

## AESTHETICS OF PRAJURITAN DANCE IN SEMARANG REGENCY

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### Abstract

The scarcity of aesthetic study of traditional arts has evoked my intention to promote a model of aesthetic study in dance performance. The focus of this research is the aesthetics of Prajurit dance in Semarang regency. The aesthetics were founded on dance choreography and cultural value systems, which grow and develop in the community of Semarang regency. Dances choreography includes dance background, form, shape, theme, number and formation of dancers, moves, musical accompaniment, make-up and costume, and dance floor patterns. Cultural value systems include communicating stories, expressed symbols, function and meaning of Prajurit dance for its supporting community. The stories were derived from the heroic tale of Prince Sambernyawa (KGPAA, king Mangkunegara I in Mangkunagaran royal palace, Surakarta) when he rebelled against the arbitrary Dutch colonialists, with his famous spell, “*tiji tibe*h (mukti siji mukti kabeh – being prosperous for one and all)” and Three Dharma of soldiers, namely “*rumangsa melu handarbeni, melu hangrungkebi, mulat sarisa hangrasa wani*, which means having sense of belonging, protection, and awareness to bravely do whatever to defend his nation and country. Therefore, Prajurit dance brings the mission to evoke sense of courage, discipline, and responsibility for the young generation.

**Keywords:** Prajurit dance; choreography; cultural value systems

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### INTRODUCTION

This research was triggered by my intention to promote a model of aesthetic study in dance performance. An aesthetic study can be traced through aesthetic views of its artist, doer, and observer. The goal of aesthetic view is to understand and conduct an evaluation of dance being observed. Kaeppler (1992) stated that to be able to understand a dance, one needs the cultural background of the dance since a dance is a cultural product and creative process of its community. Alan Lomax in his experiment called *Choreometrics* proved that art style is determined by honour,

culture, and community of a country (Jazuli, 2001, p. 24). The views of Kaeppler and Lomax show that cultural value context is interrelated with one understanding of a work of art.

The object of this research is a traditional Javanese Prajurit dance in Semarang regency. Prajurit dance is a traditional folk art, which grows and develops and becomes a part of social life in Semarang regency; it is an inherited ancestral art, which has been bequeathed for generations. Since 1995, Prajurit dance has been publicized as a typical dance of Semarang regency, and by dint of Semarang regent, Mr. Hartomo's instruction,

Prajuritan dance was established as a local content-based subject in elementary schools with the purpose of promoting nation's cultural values (Ratih, 2004). Prajurit dance has typical features in its performance, such as showing character and personality of its supporting community. The moves are characterized with moves of feet, hands, and head performed in vigorous, splintery, and energetic ways. The aesthetic values of the Prajurit dance appear in the harmony between violence and mild elements, which are expressed aesthetically in its moves (Sujendro, 2002, p. 15). Considering that reason, this paper is meant to discuss how the aesthetics of Prajurit dance are implemented in Semarang regency.

Aesthetics is a study dealing with things related to beauty. In dance arts, John Martin explained that all dancing motions that give an inward satisfaction is regarded beautiful. The motions, including smooth, tender, rough, violent, powerful, and bizarre can be beautiful ones (Soedarsono, 1987: 6). According to Parker (1980), beauty is an appealing, touching, and thrilling thing as it is valuable for anyone.

Aesthetics in this paper is understood as a pleasant, appealing, touching/thrilling, and it gives an inward satisfaction. In aesthetics, there are two aspects that can be used to appreciate a work of art, namely scientific aspect and philosophical aspect (Djelantik, 1992: 9-11). This writing uses scientific aspect, which consists of unity, intensity, and harmony as perspectives of aesthetic study of Prajurit dance. Unity or integrity refers to a whole thing, a meaningful relationship, significant among all elements; it means that one element complementary needs another element. Intensity means that a work of art directs people's attention to focus their view on something important than another. Harmony is achieved through symmetry and asymmetry; both indicate a complexity. Symmetry is a harmony of two equal parts, like human's body split into two or butterfly's wings. Symmetric harmony gives a relief and it looks stable; whereas,

asymmetric harmony gives a dynamic, moving, and versatile senses.

