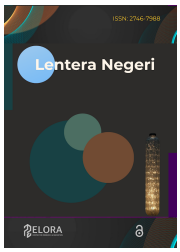
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A comparative study of regional GANDAI dance styles using Choreometry in three Indonesian communities

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify and compare the stylistic characteristics of Gandai dance across North Bengkulu, Mukomuko, and Silaut, Indonesia. A qualitative descriptive-comparative approach was employed. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation. Movement characteristics were examined using Lomax's Choreometrics framework, encompassing body attitude, active body parts, movement transitions, spatial dimensionality, and action–effort qualities. Data were analyzed through reduction, comparative presentation, and verification, supported by triangulation. Gandai dance exhibited distinct regional characteristics despite sharing common choreographic elements. North Bengkulu demonstrated graceful, fluid, and restrained movements; Mukomuko emphasized firm, forceful, and rhythmically accented execution; while Silaut displayed dynamic movements integrating fluid and assertive qualities. Differences were particularly evident in bodily coordination, transitional patterns, and expressive effort. Gandai's regional stylistic diversity reflects differentiated movement expressions within a shared cultural tradition. These findings support comparative dance documentation, cultural preservation, and heritage education.

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Introduction

Traditional dance constitutes an important form of intangible cultural heritage that preserves collective memory, expresses cultural identity, and transmits embodied knowledge across generations (Ronström, 2010). In Indonesia, interactions among neighboring communities have contributed to the development of shared choreographic traditions with distinctive regional characteristics. Gandai dance exemplifies this phenomenon through its presence in Bengkulu and the southern coastal region of West Sumatra. Although these communities share related movement repertoires, differences in movement execution and expressive conventions may reflect distinct local practices. Examining these variations is therefore essential to understanding how regional identities are maintained within an interconnected cultural tradition (Indrayuda, 2013; Utami & Fitriani, 2021).

The analysis of traditional dance requires attention not only to choreographic sequences but also to the movement qualities that establish stylistic identity. Lomax's Choreometrics framework provides a systematic approach to examining body attitude, movement coordination, spatial organization, transitions, and action

dynamics. From this perspective, shared movement vocabularies do not necessarily indicate identical performance styles, as regional traditions may differ in force, continuity, rhythm, and bodily articulation. Complementarily, the anthropology of dance situates movement practices within their sociocultural contexts. Combining these perspectives enables a more comprehensive analysis of regional variation without assuming a direct causal relationship between geographical conditions and movement characteristics (Lomax, 1978; Nerosti, 2024).

Previous studies have documented Gandai dance in relation to cultural identity, ceremonial functions, symbolic meanings, and preservation. Refisrul (2018) examined Gandai in Mukomuko, particularly its role in traditional weddings and its association with the narrative of Malin Deman and Puti Bungsu. Utami and Fitriani (2021) investigated its symbolic meanings through movement, music, and traditional verbal expressions. Maryani and Astuti (2025) documented its continued presence in North Bengkulu, while Mansyur et al. (2025) explored the reconstruction of Gandai in Silaut to preserve traditional movement repertoires and strengthen local identity. Collectively, these studies establish the cultural significance of Gandai, although systematic comparisons of its regional movement characteristics remain limited.

An important research gap concerns the comparative analysis of Gandai styles in North Bengkulu, Mukomuko, and Silaut. Existing investigations have addressed choreographic development, cultural transmission, and revitalization, but provide limited comparative evidence regarding body attitude, active body parts, movement transitions, spatial dimensionality, and action–effort characteristics. Studies of choreographic adaptation and regional reconstruction offer valuable insights but do not establish a unified framework for identifying stylistic similarities and differences. Consequently, the relationship between shared choreographic heritage and distinctive regional expressions remains insufficiently understood (Hayati & Asriati, 2026; Husni, 2026). Addressing this gap requires consistent movement-based analytical criteria that distinguish common structural features from region-specific stylistic characteristics (Afrioniica, 2022; Arma, 2022).

