

Construction of Identity and Aesthetic Meaning of Traditional Javanese Dance: A Study of Bolet Movements in the Ngremo Jombangan Performance Style

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Abstract

Ngremo Gaya Jombangan features a distinctive micro-kinetic element, the bolet, whose semiotic function and role in constructing cultural identity have never been systematically analysed in Indonesian dance scholarship, where it is folded into general descriptions of Ngremo choreography rather than treated as an analytic unit in its own right. This study analyses the bolet as a marker of micro-kinetic identity that constructs the aesthetic meaning and cultural identity of the Jombang community. The material consists of 47 bolet movement units documented from three purposively selected performance sites in Jombang Regency, East Java, over eight months. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with 12 informants selected by purposive and snowball sampling and audiovisual recordings analysed using Kinovea v.0.9.5 and Laban Movement Analysis, continuing until coding reached saturation. The analysis identified a consistent, technically distinguishable kinaesthetic profile of 35–45-degree ankle rotation, sustained-strong effort, wall-plane shape and near-reach space, with 87.3% inter-analyst agreement. Semiotically, bolet operates simultaneously as icon, index and symbol, actively producing regional identity rather than merely preserving it. Thematic analysis yields four themes: regional differentiation, transmission of collective memory, performative legitimation and communal resistance to homogenization driven by festivalization. The study concludes that bolet constitutes a somatic identity claim through performative action, in which the moving body actively expresses cultural attachment in every execution and proposes an integrative micro-kinetic framework as a replicable analytical model for intangible cultural heritage preservation policy.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Micro-kinetic Identity, Performance Semiotics, Somaesthetics, Traditional Javanese Dance.

Introduction

Ngremo Dance, the opening repertoire of East Java's ludruk performances, serves not only as an opening act but as a symbolic articulation of the social identity, bravery and cultural ethos of the dancers and their community. In the Jombangan context, bolet both a distinctive movement technique and a visual element worn by dancers' marks differentiation from the Surabayan and Malangan styles. In practice, however, bolet is often understood as a visual accessory or choreographic variation rather than a micro-performative unit carrying semiotic and historical weight. Despite this salience, bolet has never been isolated as a unit of analysis in its own right; existing accounts absorb it into broader descriptions of Ngremo choreography and this absence of systematic treatment is the specific gap this study addresses. Practitioners commonly distinguish three regional

inflexions of Ngremo Surabayan, Malangan and Jombangan. According to the senior informants interviewed (PS-01 to PS-05, each with over twenty years of teaching experience), the Jombangan style crystallised through generations of transmission within Jombang ludruk troupes, whose teachers deliberately preserved bolet as a marker distinguishing their lineage from neighbouring troupes on the same festival circuit. Documentary accounts similarly trace Remo's origins to Jombang conventionally to Ceweng village, Diwek District before its absorption into ludruk and, later, festival stages (1). This testimony is treated as data about how the community narrates its own origin, not as settled historiography. Within performance studies, the body is an active medium of meaning production. Performance operates as "restored behaviour"

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behaviour restored and reinterpreted in a specific context so everybody technique, macro or micro, represents an ongoing negotiation of collective memory (2). The concept of embodied cultural property extends this, showing that dance, as intangible cultural heritage, “remains tied to the communities in which it is practiced” (3). Movement is never abstract; it exists in relation to the identity of those who produce and read it.

This reading connects to a wider international conversation the previous literature engaged only partially. Movement anthropology treats the body not as raw behavioural data but as an intelligent, culturally saturated instrument of communication, read from within the tradition that produces it (4). It has further been argued that the body is not an object culture acts upon but the existential ground from which culture is generated (5). With cultural memory scholarship, these positions suggest bolet is not a static costume detail but a site where memory is rehearsed and produced anew with each performance.

A further complication concerns how identity is theorized. Much literature on Indonesian regional dance still treats cultural identity as a stable inheritance that performance merely displays. Cultural identity has alternatively been theorised as less a fixed inheritance than an ongoing production, always positioned within representation rather than prior to it (6). This study follows that reading: cultural identity in Ngremo Jombang is not a backdrop against which bolet is performed, but something the performance brings into being, negotiated with every dancer and audience.