Choreography is understood as knowledge about dance composition and for naming dance arrangement. Dance creator or arranger is called a choreographer. Dance choreographer can be reviewed in terms of performance pattern, theme, number of dancers, moves pattern, and dance floor pattern.

In terms of its performance pattern, there are two kinds of dance: traditional and creative dance. Traditional dance is a dance, which grows and develops in a community and that it is then bequeathed continuously for generations (Jazuli, 2008). In view of the number of dancers, dance performance can be categorized into two, mono and group dance. Mono dance is a dance, which is performed by a dancer, though it is often performed in groups or by more than one dancer. Group dance is a dance performed by more than one dancer. Group dance can be divided into three: paired dance, mass dance, and dance drama. In terms of dance theme, it can be categorized into three, namely pantomime, dance, erotic dance, and heroism dance. In view of its moves style, it is distinguished into two, meaningful motion and pure motion. Meaningful motion is a motion with certain purposes; whereas, pure motion is a motion for artistic purposes. In view of dance floor pattern, there are linear and curved patterns. Both floor lines are passed by or made by the dancers. From the two lines, one can vary other lines, such as zig-zag, diagonal, circular ones, etc. Usually before a work is realized, a choreographer will share some reflection and experience about himself/herself or his/her surroundings. Nevertheless, a dance choreography will find its whole performance and meaning when it is supported with complementary elements of dances. Among the elements are musical accompaniment, theme, costume, make-up, stage, lighting and sound effects. The presence of these elements will enable various relations in a dance, such as the dynamic aspect (velocity, complexity, strength), dances hip aspect (number and

sex of dancers), visual aspect (setting, property), and environmental aspect (music, lighting, and sound effects) (Jazuli, 2008).

Each dance form will be bound up with a cultural value system of a community that produces the dance. Cultural values have always influenced the most typical dance form and style of the community (Jazuli, 2001). Behind all the form and style is a cultural value system, or a number of concepts about what live in the minds of most community members about what they consider valuable, meaningful, influential in their lives (Koentjaraningrat, 1980: 204). The cultural value system can function as a guideline that gives directions and orientation in the respective social life. Cultural value system in dance includes dance essence, source of idea, symbols, and functions that are expressed in dance performance.

Understanding aesthetic values of a dance is not apart from the cultural pattern of community from where the dance is derived, grows and develops. Evaluation towards Javanese dance in particular and other dances in Indonesia in general uses criteria, namely *wiraga*, *wirama*, *wirasa* (Jazuli, 2008).

*Wiraga* is a way of evaluating a tangible and perceivable dance form (physical) performed by the dancers. For example, how pose and form of movies, and chronology of movements and continuity between the movies, and so on.

*Wirama* intended to assess the ability of the dancer in mastering the rhythm, both the rhythm of music accompaniment and rhythm of moves performed by the dancers. For example, a dancer has to understand when a proper move to the sound of gong instruments, *kenong*, *kempul*, and when the moves should be appropriate and not in accordance with the rhythm of the accompaniment. *Wirasa* are all *wirama* activities and its implementation should always be associated with the meaning, intent, and purpose of the dance. To achieve this it need a good appreciation of the dancer, as appreciation toward the role of the character presented, the type

and character of the moves to be carried, the expression should be raised. Any appreciation always involves a sense though. In this case the role of feelings should be in one match with *wiraga* and *wirama* so that produce harmony between the presentation, matters relating dance skills, and dance quality.

