

# *Exploration Of Sacredity In Traditional Cultural Rituals In Pemalang Through The Banyu Panguripan Dance*

Afiliasi Ilafi<sup>1</sup>, Bani Sudardi<sup>2</sup>, Slamet Subiyantoro<sup>2</sup>, Titis Srimuda Pitana<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fakultas Ilmu Budaya  
Universitas Sebelas Maret  
Surakarta, Indonesia  
[afiliasiilafi08@student.uns.ac.id](mailto:afiliasiilafi08@student.uns.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> Fakultas Ilmu Budaya  
Universitas Sebelas Maret  
Surakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Afiliasi Ilafi; [afiliasiilafi08@student.uns.ac.id](mailto:afiliasiilafi08@student.uns.ac.id)



**Abstract**—Implementation in the series of banyu panguripan ruwat traditions, there is a dance created as a representation that depicts the existence of sacredness in the banyu panguripan traditional ritual. Then the dance is called the Banyu Panguripan dance which in its creation was inspired by classical palace dance, the creation of the Banyu Panguripan dance is carried out exclusively and contemporary which is only displayed in a series of wong gunung festival activities. This research is a qualitative research that aims to describe and explore the meaning and sacred value of the Banyu Panguripan dance itself. The data collection technique used was by conducting interviews and analyzing the documentation that had been collected. The research findings revealed that the banyu panguripan dance not only functions as an event filler in a traditional cultural tourism attraction entitled the Wong Gunung Festival but also as a symbol of local cultural identity and sustainability. Through each dance movement that is harmonized with the tune of the song which contains philosophical meaning, the banyu panguripan dance displays the spirituality and social values of the Pulosari community, Pemalang Regency. Exploring the sacredness of traditional cultural rituals in Pemalang Regency through the Banyu Panguripan dance provides an understanding of the complex relationship between humans, nature, and spirituality in the context of local community life.

**Keywords**— Banyu Panguripan Dance, Wong Gunung Festival, Pulosari, Pemalang Regency

## I. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a part of societal life, so culture always exists alongside society and indirectly influences the way of life, customs, norms, and values upheld by that society. Therefore, culture becomes something important in the life of society, encompassing various aspects such as traditions and practices that live within the community. "Discussing the existence of traditions and culture in society can be seen as the identity of a region or area inhabited by the community. As stated by Sari et al [1].

Cultural identity is the regional or territorial characteristics of the society within that environment, which are easily recognizable. Cultural identity is often related to customs or traditions that have been established, preserved, and developed by the community itself. It can also be said that tradition is a heritage passed down through generations and then becomes a part of the culture, routinely practiced by the community. Such is the case with the living, thriving, and evolving tradition in Pulosari District, Pemalang Regency. This tradition is known as the Banyu Panguripan Tradition.

The Banyu Panguripan Tradition is popular in Pulosari District and has even become an annual cultural arts agenda in Pemalang Regency. In Pulosari District, there are three perspectives on the packaging of Banyu Panguripan, such as the Prabasari Padepokan, Manunggal Jati Utama School, and Jurangmangu Village, which are part of the Wong Gunung Festival.

However, the Banyu Panguripan dance is created, developed, and performed only as part of the Wong Gunung Festival activities, which involve the villages in Pulosari District, as well as various stakeholders, including the government, MSMEs, and sponsors who contribute to the event's funding.

The Banyu Panguripan Purification Tradition is a ritual that is believed and sanctified by the local community. The sacredness of the Banyu Panguripan Tradition is due to the combination of water from several springs, which is first purified by the caretaker of Mount Slamet before being mixed. In society, sacredness is often associated with something awe-inspiring or fearsome [2].

The implementation of the Banyu Panguripan Tradition attracts people from within and outside Pemalang Regency because the tradition has been modified and turned into a traditional entertainment, making it something with a strong appeal.

To enhance the intimacy and sacredness of the Banyu Panguripan Tradition and to appreciate the sacredness of the purification ritual, movements were designed and performed on the night of the water union from seven springs, which is then called Banyu Panguripan. The next day, the Banyu Panguripan procession takes place. These movements are later named the Banyu Panguripan Dance, where each movement implies the storyline of the Banyu Panguripan tradition in Pulosari District. Additionally, the movements carry meanings and symbols that depict the sacredness and beliefs of the community in the myth of Banyu Panguripan. Thus, the Banyu Panguripan dance is not merely entertainment performed during the Wong Gunung Festival but can also convey the noble values that live within the local community.