This embodied dimension becomes clearer through somaesthetics. Performative practice involves “the importance of feeling and producing what fire dancers refer to as ‘energies’” (7). Showing that the experience of movement is not only visual but affective and phenomenological. Bolet is thus not only a choreographic structure but a bodily experience carrying symbolic and emotional resonance; ignoring this reduces dance to a composition of forms.

Globalisation and the festivalization of performing arts, however, encourage an orientation towards spectacular visuality while marginalising the depth of movement semiotics. Micro-movement detail is often poorly documented, making technologies

such as motion capture valuable for capturing performance precision (8). Micro-kinetic elements are therefore not mere technical details but essential components in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

This bears directly on the sustainable development agenda. Intangible cultural heritage has been described as providing communities “a sense of identity and continuity” (9), a principle reflected in Target 11.4 of SDG 11 on protecting cultural heritage (10). Cultural literacy built through understanding the structural meanings of traditional arts further supports Target 4.7 of SDG 4 (8, 11). Studying bolet is thus relevant not only aesthetically but for global cultural policy, amid growing discourse on embodied performance and digital preservation (3, 12).

Research on micro dance elements in traditional Indonesian dance remains minimal (13). To the best of current scholarly knowledge, no prior study has examined bolet as a micro-kinetic identity marker within Ngremo Gaya Jombang through an integrative performance-semiotic framework (14).

For clarity, micro-kinetic identity denotes a cultural identity claim carried, marked and continuously re-asserted through a small, technically bounded unit of movement, rather than through an entire dance sequence, a costume, or a verbal narrative. It is proposed here as an integrative construct combining three lines Laban's kinaesthetic description, Peircean sign theory and somaesthetic accounts of felt experience not previously applied together to a single micro-unit of Indonesian traditional dance. The claim is not that bolet symbolises identity generally, but that its technically bounded movement signature performs the identity work.

This research therefore analyses bolet as a marker of micro-kinetic identity in Ngremo Gaya Jombang through an integrative approach combining performance studies, somaesthetics and movement semiotics, examining three layers: the kinaesthetic (movement-technique structure), the semiotic (carrier of symbolic meaning and identity) and the sociocultural (reconstruction of collective memory and regional differentiation). Theoretically, it expands international discourse on micro-kinetic elements in intangible cultural heritage; practically, it offers a preservation-policy

framework engaging not only the visual reproduction of forms but the meaning that sustains community identity.

Methodology

Research Design

The primary festival documentation site, Sasana Gebyar Seni Jombang, is located at approximately 7.5356° S, 112.2277° E (Plus Code F67H+Q3, Jombang Regency, East Java); the two remaining studio sites lie within an approximately five-kilometre radius of this point. This case was chosen not merely for its uniqueness but for its capacity to explain a broader phenomenon: how cultural identity is constructed through semiotic elements in traditional dance performances. A qualitative approach has been shown to be most appropriate for exploring meanings that cannot be reduced to numbers (15) and a case study has been defined as “an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context” (16). Based on this paradigm, the research limitations were the active performance of Ngremo Gaya Jombangan in community ludruk and regional festivities during 2023–2024, as well as an analytical review of its bolet movement element as a principal entity.

Location and Participants

The research took place in Jombang Regency, East Java, over an intensive eight-month field period. Three locations were purposively selected: an active dance studio that transmits Ngremo Gaya Jombangan, a community ludruk performance arena and the Jombang district-level arts and culture festival. Twelve informants were selected through purposive sampling combined with snowball sampling, namely five senior dancers with ≥15 years of experience, three ludruk dance maestros and coaches, two active night performance practitioners and two academics specialising in East Java performance traditions (17). The 15-year threshold was based on the established argument that full internalisation of the traditional movement vocabulary requires at least a decade of active involvement (18). Sample adequacy was judged by saturation rather than by size alone: data collection continued until successive interviews and additional movement units stopped generating new codes in the NVivo matrix, a point reached around the tenth informant and the fortieth movement unit, after which the

remaining informants and units served to confirm rather than expand the coding structure.