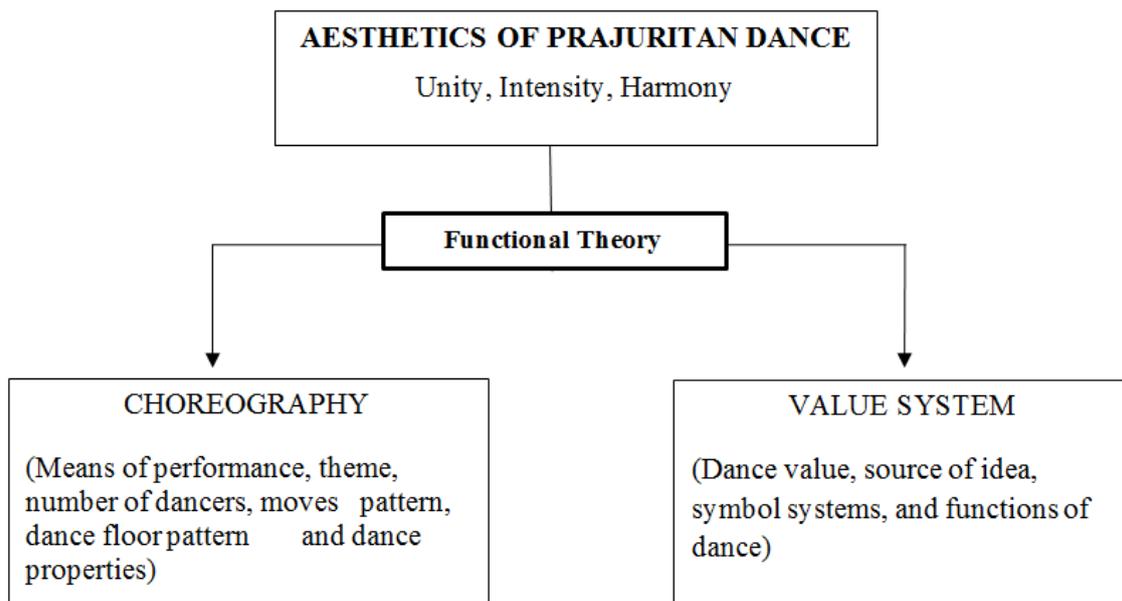
Rationale of functional is society is a social system consisting of the parts or elements that are interconnected and interdependent in the balance. The assumption is that the society is seen as a system like organisms formed from the basis for self regulated, self-maintaining, towards equilibrium, homeostasis. The purpose of system establishing is to maintain normal conditions, not pathological in the balance system. Statements of functional theory are used for analyses with a lower Prajurit dance by identifying the word 'community' with 'Prajuritan dance forms' as a system.

Prajuritan dance as a form of artwork system denotes medium of content pouring and values (life experience) that can be observed by the senses. The content and value encompass dance values, a source of ideas, symbolic systems, and functions of dance. In the choreography of Prajurit dance encompasses forms of presentation, theme, number of dancers, moves, patterns, the floor pattern, and the dance performance equipment. Both of them will be studied with the theory of functional and aesthetic theory consisting of aspects of wholeness, the dominance, and balance.

Starting from the aforementioned concepts, the strategy of aesthetic study of Prajurit dance is to locate two components, namely the knowledge about a value system and dance choreography. The frame of thinking can be described as follows Figure 1.

## METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, with the purpose of describing and explaining a situation as it really is. The location of the research is a Getasan



**Figure 1.** Thinking of Aesthetics of Prajurititan Dance

Notes:

Choreography inside the dance encompasses means of performance, theme, number of dancers, moves pattern, dance floor pattern, and dance properties; whereas, value symbols include the essence of dance, source of idea, meaning and function of dance. Both of them will be analysed in terms of functional and aesthetic theories.

district of Semarang regency. Getasan is a district, which has intensively conducted Prajurititan dance performance and regenerative acts of the dance up to this present.

The collection of research data uses the observation method, interview, and document analysis. Observation was done in a direct and planned way towards the Prajurititan dance to obtain a rigorous view about roles in the dance, moves pattern, dance floor pattern, make-up and costume.

