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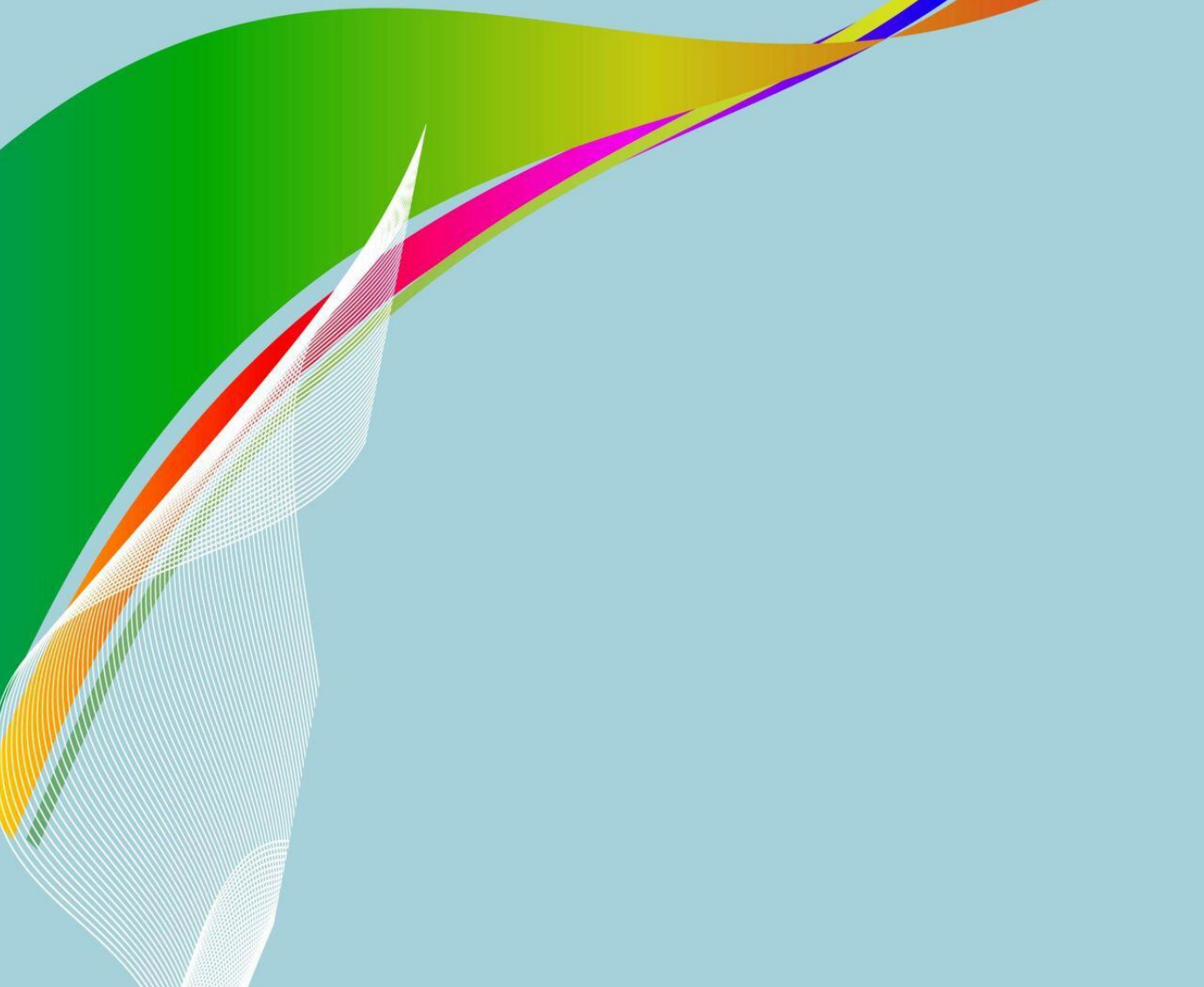
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**The Social Construction of the Banjar Ethnic Society  
Toward the Radap Rahayu Dance**

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## THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE BANJAR ETHNIC SOCIETY TOWARD THE RADAP RAHAYU DANCE