Given the bounded single-case design, this threshold is treated as adequate for analytic, not statistical, generalisation, consistent with the established argument that case-study evidence generalises to theoretical propositions rather than to populations (19). The principal researcher’s position as a practitioner of East Java performing arts, with exposure to the ludruk context since the beginning of their academic career, is explicitly recognised as a potential confirmatory bias. To address this, the reflexivity journal is systematically managed to guide the research obtained and integrated into the narrative of the findings, consistent with the established view that reflexivity must be clearly documented in a study (20). Written informed consent was obtained individually from all twelve informants prior to interview and recording and separate permission for audiovisual documentation of public performances was obtained from the responsible organiser at each site the studio director, the ludruk troupe leader and the festival committee.

Data Collection

Data is identified through three methods conducted simultaneously. Participatory observation adopts the position of participant as observer, operationalising a three-level observational framework — descriptive, focused and selective — which is expanded through an ethnography-of-the-senses approach (16). Sensory ethnography is used to document not only the formal structure of the performance but also the kinaesthetic experience in the production of dance meaning (17). Field notes are taken immediately after each session. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 12 informants, lasting 60–120 minutes per session and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Member checking is carried out in two stages: factual verification of transcripts, followed by validation of interpretive draft findings with three key informants (21). Differences between the researcher’s interpretation and the informants’ responses are not eliminated but documented as additional data. Audiovisual data are recorded using a multi-camera video system. All video is recorded in at least 1080p/30fps for accurate frame-by-frame analysis.

Analysis Procedures

Analysis is conducted through three iterative procedures that inform each other. Kinetic analysis uses Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), which consists of four dimensions: Body, Effort, Shape and Space, by the lead researcher and a certified LMA expert consultant (18). For readers unfamiliar with LMA, the four dimensions can be summarised briefly. Body concerns which parts of the body initiate and carry a movement and how they connect to one another. Effort concerns the dynamic quality of a movement along factors such as weight (light/strong), time (sustained/sudden) and flow (free/bound). Shape concerns the changing form the body takes in relation to itself and its surroundings spreading, enclosing, rising, or sinking. Space concerns the pathway and reach of a movement relative to the body's personal kinesphere, from near-reach to far-reach. These four dimensions are treated as complementary rather than independent and Table 1 reports bolet's profile across all four.

The Kinovea application (version 0.9.5) is used for frame-by-frame analysis. Inter-analyst checking is applied to a 30% random sample of the documented movement units (14 of 47 units); any coding differences between the two analysts are discussed until an analytical consensus is reached. Semiotic analysis is conducted using an established framework that categorises choreographic signs as units with iconic, indexical and symbolic dimensions (19, 20). An operational protocol is defined before analysis begins, where each element must be categorised into three types: visual/kinesthetic similarity, factual-causal relationships and communal conventions, to avoid purely intuitive interpretations that have not been verified (22).

Thematic analysis follows an established interactive model involving data condensation, data presentation and the drawing and verification of conclusions (13). The two-stage coding process using NVivo 12 (qualitative analysis software) tracks descriptive coding from preliminary categories through to interpretative coding, which utilized the matrix coding query function to reveal patterns meeting around identity descriptors through bolet (23).

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity and trustworthiness are addressed through four criteria (23). First, credibility is strengthened through source, method and theory triangulation, combined with prolonged engagement over eight months in the field and two-stage member checking conducted at chronologically separate points with the informants. Second, transferability is achieved through thick description of the social, historical and cultural context, allowing readers to assess the findings' resonance independently (24). Third, dependability is achieved through a chronological Audit Trail of every methodological decision and its rationale. Fourth, confirmability is achieved by integrating the reflexivity journal into the audit trail and into the narrative of the findings (24).