The interview was done directly toward informant, Mr. Salerno as dance instructor/trainer, Mr. Suroyo and Ms. Sugiyati as dancers. Documentation was conducted by examining documents about Prajurititan dance. The documents obtained in the field include articles, photos, and news.

To obtain a valid and accountable data, I did an evaluation of field data validity, namely triangulation of source and method. Techniques of data analysis are descriptive and content analyses. Meanwhile, the steps of analysis refer to Miles' and Huberman's theory (1994) by means

of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing processes.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Choreography of Prajurititan Dance**

Choreography of Prajurititan dance covered includes dance background, form and meaning of dance symbols, theme, number and formation of dancers, moves, musical accompaniment, and dance floor pattern.

**Background of Prajurititan Dance**

According to oral tradition developed in Semarang regency, Prajurititan dance previously grew and developed in Getasan district. This dance shows the strides of soldiers of Prince Sambernyawa (king KPAA Mangkunagara I in Mangkunagaran royal palace, Surakarta) in performing duty and responsibility as soldiers against the Dutch colonialists. At that time (1755), the charismatic heroes rebelled and fought against the Dutch colonies. The prince's rebel perturbed and caused the Dutch

to go through a great loss. Therefore, to avoid a greater loss, the Dutch agreed to cease the war. The agreement between the Dutch and Prince Sambernyawa took place at Salatiga. Nevertheless, to anticipate any trickery that the Dutch often did in each agreement with the rebels, several tough and loyal soldiers of the prince were assembled to guard the agreement. The duty of the soldiers was to guard the security and safety of the leaders (Prince Sambernyawa and his attendants) in the process of agreement. Some other soldiers made a temporary base camp in a Getasan area with a cautious manner in case of undesirable events. The soldiers' watchfulness was manifested in a Prajurit dance to show their warring vigilance as well as their show of force to their enemies. This was what became a beckoning amusement for people at Getasan and those from nearby areas. People at Getasan were very enthusiastic about observing each move of the soldiers, even more so mimicking their moves. The people's great interest in the soldiers inspired them to eternalize the soldiers' moves as a monument in the form of Prajurit dance.

### Form and Symbolic Meaning of Prajurit Dance

Prajurit dance is a dance, which has simple features as it looks in its moves, make-up, costume, dance floor pattern, and musical accompaniment. Those aspects are presented through the whole performance of *wiraga*, *wirama*, and *wirasa* so that it looks harmonious in its performance.

In Prajurit dance there are characters with certain roles, including: (a) a Manggalayuda dancer who roles as a chief of war. The symbolic meaning of this role is to describe a leader who could protect, rule, guide his attendants and show good manners; (b) two dancers of Wirapati play roles as dexterous troops and standing in the forefront by riding horses. Wirapati symbolizes a responsible commander, daring to take risks, a discipline and exemplary figure for his attendants; (c) sixteen or

more Prajurit dancers have to go to war by carrying swords and armours. The main task of the soldier is to be always ready for making war and protecting Prince Sambernyawa. Soldiers are symbols of *kawula cilik* (common folks) who are loyal to their leader and dare to die; (d) two dancers of Pekathik as tricksters with comic and farcical expressions and gestures. Their performance sometimes wears masks and comic make-up representing symbolization of a detective role whose tasks are to monitor and analysis their enemies' strength; (e) four as Pradangga (musicians) whose task is to accompany Prajurit dance. Pradangga is a masquerade symbolization of the tough and loyal soldiers who are ready to disclose important information and ready to war for defending their mother land.

### Themes

The Prajurit dance theme is the heroic story of the struggle sourcing from Prince Sambernyawa as described above. Sambernyawa, the charismatic fighter, has famous advice (*sesanti*) in the struggle, namely "*tiji tibe*" (noble one means for the glory of all) and the soldiers' Tridharma (three duties) *rumagsa melu handarbeni*, *melu hangrungkebi*, *mulat sarisa hangrasa wani*, meaning feeling belonging, sense of protecting and knowingly dare do anything to defend their homeland. Therefore, the theme of Prajurit dance brings mission meaning loyalty, responsibility, courage, and love of country.