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### Abstract

*The Radap Rahayu is a ritual dance performed today by the Banjar ethnic group in Gambut District, Banjar Regency, South Kalimantan. It is used for traditional Banjar rituals, such as weddings, bathing, and building erections. This research aimed to describe the importance of the Radap Rahayu dance for the Banjar people and its relation to their well-being and spirituality. This qualitative research used a theoretical framework established by Berger and Luckmann (1990). Through the social construction theory, the researchers explored how the Banjar people make sense of their culture and express their spirituality through art. The informants were determined using purposive sampling on 25 individuals, and data collection was conducted through observations and in-depth interviews. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis and reviewed based on existing literature. The findings showed that the function and meaning of the Radap Rahayu dance, according to the Banjar people, are not merely an art performance but a vital ritual integrated into their daily lives. The researchers identified limbai movement, spiritual meaning, spiritual beings, and guardian crocodiles as domains of social construction. This aligns with the framework, highlighting that a phenomenon displays multiple realities.*

**Keywords:** *Dance; Radap Rahayu; Social Construction; Spiritual Meaning; Well-Being.*



## A. Introduction

The Banjar people (*Urang Banjar* in the Banjar language) are indigenous to the Banjar (southeastern) regions in South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Historically speaking, the Banjar people were once a part of the Dayak ethnic group in Kalimantan who assimilated with the Sumatran and Javanese culture during the Indonesian Hinduism-Buddhism era. Now, the Banjar people are considered to be an Ethnic Malay. Banjar can be divided into three sub-ethnic groups depending on their geographic distribution: (1) Banjar Pahuluan, who live in the valleys by the upriver of Meratus mountain ranges; (2) Banjar Batang Banyu, who live in the valleys by the Negara river; and (3) Banjar Kuala, who resides in Banjarmasin and Martapura (Badan Pusat Statistik Republik Indonesia, 2010; Hawkins, 2000).

Like many other ethnic groups, the Banjar people have their way of expressing their cultural expression. The reason behind these cultural expressions that the Banjar people chose is believed to be non-random. Such specific reasons involve their geographic location, historical background, and environmental conditions. It might also serve as a means of about their ethnic identity since through artistic expressions, such as visual arts, performing arts, and traditional crafts, the Banjar values and norms are continuously preserved and promoted (Abdurrahman & Abduh, 2020; Durkheim, 1995; Indriyani, 2022).

The Radap Rahayu dance is a type of dance that originated from South Kalimantan. It is a classical dance to welcome guests to various events, from wedding ceremonies to baby showers and even death rituals. As time progresses, this dance is also performed merely as folk entertainment. The Radap Rahayu dance can be seen as a way for the Banjar people to express their social and spiritual function as a community (Ningsih, 2018; Yusoff et al., 2018; Rukmini & Juwita, 2020; Zaini & Manesh, 2020). However, the analytic and scientific explanation of the Banjar people's perception of this dance remains unexplored – until now.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1990), individuals collectively create and maintain shared meanings, beliefs, and institutions through daily social interactions. The meanings attached to objects, events, or ideas are not necessarily inherent but are socially constructed through shared understanding and agreement within a society. The social construction theory works in three steps: (1) Externalization: Individuals give meaning to their subjective experiences and thoughts and express them in the external world through the use of languages, symbols, and other communication media; (2) Objectivation: The shared meanings were, then, reified or solidified in an objective and sustainable form in society, such as social institutions, norms, and cultural practices; and (3) Internalization: Individuals came to accept and incorporated the socially constructed meanings into their subjective understanding of reality by, for example, following the norms, perform daily prayers, and participate in death rituals. This theory also notes the importance of social institutions in the social construction of reality because social institutions, whether family, legal, educational, or religious institutions, heavily contribute to the stability and continuity of socially constructed meanings through socialization (Hjelm, 2019; Samuel, 2012; Arifin & Mohd Khambali, 2016).

Berger & Luckmann's theory (1990) theory proved the previous narration that no cultural expression is random since there must be a reason behind why a particular group performs a specific culture (Ayona & Sudrajat, 2020; Prasojo, 2018; Ratih & Juwariyah, 2020; Raffar et al., 2021). This research was conducted to describe the importance of the Radap Rahayu dance for the people of Banjar and how it is related to the feeling of well-being and their need to connect to their spiritual roots. Through the social construction theory, the researchers explored how the Banjar people make sense of their culture and express their spirituality through performing art. Hopefully, this study will help us understand the Radap Rahayu dance and its significance to the Banjar people through Berger and Luckmann's (1990) social construction theory. Furthermore, the researchers believe this work should be seen as a call for cultural conservation in Indonesia, especially in Banjar.