This study aims to identify and compare the stylistic characteristics of Gandai dance in Pagardin Village, North Bengkulu; Resno Village, Mukomuko; and Lubuk Bunta, Silaut, Pesisir Selatan. Its novelty lies in applying five choreometric dimensions body attitude, active body parts, movement transitions, spatial dimensionality, and action effort characteristics to three culturally interconnected regional traditions. Unlike previous studies emphasizing cultural significance, symbolic meaning, or choreographic reconstruction, this research places movement style at the center of comparative analysis while considering sociocultural contexts. It examines shared movement characteristics, region-specific stylistic distinctions, and their cultural interpretations. By integrating Lomax's choreometric framework with Royce's anthropological perspective, this study contributes a structured basis for documenting regional diversity and supporting the education and preservation of Gandai dance (Höfling, 2025; Jablonko, 2001).

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a descriptive-comparative analytical approach to examine stylistic variations in Gandai dance across three culturally interconnected regions of Indonesia. The qualitative approach was adopted to provide an in-depth understanding of movement characteristics, choreographic structures, and sociocultural contexts underlying regional dance expressions. The comparative analysis focused on identifying similarities and differences in movement execution rather than measuring performance outcomes statistically. Alan Lomax's Choreometrics framework (1978) provided the principal analytical foundation for examining dance styles through observable movement characteristics, while Anya Peterson Royce's sociocultural perspective (1977) was employed to contextualize regional variations within the cultural environments in which Gandai is practiced and transmitted. This combined approach enabled a systematic examination of stylistic differentiation while acknowledging the relationship between traditional dance practices and their supporting communities.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in three locations: Pagardin Village, Ulok Kupai District, North Bengkulu Regency; Resno Village, V Koto District, Mukomuko Regency; and Lubuk Bunta, Silaut District, Pesisir Selatan Regency, West Sumatra. These locations were selected because they represent communities in which Gandai dance remains culturally significant while exhibiting distinctive movement characteristics. The study involved traditional dancers, performing artists, customary leaders, and community members with direct

knowledge or experience of Gandai performances and cultural transmission. Participants provided information regarding movement practices, performance traditions, and the sociocultural significance of Gandai within their respective communities. The three research settings served as comparative cases for examining how a shared dance tradition is expressed through regionally distinctive movement patterns.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through direct observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain complementary evidence concerning Gandai dance styles. Field observations focused on movement sequences, body posture, active body parts, directional transitions, spatial organization, and expressive movement qualities during traditional performances and related dance activities. Interviews combined structured questions with open-ended discussions involving experienced dancers, performing artists, and individuals knowledgeable about Gandai traditions. These interviews explored movement characteristics, historical continuity, cultural meanings, and regional performance practices. Documentary materials included photographs, audiovisual recordings, field notes, archival records, and relevant scholarly publications. Primary data were obtained from field observations and interviews, whereas secondary data were derived from documentary and literature sources. The integration of these materials facilitated a contextual understanding of both choreographic characteristics and the cultural environments supporting Gandai dance.

Analytical Framework

The comparative analysis was guided by five dimensions of Lomax's Choreometrics framework: body attitude, movement transitions, spatial dimensionality, active body parts, and action–effort characteristics. Body attitude was examined through postural orientation and the positioning of the head, trunk, arms, and legs. Movement transitions were assessed by observing changes in direction, stepping patterns, turning movements, and continuity between choreographic sequences. Spatial dimensionality concerned the organization of movements within available performance space, including directional pathways and variations in bodily orientation. Active body parts were identified according to their involvement and prominence during movement execution, while action–effort characteristics were interpreted through movement force, rhythmic accentuation, continuity, and expressive quality. These analytical dimensions were applied consistently across the three regional traditions to establish a common basis for comparison. Royce's sociocultural perspective complemented the movement analysis by considering geographical conditions, livelihoods, customary practices, beliefs, and community relationships as contextual dimensions rather than predetermined causal explanations of stylistic differences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the qualitative analytical procedures of Miles and Huberman, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Initially, observational records, interview information, and documentary materials were reviewed to identify evidence relevant to the research objectives. During data reduction, information concerning Gandai movement characteristics was selected, organized, and classified according to the five choreometric dimensions. The categorized findings were subsequently presented through descriptive accounts and comparative matrices to facilitate systematic examination across North Bengkulu, Mukomuko, and Silaut. Cross-regional comparisons were undertaken to identify recurring movement characteristics, shared choreographic elements, and distinctive stylistic expressions. Sociocultural information was examined alongside these comparisons to provide contextual interpretation without assuming direct causal relationships. Conclusions were developed inductively and reviewed against the available observational, interview, and documentary evidence to ensure consistency between the interpretations and the empirical findings.