### Number of Dancers

Choreography of Prajurit dance is classified as group dance performed by 25 to 30 dancers done in the open field. In its development, the number of dancers can be minimized from 10 to 15 or 4 to 6 dancers in accordance with the needs and forms of stage performances. Details of the 25 dancers are one Manggalayuda dancer, two Wirapati dancers, sixteen or more soldier dancers, two Pekathik dancers, plus four people as Pradangga (musician). Thus, the number of players are twenty five, namely twenty one dancers and four

musicians.

### Moves

Prajuritan dance moves are inspired by the soldier moves of soldiers when they exercise with swords and shields. The moves motif looks simple and is always tied to the theme of the story. Broadly speaking, the style of the moves can be divided into three main parts, namely (a) the style of sword and shield *Beksan* (dance), (b) style of moves without the sword and shield, (c) style of moves of sword and shield moment.

### The floor pattern (dancer formation)

The Prajurit dance floor pattern is varied. Each form of dance floor pattern is called *gelar* (formation) in accordance with the composition of dance moves namely *gelar diratameta*, *gelar supit urang*, *gelar sawojajar*, *gelar kuntul nebo*, *gelar wulan tumanggal*, and *gelar garuda nglayang*. The floor pattern variations of Prajurit dance are described as follows.

#### Gelar Diratameta

*Diratameta* means an angry elephant (raging). This war tactic illustrates the anger of an elephant that its trunk and tusks are very dangerous and incredible strength. In this formation the position of trunks serves as a buffer that disrupt the enemy line. Left and right tusk as the attacker, and the head as a play maker. In a war story of Baratayuda, *gelar Diratameta* is often used by Kaurava forces. The aesthetic value of the formation appears on a rectangular floor pattern.

#### Gelar Supit Urang

*Supit Urang* describe a shrimp moving its both chopsticks deftly and carefully. The end of the left and right chopsticks function to strike by pinching enemy attack and shrimp body as a play maker. The aesthetic value of formation appears on the dancer formation from the right and left and then meet in the middle. In Baratayuda, this form is used by the Pandavas and Kauravas.

#### Gelar Sawojajar

*Gelar Sawojajar* floor pattern with formation forms a vertical line, two lines are lined back. The dancers are divided into two, right and left, to form a vertical line moving from the back forward.

#### Gelar Kuntul Nebo

*Kuntul Nebo* describes a group of birds that comes suddenly and rushed to the damaged crops in the fields, meaning a group of enemy soldiers attacking suddenly and simultaneously. The aesthetic value of *gelar Kuntul Nebo* is X-shaped formation, the dancers split into two directions, then forward it to the right corner and left to form a diagonal line and bumped into each other in the middle.

#### Gelar Wulan Tumanggal

*Gelar wulan tumanggal* is a war strategy likened to a beginning of the month. The moon shape as if no harm, but actually very deadly because at the end of a corner and in the middle of the lineup that is always ready to move (attack) is easy to do. This crescent-shaped formation in Baratayuda used by Pandavas where Arjuna is placed in the middle as the executor of the attack which is accompanied by Krishna. Yudhisthira accompanied by Nakul and Sahadev is at the back of the moon as the playmaker. Bima is at the right end and Setyaki is on the left one acting as a clamp on the line.

#### Gelar Garuda Nglayang

*Gelar Garuda Nglayang* denotes a semicircular formation as a continuation of *gelar Sawojajar*. After the dancers form a vertical line up to the back and then turn outwards and curved back. *Gelar Garuda Nglayang* on Prajurit is inspired from a *gelar* in Baratayuda war. This *gelar* has an aggressive character that all soldiers must move quickly.