## B. Method

This study used a qualitative, ethnographic approach to obtain details about the value and meaning of local wisdom in a holistic context. Purposive sampling was used as the primary method of data collection, with the inclusion criteria being that the informants had a direct relationship with the activities surrounding the Radap Rahayu dance both in the past and present, which include those involved in Radap Rahayu dance workshops and festivals throughout South Kalimantan in 1997, 2006, 2022 and the anniversary of Banjarmasin City. The researchers conducted participatory observation and in-depth interviews with 25 informants, consisting of 10 men and 15 women. The informants for the Radap Rahayu dance consist of five dancers, five dance teachers, six dance responders, four musicians, and five dance spectators.

The research was conducted in Gambut District, Banjar Regency, South Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The data collection step was conducted from January 2019 to January 2022. Difficulties were found during the data collection step, including the lack of informants, erased or lost documents about the dancers, and the need for written in-depth data regarding the dance in general. To cope, the researchers managed to seek other documents in the Banjar Regency archives. The researchers also connected the lost data through interviews with local historians and cultural experts. The data was then thematically analyzed through strict selection and interpretation based on the existing literature.

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. Result

The population in the Gambut District, Banjar Regency, is predominantly Muslim. Their routine includes *Yasinan* (reciting Yasin-a chapter in the Quran), 7-minute lectures (*Kultum* or *Kuliah Tujuh Menit* in Indonesian) on selected topics in Islam, and assemblies at the *tuan guru's* house or the mosque. The district is characterized by its large, flowing rivers, one of which is the renowned Martapura River. Despite the solid

Islamic influence, the community around this river still adheres to their ancestral traditions. Particular emphasis is placed on matters related to the *pamali* that every family must perform during traditional social activities and events. They firmly believe it is essential to fulfil the requirements, or *duduk*, in various events such as weddings, the ceremony of the seventh month of pregnancy, and others.

Based on the observation and interviews with the informants, the social construction of the Banjar people in Gambut toward the Radap Rahayu dance can be seen in Table 1. As seen on the table, the researchers highlighted four main ideas: *limbal* movement, spiritual meaning, spiritual beings, and guardian crocodile. These central themes or domains reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the Gambut Banjar people toward the Radap Rahayu dance.

Table 1. The domains of the social construction of the Banjar society towards the Radap Rahayu dance

Domain	Explanation
<i>Limbai</i> or <i>larung sesaji</i> movement	The term means to give offerings to the river by throwing them into the middle of the river. The Banjar ethnic society views the river as part of their life.
Spiritual meaning	Some Banjar ethnic groups believe the Radap Rahayu dance has a spiritual meaning. For example, a dance like <i>tolak bala</i> or <i>Tapung Tawar</i> can eliminate negative things for those performing at any event.
Spiritual beings	Refers to images of angels coming down to earth, giving prayers, and scattering flowers in all directions. They provide safety for everyone present.
Guardian crocodiles	The myth is that people around this area were the descendants of the hite Guardian Crocodile. It is a custom that whenever they carry out a ceremony - such as a marriage ceremony - they would put an offering to the river as a gift to the crocodiles. So that, even when the crocodile shows up in a nearby place, the crocodile would not harm the people performing the ceremony.

Source. Interview in October 2022.

The application of the local wisdom of the Radap Rahayu dance in the daily life of the Banjar people on the banks of the Martapura River can be



seen in Table 2. There, we explored the domain and taxonomy of Banjar's local wisdom in the daily life of Banjar society. It is important to note that the “domain” refers to the ceremony or rites, and the “taxonomy” refers to the rules, application, and materials attributable to the domain.

Table 2. Domain and taxonomy of application of Banjar local wisdom in the daily life of the Banjar society

Domain	Taxonomy
Salvation ceremony (Batapung tawaran)	At birth and the time after. Bapalas midwife and various <i>mengayun</i> ceremonies. The ceremony of completing the Al-Quran. <i>Manyunat</i> . <i>Batumbang</i> . Bathing ceremony ( <i>bamandian</i> ). Building and inhabiting a house.
Offering (Piduduk)	41 kinds of water. Coconut, rice, brown sugar, free-range chicken eggs, and cigarettes.
Taboo (Pamali)	It is forbidden for pregnant people to <i>mengunjun</i> ; later, the child can suffer from lip cleft ( <i>sumbing</i> ). <i>Basunat</i> children are prohibited from leaving the house. If they step on chicken droppings, the wound will take a long time to dry. The bride and groom are prohibited from leaving the house or travelling after the <i>bamandian</i> .

Source. Interview in October 2022.