As stated by Soedarsono dance is an expression of the human soul revealed through beautiful rhythmic movements [3]. Dance has various forms, including classical dance, traditional dance, modern dance, and contemporary dance. Traditional dance movements are symbolic, based on the values within the community. Traditional dance is often associated with sacredness, which is believed by the community. This is because dance is considered part of rituals that not just anyone can perform [4]. This is also true for the Banyu Panguripan Dance, performed by seven unmarried girls.

The sacredness of traditional culture is reflected in the Banyu Panguripan ritual through the Banyu Panguripan Dance. The Banyu Panguripan Dance is an effective medium to convey noble values and local wisdom that has become a heritage. Through movements rich in symbolic meaning, the Banyu Panguripan Dance illustrates prayers, hopes, and requests. Each movement reflects the philosophy of the sacred Banyu Panguripan tradition, believed by the local community to be a source of wisdom.

Sacredness is often associated with beliefs held by the community, not only regarding sacred places but also in understanding life with God. This process can change human attitudes and behavior for the better because they have undergone purification, thus being free from disturbances in life and achieving unity with God [5]. Similarly, the Banyu Panguripan Dance is believed by the community to be a dance wrapped in sacredness.

This study also attempts to explore and describe how the Banyu Panguripan Dance plays a role in preserving the cultural identity of the Pulosari community amidst the tide of modernization. The Banyu Panguripan Dance is not just an art performance, but can be considered a sacred ceremony that connects the present with the past. The Banyu Panguripan Dance, created and exclusively performed during the Banyu Panguripan Tradition as part of the Wong Gunung Festival, can be seen as an existence and exploration of culture embodied in each dance movement. Thus, the Banyu Panguripan in Pulosari also serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving traditions and values that have become the foundation of life for the Pemalang community, especially the Pulosari community.

## II. METHODS

This research is a field study employing a qualitative approach with an exploratory method. The exploratory method is used to uncover the definition of sacredness in cultural rituals and traditions in Pemalang, as manifested through the Banyu

Panguripan Dance. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the dance instructors of the Banyu Panguripan Dance and through document studies on the ritual and the Banyu Panguripan Dance, which is performed only during the Wong Gunung Festival. To facilitate analysis, this research uses Clifford Geertz's symbolic theory. This theory is employed to analyze the symbolism of the Banyu Panguripan Dance, which reflects the sacredness in the cultural ritual of the Banyu Panguripan purification."

### III. RESULTS

#### A. Background of the Formation of Banyu Panguripan Dance

The Banyu Panguripan Dance is a performance that narrates the packaging of the Banyu Panguripan Tradition in the Pulosari District. This dance was first created in 2016 to serve as an event during the Wong Gunung Festival. In 2023, the Banyu Panguripan Dance underwent revitalization, including updates to its costume, makeup, and choreography. This was due to the new branding of the Wong Gunung Festival, which had been halted because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Banyu Panguripan Dance describes the origin of the Banyu Panguripan tradition, which was intended to request ease and abundance of water. Essentially, the Banyu Panguripan Dance was inspired by popular sacred dances such as the Bedhaya Dance. The community perceives the Banyu Panguripan Dance as one rich in sacredness and magical values. This is also reflected in the number of dancers, which consists of seven unmarried women, as well as the ritual processes, such as fasting, performed by the dance instructor. Azoni stated that people in certain areas view art as something sacred, making it an important and valuable aspect of their culture [6].

The presence of the Banyu Panguripan Dance is crucial in the series of events at the Wong Gunung Festival. Before the Banyu Panguripan purification process and the pinasrahan procession take place, the Banyu Panguripan Dance is performed. As expressed by Obi, the Banyu Panguripan Dance instructor, who was directly appointed by the Wong Gunung Festival committee to create the dance, this performance encapsulates the journey of the Banyu Panguripan Tradition within the context of the Wong Gunung Festival.