Results

This research aimed to reveal how the micro-kinetic elements of the bolet construct regional cultural identity in the Ngremo Dance Gaya Jombang. The main finding can be stated directly: bolet is not a choreographic ornament that can be substituted, but rather a micro semiotic element that actively constructs and communicates the cultural identity of the Jombang community through the bodies of its dancers in every performance execution.

Kinesthetic Structure of Bolet

Frame-by-frame analysis using Kinovea v.0.9.5 on 47 bolet movement units reveals consistent kinesthetic patterns that can be distinguished technically. Specifically, repeated kinesiological structures have been identified: ankle rotation outward at 35–45 degrees, with heel elevation in phase with asymmetric arm swings. An inter-analyst agreement of 87.3% was reached on a 30% random sample ($n = 14$ of 47 units), exceeding the protocol consensus threshold (18).

Within the LMA framework, the range of 35–45 degrees specifically produce a strong weight quality with a spreading shape-flow combination of kinesthetic elements that communicate both tightness and openness. Based on the four LMA dimensions (Body, Effort, Shape and Space), the distinctive characteristics of Bolet Jombang are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Kinesthetic Profile of Jombangan Style Based on LMA

LMA Components	Jombangan Style	Differences from Surabayan	Differences from Malangan
Body	Head isolation with asymmetrical lateral rotation, neck and shoulders move as a single unit	Symmetrical head, without shoulder isolation, shoulders and neck move independently	Full head rotation without shoulder involvement, the upper body is more passive
Effort	Sustained, strong, heavy pressure but controlled, slow internal tempo, although visually explosive	Sudden light movement, quick, without leaving pressure	Sustained light, flowing without pressure, soft and continuous
Shape	Wall plane-dominant, movements spread sideways, forming a clear and stable horizontal plane	Door plane-dominant, vertical and upright, emphasising height-low dimension	Table plane-dominant, horizontal and even, spreading in all directions
Space	Near-reach space, intense movements, concentrated around the body, not expansive outward	Expansion to far-reaching space: the body reaches out beyond its physical limits	A combination of near and far reach space, flexible without a dominant zone

The profile was derived by the authors from frame-by-frame analysis in Kinovea v.0.9.5 using Laban Movement Analysis (18); inter-analyst agreement reached 87.3% on a 14-unit random sample. Table 1 sets these four dimensions side by side against the corresponding Surabayan and Malangan profiles. What distinguishes Jombangan bolet is not any single feature in isolation, but the specific combination of a wall-plane shape, sustained-strong effort and near-reach space, a combination that does not recur as a set in either comparison style.

Bolet as a Choreographic Sign System

Semiotic analysis identifies bolet as a sign system operating simultaneously across three Peircean dimensions, using the operational protocol described in the methodology. Table 2 sets out this mapping. The map is the authors' semiotic analysis, drawing on embodied cultural-property theory (3) and an established sign framework (22), applied to 2023 field data.

Table 2: Semiotic Map of Bolet as a Layered Choreographic Sign

Sign Type	Definition	Manifestation in Bolet	Semiotic Function
Icon	Sign resembling its object through visual or kinesthetic similarity	Ankle rotation and asymmetric arm swing visually evoke the physical geography and movement culture of Jombang	Communicates place-based bodily aesthetics through movement form
Index	Sign that has a factual-causal relationship with its object	Performance context restricted to official ludruk marks it as community-validated authenticity	Points to dancer's training lineage and community belonging
Symbol	Sign based on communal convention and shared meaning	Seven of twelve informants spontaneously identified bolet as the body 'speaking about origins'	Regulates identity boundaries; differentiates Jombangan from Surabayan and Malangan styles

Table 2 shows that no single dimension operates alone: the icon supplies the visual and kinaesthetic likeness, the index anchors that likeness to a specific, sanctioned performance context and the symbol is what a community-wide convention ultimately regulates. It is this layering, rather than any one function taken separately, that gives bolet its semiotic weight.