Their religious beliefs and moral principles guide the traditions of the Banjar people. They follow the teachings of their *tuan guru*, the religious elders who possess extensive knowledge and uphold morals and degrees. Their view of life is that it continuously connects to God. Life is intertwined with spirituality, mysticism, and respect for ancestral spirits and powers that are invisible to the human senses. Symbols are used to express this. Offerings, pilgrimages, burning incense, and upholding morals or guidelines for life, called *waja sampai kaputing* and *haram manyarah* (the struggle of life that must be lived), emphasize the importance of perseverance.





Table 4 shows variations in the society's view of the Radap Rahayu dance. These variations are influenced by the traditions that develop in society and the use of the dance as a symbol. The true meaning that is represented in the dance is strongly associated with the informants' and their culture's relation to the Martapura River and other ecological contexts.

Table 4. Componential analysis of the Radap Rahayu dance performance and its symbolic meaning

Meaning	Symbolic Performance
Dance of the angels from the sky	Beautiful princess dancers in the shawl
Myths about Tapung Tawar dance ( <i>tolak bala</i> )	Properties used flowers with 3, 5, or 7 colors
Safety or avoidance of the occult	The sowing of flowers is a <i>tapung tawar</i> motion
Dance in a traditional Banjar ceremony	Semi-classical dance (regional dance)

Source. Interview in October 2022.

In Table 4, the social construction of the tradition that developed in the Banjar ethnic society towards the Radap Rahayu dance performance includes four elements: (1) the belief that the dancers bearing an odd number (3, 5, or 7) are angels who have descended to earth; (2) the myth about the Tapung Tawar dance (*tolak bala*), which is still performed for traditional ceremonies; (3) the idea of safety or avoiding the occult, as the Tapung Tawar dance is interpreted as a performance for the success of the particular event and the safety of those in attendance; and 4) the dances in traditional Banjar ceremonies, namely dances that are always present during traditional Banjar marriages and ritual dances. As mentioned, the Banjar people avoid even numbers, especially six. Aside from the supernatural belief about descended angels, the number six also equals unfortunate events for them.

*"The culture of Banjar people here, considered the number six a bad number, because according to the Banjar people, when they said "six" ("enam" in Banjar and Indonesian), their mouth is shut, Therefore, that word is associated with jobs and other opportunities being shut down. If we can not work, we can not obtain wealth". (Interview with the informant in October 2022).*



From the construction of customs and dance performances as symbols, it can be seen that behavior embodies the views that appear in society. The customary construction of the life of the Banjar ethnic society and the construction of the dance performances are shown in Table 7.

Table 5. The social construction of Banjar people's beliefs and Radap Rahayu dance

Construction of Banjar People's Beliefs	Construction of the Radap Rahayu Dance
Holding various kinds of traditional ceremonies	Intended to be grateful
Respect for maritime ancestors	Pay attention to the appeals of Datuk and elders
Belief in the truth of the <i>piduduk</i>	Always follow instructions from wise elderly
Obey the Banjar rules	Choose experienced dancers

Source: Interview in October 2022.

Dance performances in traditional Banjar ceremonies are done according to the motivations and times of the performance. For example, a performance for the bride and groom's safety and happiness differs from the performances of *bamandi-mandi* during the seven months of pregnancy. Listening to the words of the *Datuk* or *jurit*, people who are wise to societal tradition are considered a form of respect for their ancestors.

Belief in *piduduk* is integral to responding to phenomena during wedding ceremonies and the seven months of pregnancy. Providing *piduduk* and obeying all rules and customs is essential because of past incidents of possession. Members cannot violate existing prohibitions, such as leaving the *piduduk* at any ceremony. Obedience to these prohibitions is believed to encourage calmness and ensure safety from disturbances by their ancestors. The practice of providing a *piduduk* is carried out by the recommendations of the *Datuk* or *jurit*. In the event of possession by the bride, groom, or guests, society members will usually turn to the *Datuk* or *jurit* in their area to handle the situation.