Trustworthiness and Data Validation

The trustworthiness of the qualitative findings was addressed primarily through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from traditional dancers, performing artists, customary leaders, and community members across the three research locations. Methodological triangulation was conducted by examining the consistency of evidence derived from observations, interviews, and documentary materials. These procedures were used to assess the credibility of descriptions concerning movement characteristics, regional stylistic distinctions, and sociocultural practices. Particular attention was given to whether interpretations of body attitude, movement transitions, spatial organization, and action–effort qualities were supported by complementary sources of evidence. The comparative interpretation was therefore grounded in the convergence of available qualitative information rather than in individual observations or subjective stylistic judgments.

Results and Discussions

Comparative Analysis of Gandai Dance Styles in North Bengkulu, Mukomuko, and Silaut

The findings reveal distinct stylistic characteristics of Gandai dance across three culturally interconnected regions: Pagardin Village in North Bengkulu, Resno Village in Mukomuko, and Lubuk Bunta in Silaut, Pesisir Selatan. Using Alan Lomax's Choreometrics framework, the analysis focuses on five movement dimensions: body attitude, movement transitions, spatial dimensionality, active body parts, and action–effort characteristics. The comparative findings demonstrate that North Bengkulu predominantly exhibits fluid and restrained movements, Mukomuko emphasizes forceful and accented execution, and Silaut combines controlled movements with dynamic spatial and rhythmic variations. These differences occur within a shared Gandai tradition and are examined alongside the sociocultural contexts in which the dance is practiced and transmitted.

Regional Characteristics and Body Movement Patterns

Table 1. Comparative Characteristics of Body Attitude and Active Body Parts in Gandai Dance

Movement component	North Bengkulu	Mukomuko	Silaut
Body attitude	Relatively upright and relaxed	Firm and strongly articulated	Flexible with alternating postural emphasis
Head movement	Follows movement direction with minimal accentuation	More pronounced directional emphasis	Adjusts to both fluid and accented sequences
Arm and hand movement	Flowing swings and extensions	Assertive gestures with distinct accents	Alternation between smooth gestures and emphatic movements
Trunk movement	Relatively stable and controlled	Active during directional changes	Variable according to movement sequences
Leg and foot movement	Regular steps and smooth displacement	Accented steps and stamping	Controlled steps combined with accented footwork
Overall coordination	Continuous and restrained	Forceful and energetic	Dynamic and rhythmically varied

Source: Synthesized from the thesis's comparative movement analysis.

Table 1 demonstrates that Gandai performances across the three regions employ similar anatomical components but differ substantially in movement coordination and expressive emphasis. North Bengkulu is characterized by relatively upright postures, controlled trunk movements, and continuous arm gestures that produce a graceful visual quality. In contrast, Mukomuko displays more pronounced bodily articulation, particularly through accented footwork, forceful gestures, and coordinated directional changes. Silaut exhibits a more variable movement structure, combining fluid upper-body movements with stronger accents in selected sequences. These findings indicate that regional stylistic differentiation is primarily associated with the organization and execution of bodily movements rather than the exclusive use of particular body parts.

Movement Transitions and Choreographic Continuity

Table 2 reveals that movement transitions constitute an important distinguishing feature of Gandai dance styles. In North Bengkulu, transitions are predominantly characterized by smooth stepping patterns and gradual directional changes, maintaining continuity between successive movement sequences. Mukomuko demonstrates more assertive transitions through accented steps, stamping, and clearly articulated changes in body orientation, contributing to a stronger rhythmic impression. Silaut incorporates both continuous and accented transitions, allowing movements to shift between restrained and energetic execution. Although all three traditions employ stepping, turning, and directional adjustments, their distinctive transitional qualities contribute to recognizable regional movement identities.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Movement Transition Patterns Across Three Gandai Traditions

Transition indicator	North Bengkulu	Mukomuko	Silaut
Step transitions	Smooth and continuous	Accented and assertive	Alternation between smooth and accented steps
Directional changes	Gradual and controlled	Clearly articulated	Variable and rhythmically responsive
Turning movements	Integrated into continuous sequences	More distinctly emphasized	Combined with changes in movement intensity
Transitional energy	Relatively restrained	Stronger and more emphatic	Alternating levels of emphasis
Movement continuity	Predominantly flowing	Marked by pronounced accents	Combines continuity and accentuation
Stylistic expression	Graceful and fluid	Firm and dynamic	Flexible and dynamic

Source: Synthesized from the thesis's findings on movement transitions.