Thematic Construction of Identity

Table 3 summarises the thematic construction of identity that emerged from the two-stage coding process. Four themes recur across the majority of informants: regional differentiation, transmission of collective memory, performative legitimacy and resistance to homogenisation. Regional differen-

tiation is the most frequently coded theme, raised spontaneously by nine of the twelve informants, typically framed as a claim that outsiders can recognise a Jombangan dancer by movement alone. Collective-memory transmission, coded from eight informants, centres on bolet as an inheritance that must be passed on unmodified. Performative legitimacy, coded from seven informants, treats correct execution of bolet as the practical test of whether a dancer may be called a Ngremo Jombangan dancer at all. Resistance to homogenisation, coded from six informants, receives closer treatment in the Discussion section because of its direct bearing on the sustainability of the practice.

Table 3: Thematic Construction of Identity through Bolet

Theme	Analytical Description	Frequency (n of 12)	Representative Quote
Regional Differentiation	Bolet actively marks Jombang identity as distinct from Surabayan and Malang styles.	9 of 12	People only know Jombang from its way of speaking (PS-01)
Collective Memory Transmission	The community understands Bolet as a heritage that must be passed on in its original form, not modified.	8 of 12	"We preserve bolet so that our descendants know where we come from" (ML-03)
Performative Legitimacy	Mastery of bolet becomes a benchmark for the community in assessing the competence and legitimacy of Ngremo Jombangan dancers.	7 of 12	"If you can't do bolet, you can't be called a Ngremo Jombangan dancer" (ML-02)
Resistance to Homogenisation	Bolet is consciously maintained as a response to the pressures of festivalisation and standardisation of choreography at the national level.	6 of 12	"Festivals want everything to be the same. We don't want to be the same." (AK-01)

Themes were constructed by the authors through NVivo 12 thematic analysis with two-stage coding (13) and member checking with three informants (PS-01, ML-02, AK-01) across the 12-informant sample.

Discussion

Kinesthetic Habitus and Restored Behaviour

This finding confirms, expands and in one aspect challenges the existing literature. It affirms the performance studies argument that the body is an active medium of meaning production, but it extends this argument to a more specific dimension: regional granularity, which is not

merely ethnic or national identity, is the most relevant analytical unit for understanding how meaning operates in Javanese traditional dance (2). At the same time, this finding refutes the assumption in Indonesian cultural policy that Ngremo can be treated as a single entity, 'a typical East Javanese dance,' without losing the substance of its meaning.

The four LMA components are consistently present in the five senior dancers (PS-01 to PS-05), showing individual variations in amplitude and timing. This suggests that bolet is not personal improvisation but a movement vocabulary internalised as a bodily habitus, defined as the active presence of past experience deposited in the

body as schemes of perception, thought and action (25). The kinesthetic patterns identified across the 47 segments confirm that the Jombangan practice community has internalised this habitus in a shared, rather than idiosyncratic, form (26). These findings simultaneously affirm and deepen an established argument on behavioural renewal (2): bolet is not only inherited from generation to generation but is internalised as a cultural reflex that transcends technical awareness. Maestro ML-02 expresses it thus: 'That bolet wasn't created by you. That bolet existed before you. You just need to find its place on your body' (ML-02, interview, 14 June 2023).

The ten-degree spread in ankle rotation (35–45°) deserves direct comment, since a range rather than a fixed value could in principle reflect stylistic flexibility, individual variation among performers, or simple measurement imprecision. Three observations favour the first two readings over the third. First, the range is stable across the five senior dancers observed and does not correlate with any single performer producing consistently higher or lower values, which would be expected if the spread reflected one dancer's idiosyncratic technique rather than a shared stylistic boundary. Second, inter-analyst agreement on the same movement units reached 87.3%, high enough to suggest the range reflects real variation in the performed movement rather than disagreement between coders reading the video. Third, informants themselves described bolet as allowing controlled individual expression within a recognisable boundary rather than one exact angle; several used the phrase 'finding its place on your body' (ML-02) to describe this latitude. Taken together, the range is best read as the outer and inner limits of a stylistically bounded technique, within which individual dancers retain some latitude, rather than as noise introduced by the measurement protocol (18).