## **2. Discussion**

Reality is the result of human creation through the power of social construction of the world around it. According to Berger and Luckman (1990), society is an objective reality in which an institutionalization process is built through ongoing habituation. Therefore, social reality can be defined as the byproduct of human construction through externalization and objectivation that shapes humans through internalization. Over time, the three habituation above mechanisms are sedimented into society and become a tradition (Samuel, 2012; Sulaiman, 2016; Fakhriati, 2020).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1990), objective reality only exists as an intersubjective construct, and it is only genuinely social if it has been objectified in a sign system. This means that it is possible for shared experiences to be objective and repeated, transferred from one generation to the next and from collectivity to collectivity. These deposits of collective knowledge are then stored in language, which can be obtained synthetically, that is, as a cohesive whole without reconstructing the process of its original formation. The third element is the process of internalization or individual socialization into the objective social world. Through this process, accumulated knowledge will be instilled in all members of society and serve as a guide for social interactions and activities that externalize values in social life. These activities eventually lead to new objectification, which is how social reality is built (Nurkhalis, 2018; Sica, 2016).

Since it is one of the most prominent variables in this paper, another concept worthy of discussion is "local wisdom". Local wisdom can be understood as an idea that is wise or full of wisdom that originated or is rooted in the local society's culture. The said idea is embedded with local values, norms, and beliefs. Because of its functionality for their survival, the idea is shared with and adhered to by society. Their local wisdom is deemed highly significant, so the wisdom is passed on to the next generation (Triwardani & Rochayanti, 2014; Djawas et al., 2023). Due to its importance in maintaining the social structure, several cultures also have their version of experts or leaders with the responsibility of maintaining



their local wisdom for the sake of the group's collective survival and social stability (Sartini, 2004)

In Indonesia, some of these local guardians are formalized within the state system, creating a form of plural legalism between customary and state law. An example of these are Dewan Harian Nagari (Nagari Daily Council) in Minangkabau, Dewan Adat Dayak (Dayak Customary Council) in Kalimantan, and Dewan Adat Papua (Papuan Customary Council) in Papua. As a group of local chiefs and leaders, they have had a massive part in both contemporary and traditional matters about the cultures or tribes that they represent in the council (Dewi, 2017; Muzana et al., 2017; Dey & Djumaty, 2019; Tegnan, 2015). Their actions, for the Dayak Council, for example, might include embarking on legal actions to gain equal rights for Dayak tribes, promoting cultural tourism in Kalimantan, and maintaining the Dayak tattoo tradition (Sandi, 2021; Suswandari et al., 2022; Bukido et al., 2022).

By borrowing the views of the two figures (social construction and local wisdom), we can infer that society is an individual place where people interact and socialize in objective reality. Habituation occurs by building patterns of interaction and socialization in the form of myths, traditions, and local wisdom. Local wisdom is embodied in the form of ideas implemented in the form of actions and behaviours that leave traces in the daily lives of the people (Abas et al., 2022; Ramdiah et al., 2020; Sartini, 2004).

The Banjar society is aware that they live on the banks of the river and are intertwined with the water connected with the Martapura River, forming a social construct for the river's flow. This social construction is shown in various kinds of salvation rituals and myths, as shown in the tables prior. Interestingly, much of the information stated by the informants is closely related to other cultures across Indonesia, especially those living in similar geographical and ecological contexts (Abdurrahman & Abduh, 2020; Antoni, 2015; Gustaman & Khoeruman, 2019).

The white crocodile myth, for example, can be found in other tribes, such as Lampung and South Sulawesi. Parallel to the Banjar people in

Gambut, the Lampung and Cerekang (South Sulawesi) people live in the proximity of significant water sources - in this case, rivers (Akhmar et al., 2023; Harum et al., 2022). On the other side, the white tiger myth is more prevalent in societies that live near or within Indonesia's deep, tropical rainforests. The Sundanese, Minang, and Javanese people who live in the forests, for example, are more familiar with the white tiger myth (Gustaman & Khoeruman, 2019; Rifai & Hetami, 2022; Syahrul et al., 2022). The Sundanese often associated two white tigers with Prabu Siliwangi, a former King of the Padjadjaran Kingdom, and the tigers are often seen guarding him or his spirit (Wessing, 1993, 1995).

This narration proved that cultures, though they can parallel each other in some way, are essentially different. The adaptation of the people to their environment is manifested in these cultural expressions. For example, ethnic groups who live close to the river and sea are highly respectful of the mythical white crocodile that guards the said river and sea, while ethnic groups who live close to the deep forests are more respectful of the forest's white tiger (Mursalin, 2015; Wessing, 1995; Okawa, 2019). Many of these folklore and beliefs are then expressed in art performances that represent the beliefs in an artistic and symbolic form (Gustaman & Khoeruman, 2019; Rifai & Hetami, 2022).

