are similar at first glance, with only slight differences in the lifting techniques used.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrates that choreography in traditional dance sports represents a dynamic negotiation between cultural essence and competitive performance demands, where tradition is not rigidly maintained but rather transformed through adaptive and creative approaches, with the athlete's body serving as a convergence between cultural values and sporting regulations, resulting in hybrid choreography. Practical implications of these findings include: coaches are advised to provide dedicated time for athletes to understand cultural values before the technical adaptation stage, athletes are motivated to become active subjects in negotiating movement choices, rather than simply technical implementers, and policymakers are advised to immediately develop assessment rubrics that are more sensitive to cultural authenticity by adding specific criteria for the preservation of cultural elements. However, this study has limitations such as its focus on a single case with three dance styles, the potential for subjective bias from the researcher's position as an athlete-insider, and the specific context of Indonesian competitions that may not be fully generalizable. Further research is recommended in the form of cross-country comparative studies, quantitative research on the relationship between cultural preservation and competitive scores, exploration of judges' perspectives, and longitudinal studies of the evolution of negotiation strategies in traditional dance sports.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The main author is fully responsible for the entire process of writing this article to serve "From Tradition to Competition: The Negotiation Process of Cultural Identity in Traditional Dancesport Choreography at National Competitions". The author directly dives in as an athlete who goes through the creative process from the beginning, starting from regional to national competitions. The creation of this choreography began with the author's process of being involved as a participant in the 2025 PORPROV competition, which was then re-competed at the

2025 KEJURNAS XV in Jakarta. The author is directly involved in the creative process starting from the selection of ethnic groups to be performed, the process of exploring movements, to the culmination of creating traditional dancesport choreography.

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