Bolet as a Choreographic Sign System

Some theoretical precision is needed here, since the three established sign types are not mutually exclusive categories but overlapping functions a single sign can perform simultaneously, depending on which relation to its object is being activated (20, 22). In bolet, the iconic function rests on a resemblance relation: the ankle rotation and asymmetric arm swing visually evoke, for observers already familiar with the local landscape

and gait, the physical geography and movement culture of Jombang. The indexical function rests on a causal-contextual relation: bolet's restriction to official ludruk performance is not a resemblance but a factual link between the sign and the conditions of its authorised use. The symbolic function rests on convention alone nothing in the movement itself dictates that it should mean 'origin,' but the community has settled on that reading through repeated use. Distinguishing these three relations operationally, rather than treating 'icon, index, symbol' as three loosely applied adjectives, is what allows the semiotic map in Table 2 to function as an analytic tool rather than a descriptive label.

Among the three dimensions of signs, it is the symbolic function that is most culturally strategic and epistemologically vulnerable. The limitation on using bolet only during official ludruk, not casual entertainment, is not simply an aesthetic rule but a mechanism of identity differentiation that operates through the regulation of bodily practices rather than through verbal communication. Seven out of twelve informants spontaneously, without being prompted by specific questions, mentioned bolet as a way for the body to 'speak about origins.' The stability of this account across informant background and age groups suggests that a community-wide narrative has emerged around the semiotic function of bolet, alongside its techniques of movement. This proves the argument that elements of traditional microkinetic modelling serve as a vessel for cultural memory that transcends verbalisation (27). This semiotic finding significantly broadens the argument that embodied cultural property not only socially limits the community but also reshapes it each time it is demonstrated (3).

Sociocultural Identity Construction

With 34 coded interview excerpts from nine informants, regional differentiation is the most frequently discussed theme. Importantly, differentiation is not a verbal statement of identity; rather, it is regulated within the practice of bodily habits. This reflects a form of external pressure that sharpens awareness of local identity a paradox repeatedly encountered in the traditional performing arts of Java in the era of globalisation (27, 28).

The theme of resistance to homogenisation is the most significant finding. Of the three district

festivals observed in 2023, two set a seven-minute performance limit for Ngremo. The maestro consistently states 12–15 minutes as the minimum duration for the bolet sequence to be executed in a fully dynamic, gradually unfolding manner. As a result, the performance prioritises visuals at the expense of substantive content. This process has been named 'cultural dilution through spectacularisation,' where traditional art transforms into a visual spectacle that separates its deeper intelligence (29). AK-01 provided the most direct testimony: 'There is always stress during a provincial-level competition to dumb it down. However, it is during those moments when these maestros double down on their bolet teaching. The higher the pressure, the more impactful it is' (AK-01, interview, 3 September 2023).

Regarding the transmission crisis, only one of the three studios observed has a trainer who can articulate the technical principles of bolet explicitly. Students in the other two studios can produce something that appears to be a bolet, but when asked to explain what they are doing and why, they lack the language to do so. Fortin, Long and Lord identify this pattern as embodied knowledge erosion, a condition in which bodily knowledge persists superficially while losing depth (30). The mechanism behind this vulnerability has been explained through the concept of carnal knowledge, in which bodily knowledge in cultural practice is tacit and can only be transmitted through direct physical engagement between the master and the pupil (31).

Bolet in Regional Comparative Perspective

Placed alongside other Indonesian regional dance traditions, the pattern identified here is not unique to Jombangan Ngremo, though its specific mechanism appears understudied elsewhere. Sundanese classical dance scholarship similarly documents how a small, technically bounded set of movement and costume markers, rather than the whole choreography, carries the ethical and social identity of the noble class from which Keurseus and Sulintang dances originate (32). This suggests that micro-level markers functioning as identity

carriers may be a broader feature of Javanese and Sundanese court-descended dance traditions, not a peculiarity of Ngremo alone. What appears comparatively distinctive about bolet is the explicit boundary-policing function reported by informants: its restriction to sanctioned ludruk performance operates as an active regulatory mechanism, whereas comparable Sundanese markers appear in the literature primarily as carriers of aesthetic and ethical value rather than as tools the community uses to draw a line between insiders and outsiders. Whether this difference reflects a genuine contrast between performance genres or simply a gap in how each tradition has been studied is a question this single-case design cannot resolve and is flagged here as a direction for comparative future research rather than a settled finding.