Art performances in Gambut also contain meanings or values related to God, the Creator. The religious meaning of each art performance can be observed in the elements of dance, music, and offerings. All of these elements must be done to complete the ritual or ceremony (Herlina et al., 2019; Suharti, 2013; Ferdian et al., 2022).

At the beginning of the Radap Rahayu dance, there is a presentation of a very similar motion to worshipping or praying, followed by sitting in a kneeling position. The position of the head is slightly nodded with both hands clasped, like praying. The clasped hands are then moved to the middle, up, and back to the centre again. The position of the dance movement in the opening part is a picture of the attitude of worshipping



God (Rumahuru, 2018). In the closing part, the dancer returns to a kneeling position as a form of expression of gratitude for the course of the show. This conveys a limitation in the knowledge of the dance composition if the movement of the upper region (chest to head) reflects a spiritual character (Soedarsono, 1999; Subeitan, 2022).

The songs used to accompany the Radap Rahayu dance contain religious meanings. It is a solemn song that expresses hopefulness and purposefulness. The people perceived this song as a way to pray for their salvation to God Almighty. The lyrics also invited and advised humans always to be close to God. The text also contains a symbolic meaning as an expression of belief in the existence of human relationships with God, the universe, and other beings. Such expressions can also be found in different cultures and religions. Based on the previous studies, it can be interpreted that the Banjar culture and its Islamic dominance share a similar pattern with another Abrahamic religion, such as Catholicism, regarding cultural expression (Elizondo, 2015; Thao Nguyen, 2017; Auni & Nidawati, 2023).

The Radap Rahayu dance is perceived as one way to express the Banjar people's spirituality. Therefore, there are other ways to express them as well. Religious meanings can be found in many artistic performances, such as the Zapin Rantauan dance, the Baksa Kambang dance, and the Kuda Gipang dance. These dances are performed in different ceremonies and rituals, depending on the context and purpose (Khutniah & Iryanti, 2012; Sasmita, 2018; Suharti, 2013).

The Radap Rahayu dance is regulated with the coordination and approval of the elders (Datuk or *jurit*). Not just the dance itself, the whole ceremony, the offerings or *piduduk*, the rules of the taboo (*pamali*), and the life of the Banjar people, in general, are highly dependent on the wise words of the Datuk. The Banjar people have even paid their utmost respect to the Datuk since the pre-Islamic era, since by respecting the elders, they believe that they are respecting their ancestors. Without the ancestors and the elders' role in maintaining their ancestral roots, they cannot live their lives now (Abdurrahman & Abduh, 2020; Daud, 1997; Hafidzi, 2020; Syakhrani & Islami, 2022).

The researchers would like to draw a parallel to the Church, where it is believed that the wisdom of Jesus Christ (the founder of the Church) was passed on to Saint Peter when He died and rose to heaven (Bainton, 1946; Berkhof & Enklaar, 2009; Hutahaean, 2017). The second example is the Kingdom of Great Britain, where the monarch is “chosen by God”, and when a monarch dies, another one should take their place and inherit the former's divine power and glory (Burgess, 1992; Straka, 1962). The narration is similar to the findings of this study, where the people believed that the power and wisdom of their ancestors are passed on to the Datuk, and thus, the people are constructed to obey the elders’ rules (Durkheim, 1995). Further studies and theoretical analysis are required to explore the parallels of these cultures, particularly in the realm of anthropology of religion, sociology of religion, art studies, and theology, since it might uncover the universal perceptiveness of humans in how they view the divine and its transfer of power. This finding is attractive to the researchers since the application of divine correct theory should be explored more in Indonesian indigenous communities.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The social construction of the Banjar ethnic society in Gambut District, Banjar Regency, towards dance performances is multifaceted, encompassing *pamali*, *piduduk*, river spirits, and *batapung war*. These rich cultures are expressed in the traditional Banjar art performances. Dance as a form of artistic, cultural expression is not just seen as entertainment but also as a tribute to their ancestors. The constructed importance of dance performances is then implemented in various rituals and ceremonies, including thanksgiving and requests for protection and safety.

The social construction of the Banjar ethnic society in Gambut toward the performance of the Radap Rahayu dance cannot be separated from the concept of Banjar’s local wisdom. This particular concept can be interpreted in various ways, most prominently by acknowledging the contributions of their ancestors and the wise individuals who have helped shape their



traditions. Through this concept, the Banjar people in Gambut District, Banjar Regency, have developed a deep appreciation for their traditional art performances, particularly dance performances, which they see as a manifestation of their cultural identity.

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