Spatial Dimensionality and Movement Organization

Table 3. Comparative Spatial Characteristics of Gandai Dance in the Three Study Regions

Spatial indicator	North Bengkulu	Mukomuko	Silaut
Predominant movement organization	Continuous hand gestures and regular stepping	Accented displacement and directional changes	Varied spatial pathways and movement accents
Linear movement	Present in stepping and arm gestures	Present in accented stepping sequences	Present in several movement motifs
Curved and turning pathways	Incorporated into controlled transitions	Used with stronger directional emphasis	Combined with fluid and dynamic sequences
Three-dimensional movement	Identified in selected movement motifs	Present within the movement repertoire	Identified in selected motifs, including Rantak Kudo
Spatial expression	Restrained and continuous	Assertive and dynamic	Varied and rhythmically articulated
Relationship with movement effort	Supports fluid execution	Reinforces movement accents	Accommodates alternating effort qualities

Source: Synthesized from the thesis's spatial-dimensionality tables and comparative findings.

Table 3 indicates that spatial organization contributes to stylistic differentiation through the interaction of movement pathways, directional changes, and bodily execution. North Bengkulu generally employs spatial trajectories that support smooth and continuous movements, whereas Mukomuko demonstrates more pronounced spatial articulation through accented displacement and turning sequences. Silaut exhibits varied movement pathways, including motifs classified within the third dimension of the thesis's choreometric analysis, particularly in selected Rantak Kudo sequences. Importantly, the documented movement repertoires contain different dimensional classifications, indicating that regional distinctions cannot be reduced to a single spatial category. Instead, stylistic differences emerge from how spatial pathways interact with movement transitions, bodily coordination, and expressive effort.

Action, Effort, and Expressive Movement Qualities

Table 4 identifies action and effort as particularly salient dimensions of regional stylistic differentiation. North Bengkulu consistently exhibits restrained energy, fluid arm movements, and controlled stepping, producing an overall impression of softness and gracefulness across several documented movement varieties. Mukomuko, by comparison, emphasizes stronger muscular engagement, pronounced accents, and more forceful execution, particularly through stamping, clapping, and directional changes. Silaut demonstrates a broader alternation between movement qualities, combining gentle sequences with more emphatic rhythmic actions. These differences suggest that the expressive identity of Gandai is closely associated with movement execution, since similar movement motifs may generate substantially different visual and rhythmic impressions when performed with different levels of effort and accentuation.

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Action and Effort Characteristics in Gandai Dance

Analytical indicator	North Bengkulu	Mukomuko	Silaut
Movement force	Relatively gentle and restrained	Strong and emphatic	Alternates between restrained and stronger execution
Movement flow	Predominantly continuous	More distinctly accented	Combination of continuous and accented flow
Rhythmic emphasis	Relatively subtle	Clearly pronounced	Variable across movement sequences
Footwork quality	Controlled stepping	Accented steps and stamping	Smooth steps with selected emphatic accents
Upper-body expression	Graceful and fluid	Assertive and energetic	Alternating expressive qualities
Representative movement repertoire	Nenet, Leluen, Retak Kudo, Sementaro	Lori, Rantak Kudo, and other documented motifs	Hari Paneh Sabalum Puaso, Kwawletok, Nenet, Lori, Rantak Kudo
Overall movement quality	Soft and graceful	Strong, firm, and energetic	Dynamic, combining softness and firmness

Source: Synthesized from the thesis's action–effort analysis and documented movement repertoires.

Sociocultural Contexts and Regional Stylistic Variation

Table 5. Comparative Sociocultural Characteristics Supporting Gandai Dance Traditions

Sociocultural dimension	North Bengkulu	Mukomuko	Silaut
Geographical setting	Inland and hilly areas	Coastal Bengkulu	Coastal West Sumatra
Main livelihoods	Oil palm and rubber cultivation; farming	Agriculture, fishing, and plantation activities	Fishing, agriculture, and trade
Cultural traditions	Predominantly Pekal customs	Pekal customs with Minangkabau influences	Strong Minangkabau cultural influence
Religious and customary values	Islamic practices and Pekal traditions	Islamic practices and local customs	Islamic practices integrated with customary traditions
Social relationships	Strongly community-oriented	Communal social organization	Intercommunity interaction
Cultural orientation	Strong preservation of local traditions	Preservation alongside adaptation	Relatively open cultural interaction
Gandai performance context	Local customary and community activities	Weddings, cultural events, and regional performances	Community celebrations and cultural activities
Observed stylistic tendency	Soft and graceful	Strong and assertive	Dynamic and varied

Source: Adapted and synthesized from the thesis's sociocultural comparison table and field findings.