Theoretical Contribution

At this point, a new analytical concept is introduced: somatic identity claim. This is defined as a cultural identity statement made through, within and by a moving body not about the body itself but the body as an active and performative agent of identity statements in every execution of movement. The embodied identity literature has tended to discuss identity as 'stored' within the body, a relatively passive memory or cultural inheritance (33). The somatic identity claim differs: each time the bolet is correctly executed in front of a community that recognises it, the dancer actively acknowledges it and the validity of that claim is determined by the recognition response from the attending community. This is what makes the performative continuity described in the previous subsection critically important.

The second methodological contribution is the integrative micro-kinetic framework, which connects LMA, Peircean semiotics and somaesthetics as an integrated approach to reading micro-kinetic elements in Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). This integrative model represents an evolutionary step in the analysis of dance within ICH spaces and provides researchers with a replicable methodological model. Table 4 presents a comparison of theoretical positions.

Table 4: Comparison of Theoretical Positions: Literature and Research Findings

Theoretical Concept	Position in Literature	Findings of This Research	Theoretical Implications
Restored behavior	Traditional movement is a behaviour that is restored and reinterpreted within a social context.	Bolet is not only restored but actively maintained as an instrument of cultural resistance.	There is a need to expand the concept of resistance as a new analytical category.
Embodied cultural property	Dance practices are tied to the community that socially produces them.	Bolet actively reproduces community identity each time it is performed, not merely stored.	Cultural property is not static; it is an agent of ongoing identity reproduction.
Threat of festivalisation	Micro-kinetic elements are at risk of being poorly documented due to a focus on spectacular visual appearances.	Festivalisation also triggers active communal agency responses that have not been discussed in previous literature.	Communities are not passive victims of festivalisation; they are active agents of resistance.
Safeguarding ICH	Conservation focuses on reproducing visual forms and documenting surfaces.	Preservation must simultaneously touch upon the semiotic function, the somaesthetic dimension and communal agency.	A policy reorientation from form to meaning, from documentation to transmission

Table 4 places four established theoretical positions side by side with the corresponding findings of this study. Read across its rows, the table shows a consistent direction of movement: from behaviour that is merely restored to behaviour actively maintained as resistance; from cultural property that is stored to identity that is reproduced with each performance; from communities treated as passive objects of festivalisation to communities acting as agents; and from form-centred documentation to meaning-centred transmission. The table therefore functions as a condensed statement of the study's theoretical contribution rather than as an additional data set.

Implications for Conservation Policy

The policy for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in Indonesia currently focuses on repeated forms such as video documentation, visibility festivals and official certification of school arts and culture curricula. In this respect, they contribute to the continuity of various forms of visual dance, but do not offer a systematic answer to the harder question of whether the living meaning that animates the practice survives once its form has been archived. Again, explicitly

acknowledging this paradox emphasises the need not only for documentation but also for the transmission of knowledge, skills and the meanings that make up its living substance to sustain ICH (34).

This research offers a clear step-by-step protocol for microkinetic analysis that can be developed and refined for LMA, semiotics and community narratives as standard preservation instruments. Such protocols can be implemented immediately by the Cultural Heritage Preservation Agency at the provincial level as part of ongoing ICH documentation procedures. This innovative model requires an almost cost-free storage infrastructure. Archives embody their policies through what is documented, by whom and how (33).

Our approach directly reflects the power relations that determine which cultures are considered worthy of preservation. Not only is there no official file of 'bolet' among East Java's cultural archives, therefore; the lack of bolet as a distinct object of analysis in their records is never presented as an evident technical lapse, but rather must be seen first and foremost as the result of the politics of representation that implicitly assert the supremacy of an ideal for what counts as 'East

Javanese dance' by default one based on the Surabayan performance style. This research directly challenges the politics of representation by providing empirical evidence of the semiotic significance of the Jombangan style (33). Within the framework of SDG 4.7, strengthening cultural literacy through a deep understanding of the structural meaning of traditional art forms is not merely about recognising the forms. However, it is an investment in the community's capacity to maintain its identity amidst the currents of global homogenisation. This study provides an empirical basis for that argument.