### Dance Music Accompaniment

Music that accompanies the dance consists of several forms and types of instruments, namely *bendhe*, *trendeng*

(*Dheng-thek*), and *jidur* (small *bedhug*). *Bendhe* instrument pitches *slendro* (Java- nese Scale System) which it consists of four types, namely (a) Featured *Bendhe* pitched 6 (*nem*) functions as stakehol- ders rhythm, (b) *Nyelo Bendhe* pitched 5 (*ma*) functions as insertion between one tone with another tune, (c) *Penitir Bendhe* pitched 3 (*lu*) functions as *kerepan* (A fast and constant hit), (d) *Jur Bendhe* pitched 2 (*ro*) functions as a gong (a sign of the end of each verse). *Trendheng* instru- ment is a musical instrument shaped like a truncated ketipung and made of lambskin. *Jidur* instrument is an additional musical instrument that functions as a *dynamist* of music accompaniment and encourage- ment to look dynamic motion.

### Make Up and Dance Clothing

Makeup and costume of *Prajuritan* dance are distinguished by its role. Each role has different costume. *Manggalayuda* role with makeup and fashion details consist of : (a) the head using *blangkong*, (b) *beskap* clothes/*surjan*, (c) the *panji* trousers (breeches), (d) cloth with *cancutan* model, (e) belt, (f ) *uncal*, (g) *epek timang*, (h) the furnishing consists of necklaces scrubs, *kris*, *binggel* (anklet), *sumping* (ear), and carrying a trumpet. The motif of manly men makes up tends to be hard and authoritative.

Equipment makeup and costume of *Wirapati* role consist of: (a) the head using *blangkong*, (b) *beskap* clothes / *surjan*, (c) *panji* trousers (breeches), (d) cloth with *cancutan* model (e) *cindhe* belt, (f) equipment that consists of *kace* necklaces / scrubs, *keris*, *binggel* (anklet), *sumping* (ear), and sometimes use a horse or without a horse. The motif of manly men makes up tends to be hard and authoritative.

Makeup and fashion soldiers are: (a) the head using *iket*, (b) vest dress (wear or without clothes), (c) the banner trousers (breeches), (d) cloth with *supit urang* model, (e) *sampur*, (f) equipment that consists of *kace* necklaces, *kris*, *binggel* (feet), and carrying a sword and shield. Make motif is manly and hard.

Makeup and *Pekanthik* are: (a) the head using *iket*, (b) armor vest, (c) the *pan- ji* trousers (breeches), (d) cloth with *supit urang* model, (e) belt. Dressing funny motif, like shaving moustache is just in the middle, reduction lip shape.

### Value System

The value system of *Prajuritan* dance encompasses the value of dance content, source of stories and communicated dance symbols, and functions of dance for supporting the community. Content value of the dance denotes an expression result of public spirit owners that it contains its intended purpose. The purpose and objectives *Prajuritan* is stated by Sularno as follow:

*Tari Prajuritan menika kangge keba- tahan masyarakat mriki utaminipun kangge kelangenan, lan tanda bilih dsa mriki wonten kesenian tradisi ingkang dipun lestariaken... biasanipun kangge ngramekaken hajatan, ugi peringatan hari nasional, lan sanesipun* (*Pra- juritan* dance is needed here, especially for a vehicle of expression, pleasure and a sign that in this village there is tradition art that has been preserved ... usually for the purposes of a celebration and national day commemoration, and others).

The word '*kelangenan*' is the symbolic meaning of the system of cultural values associated with the function of dance as a means of pleasure (entertainment functions) and for the purposes of celebra- tion (ritual function). This clearly shows that what is valuable and meaningful in people's lives has been expressed in sym- bolic forms such as *Prajuritan* dance. This means that there is a 'message' that it will be communicated to others or the next ge- neration. The message is in the form of the symbolic value of dance *Prajuritan* itself, such as planting value of the struggle of courage, discipline, responsibility, and so on. The value of such a struggle is very im- portant in the lives of *Getasan* community considering the hilly *Getasan* geography with winding roads and up and down. Li- ving in a state of nature as it really takes passion and perseverance in every effort

to meet the necessities of life. Naturally, it needs an unyielding attitude to achieve the goals desired by the Getasan community.