Table 5 illustrates that Gandai traditions are embedded in distinct yet interconnected sociocultural environments. North Bengkulu is characterized by relatively strong continuity of Pekal customary practices and localized community traditions, while Mukomuko demonstrates broader cultural circulation and adaptation within its coastal social environment. Silaut reflects substantial interaction with Minangkabau cultural practices and maintains Gandai through community-based artistic activities. These differences provide contextual information for understanding how dance traditions are maintained, transmitted, and performed across the three regions. Nevertheless, the qualitative findings do not establish direct causal relationships between geographical conditions, livelihoods, cultural practices, and specific movement qualities. Rather, sociocultural characteristics provide an interpretive framework for understanding the coexistence of shared cultural heritage and regionally distinctive Gandai styles.

Integrated Comparison of Regional Gandai Dance Styles

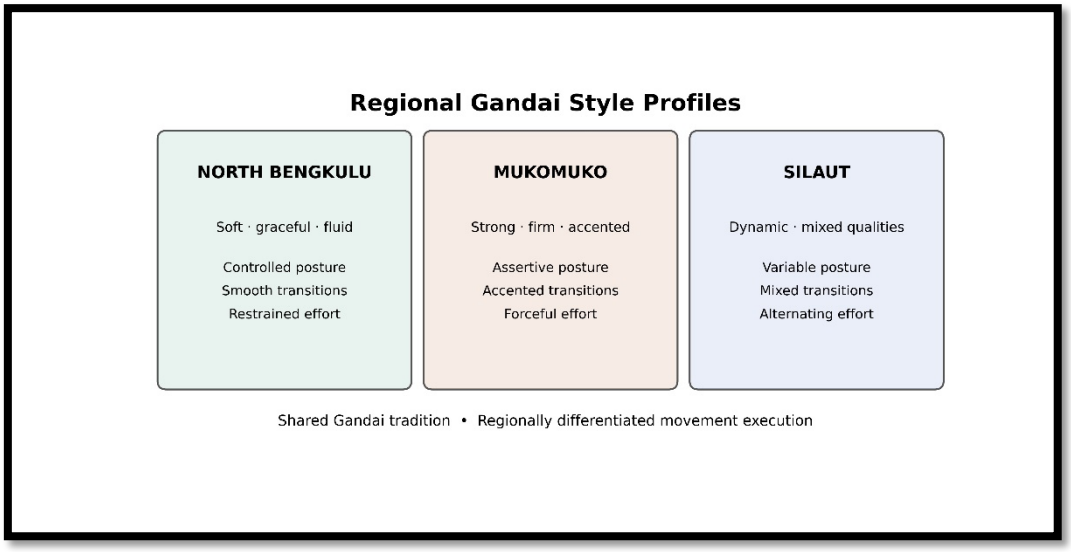


Figure 1. Comparative stylistic profiles of Gandai dance across North Bengkulu, Mukomuko, and Silaut

Figure 1 synthesizes the principal stylistic distinctions identified across the three Gandai traditions. North Bengkulu exhibits a predominantly graceful movement profile, characterized by controlled body posture, continuous transitions, and restrained expressive effort. Mukomuko displays a contrasting profile distinguished by stronger bodily articulation, accented transitions, and more emphatic movement execution. Silaut occupies a distinctive stylistic position through its combination of fluid and forceful movement qualities, producing a dynamic and rhythmically varied performance structure. Despite these differences, the three regional traditions retain recognizable similarities in movement repertoires and choreographic organization. The comparative synthesis therefore demonstrates that Gandai maintains a shared cultural foundation while exhibiting regional differentiation in movement execution, spatial organization, and expressive qualities.