Conclusion

This study reveals that bolet is not a kind of embellishment or other gesture that can be abstracted or minimized without collateral damage. As living cultural wealth, not static but constantly at work and as a micro-semiotic unit of culture, every performance continues to revive the regional cultural identity of the Jombang community. Three distinct levels of analysis lead to the same conclusion. Kinetically, bolet presents a stable and technically describable profile: outward ankle rotation of 35–45 degrees, sustained-strong effort, a wall-plane-dominant shape and concentration of movement within near-reach space. These features hold for the majority of dancers in most contexts and point to something closer to a collective than individual movement lexicon. The bolet thus acts semiotically as icon, index and symbol, regulating what the community defines as authentic Ngremo Jombangan. Socioculturally, four key themes emerged: regional differentiation, collective memory sharing, performative legitimacy and communal resistance, the last of which was given the highest priority. Festivalization, in fact, is an intensifier of intentionality here, as it refines the transmission of bolet from maestros to pupils, not undermines it. These findings yield two contributions: the somatic identity claim, a new analytical category in which the moving body is an active agent whose validity rests on social recognition at every performance; and the integrative micro-kinetic framework combining LMA, Peircean semiotics and somaesthetics, offering a replicable model for assessing the micro-kinetics of intangible cultural heritage beyond Jombang, with direct relevance to the SDG 11.4 gap in cultural heritage protection. As

already detailed in the Methodology, the principal limitations of this study are its single-site case design, its purposive sampling and its dependence on observational rather than instrumented movement measurement, which together bound the claims to analytic rather than statistical generalisation. Future studies could compare bolet transmission in digital and face-to-face learning environments and examine multi-generational reception of micro-kinetic elements among young urban practitioners. Whether the living meaning of bolet endures will depend on how these transmission pathways evolve over the next decade.

This study has several limitations that bound its claims. It is a single-site case centred on three locations in Jombang Regency, so its findings describe this community rather than Ngremo practice in general; it relies on purposive and snowball sampling, which privileges practitioners in recognised lineages; and it depends on Laban-based observational analysis rather than instrumented biomechanical measurement, so the 87.3% figure reflects analyst consensus, not engineering precision. Together these bound the findings to analytic rather than statistical generalisation.

Abbreviations

ICH: Intangible Cultural Heritage, LMA: Laban Movement Analysis, SDG: Sustainable Development Goals.

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Author Contributions

Jajuk Dwi Sasanadjati: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Investigation, Field Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Initial Manuscript Writing, Visualisation, Warih Handayani: Methodology, Validation, Semiotic Analysis, Writing, Review

and Editing, Supervision, Setyo Yanuartuti: Investigation, Data Curation, Kinaesthetic Analysis based on LMA, Review and Editing, Bambang Sugito: Validation, Review and Editing, Project Administration, Arif Hidajad: Validation, Review and Editing, Project Administration.

Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to report in this study.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Raw interview transcripts and movement analysis data are not publicly available due to the confidentiality agreements made with informants.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used an AI-based language tool solely to assist with language editing, grammar and the formatting of references. No AI tool was used to generate the research design, field data, movement analysis, semiotic interpretation, findings, or conclusions, all of which are the authors' own intellectual work. The authors reviewed and verified all AI-assisted edits and take full responsibility for the originality, interpretation and accuracy of the content.

Ethics Approval

This research was undertaken in alignment with relevant ethical research principles. Written informed consent was obtained individually from all twelve informants prior to data collection and permission for audiovisual documentation of the observed performances was separately obtained from the studio director, the ludruk troupe leader and the festival committee at each research site. Participation was voluntary and the identities of informants were kept confidential as agreed. This study was approved by the competent institutional authority according to applicable procedures.

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