Source of Story and Symbol of Prajurititan Dance Sources of story of Prajurititan dance come from the story of Prince Samber nyawa struggle against the Dutch in Semarang residence. From the source of this story, it arises the idea to create a monument to recall the struggle of the populist and charismatic hero, Prince Sambernyawa. The monument is realized in a dance work called Prajurititan.

### Functions Dancing Prajurititan

Prajurititan dance functions can be divided into two aspects, namely the ritual and entertainment. The function of the rituals associated with the celebration namely *sadranan* ceremony and *bersih desa* (clean the village) usually served in the field with a complete number of dancers complete around 25 to 30 dancers as noted by Ms. Sugiyanti (Interview July 9, 2012) following.

*Tari prajurititan ingkang wetah menika biasanipun kangge keperluan bersih desa, kadang sadranan...dipun tampilaken wonten lapangan supados para warga saged mriksani lan dereng nyengkuyung babagan kelestarian kesenian kita piyambak tari Prajurititan* (the full Prajurititan dance which is usually displayed at the village clean and sometimes *sadranan* ... held in the open field so that all citizens can see and belonging and then to preserve our own art, Prajurititan dance).

Entertainment functions are typically associated with the performing arts in order to celebrate Indonesia's Independence Day, *Wasana Warsa*, circumcision, welcoming guests and so on. In Prajurititan dance, entertainment functions is performed in accordance with the requirements, meaning not as complete as ritual events.

### Aesthetics Dance Prajurititan

Based on the analysis of the scientific, aesthetic theory, including aspects of who-

leness, protrusion, and the balance shows that the tree covered in Prajurititan dance is interconnected, correlative, and complement each other in creating an expression of art and culture of a society. Wholeness of Prajurititan dance, especially apparent from the choreography of the dance consisting, dance form, theme, number of dancers, structure moves, formation of dancer, accompaniment, makeup and dance costume.

It departs from the data obtained to elucidate and analyse it one by one the aesthetics of Prajurititan dance. Actually, there are three aspects that cannot be separated in the analysis the Prajurititan dance. However, for the sake of clarity and firmness or an analysis, it is presented below by going to each aspect of its depiction of the outline elements of dance that exist in every aspect. It looks simple, dynamic, and monotonous, but rousing in all performances of the Prajurititan dance. Such performance may only be done when each dancer has the discipline, courage and responsibility to achieve compactness in a group dance. *Prajurititan* balance can be seen from the combination of hard and soft moves (unification in diversity), harmony between moves patterns with accompaniment patterns along with makeup and costume that is stable impression of simplicity, dynamic expression, and monotonous in disclosure (*wiraga*, *wirama*, and *wirasa*). Balance or harmony of that dance performance is certainly an attractive and entertaining spectacle. As told by Parker (1980), that the balance as a principle form denotes an equation of the aesthetic elements of opposing or resistance but need each other to deliver a whole.

### CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study are that the aesthetics of Prajurititan dance are formed from different elements of dance choreography, harmony with the source of the story and the value system in the form of symbols and values that live in the community and functional for both sub-

sistence of the communities and entertainment, social integration, and mode of the ongoing fulfilment of ritual in the cultural environment of the Getasan district, in Semarang regency.

Based on the result above it suggest: First, the pattern of the choreography of *Prajuritan* dance need to be styled to be more varied and interesting (not monotonous). Second, *Prajuritan* dance as a form of traditional performing arts should be developed and are performed to make increased community participation so that they really feel to have thus it can reinforce the dance as one of cultural identity in Semarang Regency.

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