The findings demonstrate that Gandai dance exhibits distinctive regional stylistic characteristics despite sharing a related choreographic repertoire across North Bengkulu, Mukomuko, and Silaut. North Bengkulu is characterized by graceful and restrained movements, Mukomuko by forceful and rhythmically accented execution, and Silaut by a combination of fluidity and assertiveness. These differences indicate that dance style is shaped not only by movement sequences but also by bodily coordination, spatial organization, and expressive effort. This interpretation is consistent Choreometrics framework, which identifies observable movement characteristics as essential indicators of stylistic differentiation (Bishop, 2003; Laemmli, 2018; Lomax et al., 2003). Thus, Gandai can be understood as a shared cultural tradition that accommodates distinct regional movement identities.

Differences in movement transitions and action–effort characteristics further distinguish the three regional styles. North Bengkulu emphasizes continuous gestures and controlled stepping, whereas Mukomuko demonstrates stronger footwork and more pronounced rhythmic accents. Silaut combines contrasting movement dynamics through varied transitions and expressive patterns. These findings support the argument of that movement organization and transitional complexity provide meaningful indicators for comparative dance analysis (Elyadi & Ningsih, 2019; HARIYATI, 2016; Musthofa & Yanuartuti, 2022; Syafputri & Hidayat, 2023). They also demonstrate that stylistic diversity can emerge within a shared choreographic tradition, even when fundamental movement motifs remain recognizable across regions.

Spatial organization and bodily coordination provide additional dimensions for understanding regional stylistic differentiation. North Bengkulu tends toward controlled spatial pathways, Mukomuko displays more emphatic directional movements, and Silaut incorporates greater variation in turning sequences and movement dynamics. These differences suggest that regional identity emerges through the interaction of spatial pathways, transitions, and expressive execution rather than through isolated movements. Mansyur et al. (2025) documented the reconstruction of Gandai movement motifs in Silaut, highlighting the importance of choreographic continuity in cultural preservation. The present study extends this perspective by showing

that preserving a shared repertoire does not necessarily eliminate stylistic variation among communities (Efrida, 2016; Setiawan & Jatnika, 2021; Sugiarto, 2013; Wulan & Yanuartuti, 2019).

The regional differences should also be interpreted within their respective sociocultural contexts. Although North Bengkulu, Mukomuko, and Silaut maintain historical and cultural connections, their performance practices may reflect different community experiences and traditions. Conceptualizes dance as an embodied cultural practice through which social relationships and cultural identities are expressed. Similarly, Refisrul (2018) highlights Gandai's significance in Mukomuko's customary celebrations and community life. However, these contextual relationships do not establish that geographical conditions or customary practices directly determine specific movement characteristics. Instead, sociocultural contexts provide an interpretive basis for understanding how a shared tradition develops distinctive regional expressions (Husni, 2026; Kartikasari, 2015; Kurniawan, 2020).

The principal contribution of this study is its comparative application of five choreometric dimensions to Gandai dance across three regional settings. Unlike studies primarily concerned with cultural meanings, performance functions, or choreographic reconstruction, this research foregrounds movement characteristics as the basis for identifying regional stylistic differences. The findings provide a foundation for culturally sensitive documentation, dance education, and heritage preservation that recognizes both shared repertoires and local expressions. Nevertheless, the qualitative design and geographically limited settings constrain generalizability, while the absence of standardized quantitative measurements limits objective comparisons. Future research should integrate audiovisual movement coding, dance notation, and longitudinal observation to investigate stylistic transmission and transformation (Husni, 2026; Kamiludin et al., 2012). Overall, Gandai's cultural continuity is better understood through the coexistence of shared heritage and regional stylistic diversity than through the assumption of stylistic uniformity.

Conclusions

This study concludes that Gandai dance exhibits distinct regional stylistic characteristics across North Bengkulu, Mukomuko, and Silaut despite sharing common choreographic elements and cultural traditions. The comparative analysis using Lomax's Choreometrics framework revealed differences in body attitude, active body parts, movement transitions, spatial dimensionality, and action–effort qualities. North Bengkulu Gandai is characterized by graceful, fluid, and restrained movements, whereas Mukomuko Gandai demonstrates stronger, firmer, and more rhythmically accented expressions. In contrast, Silaut Gandai displays dynamic movement patterns combining fluidity with assertive execution. These variations indicate that regional dance identity is shaped not merely by movement vocabulary but also by distinctive patterns of bodily coordination and expressive qualities developed within specific sociocultural contexts. By systematically identifying these similarities and differences, this study contributes to the comparative understanding of traditional dance styles and provides a foundation for documenting, preserving, and transmitting Gandai's diverse cultural heritage to future generations.

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