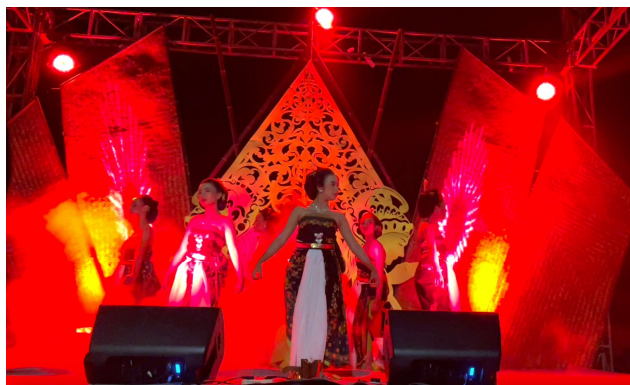
"The Banyu Panguripan Dance serves as a symbol of one of the core events of the Wong Gunung Festival because the creation of this dance is inseparable from the event itself. The Banyu Panguripan Dance was initiated by Mr. Agus Susanto, who first branded the Banyu Panguripan. The Banyu Agung purification ceremony is incorporated as a core part of the event, involving the dancers in the procession from the initial water collection to the parade." (Interview, May 18, 2024).

*"Tari Banyu Panguripan sebagai simbol dari salah satu inti acara Festival Wong Gunung karena terbentuknya tari ini tidak lepas dari kegiatan tersebut, yang adanya tari banyu panguripan merupakan sesuatu hal yang diprakarsai oleh Bapak Agus Susanto yang pertama kali membranding banyu panguripan. Dan dari acara pengambilan ruwat banyu agung, dimasukkan itu sebagai bagian inti dari acara tersebut. dari awal pengambilan dan dibagian kirab, melibatkan penari (Hasil wawancara tanggal 18 Mei 2024).*

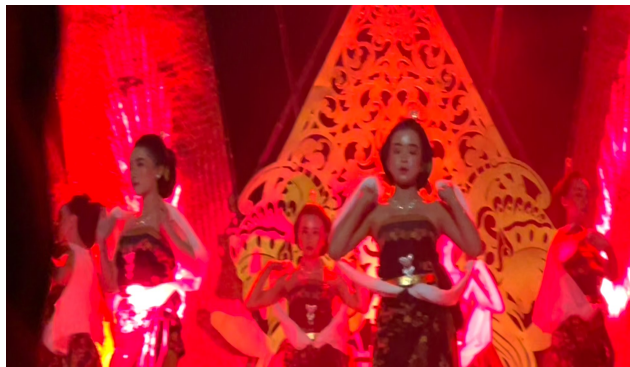
#### B. Cultural Meaning of Banyu Panguripan Dance

Like other traditional dances with meaningful movements and philosophies, the Banyu Panguripan Dance carries cultural significance, symbolizing a plea to God for the ease and flow of water in the Pulosari District. To simplify the description of the cultural meaning of this dance, it is divided into three categories:

1. **Plea:** Every movement in the Banyu Panguripan Dance represents sacredness and a plea to the Creator for the ease and abundance of water. This is because the Pulosari District was historically known for its water scarcity (before the introduction of PDAM in the area, and even then, not all residents connected their homes to PDAM water supply).



2. **Collection:** Similar to the Banyu Panguripan Tradition, where seven warriors collect water from the spring, this movement represents the process of collecting Banyu Panguripan water.



3. **Unification:** This movement depicts the unification of water collected from seven different springs, just as in the Banyu Panguripan Tradition, where water is gathered from sources like Gombong, Suyud, Sipendok, Curug Kinang, Silangse, Cikunang, and Sences.





4. **Distribution:** In this part, seven maidens perform movements symbolizing the placing of lodong (vessels) filled with water that will later undergo a purification ritual.



The closing of the Banyu Panguripan Dance is distinguished by the position and form of the hand gestures.



### *C. Philosophical Meaning of Banyu Panguripan Dance Attributes*

The Banyu Panguripan Dance is rich with symbols representing the sacredness of the Banyu Panguripan, influenced by the mythology surrounding it. As Fic and Doubalova suggest, myths serve a strong symbolic function. Through these symbols, human life can be seen as a negotiation within the timeless structure of myths. Human life is made possible and necessary within societies with living mythological traditions, often seen as a realization of the myth itself. Despite being transcendental, myths cannot be separated from reality [9].

The attributes of the Banyu Panguripan dancers carry philosophical meanings, indirectly interpreted through the accessories used, which include

1. **Cunduk Mentul or Kembang Goyang:** This is shaped like a tembelean flower, symbolizing the repelling of evil. The choice of the tembelean flower is due to its growth in highland areas, representing the location of the Banyu Panguripan Dance. As Obi, the dance instructor, explains:

"Cunduk mentul (kembang goyang) is made from flowers that grow in the highlands. The tembelean flower is orange, only found in high areas. According to ancestral stories, this unattractive flower repels evil. We only use one because it's challenging to find, and it represents a single wish from the Pulosari community" (Interview, May 18, 2024).

*"cunduk mentul (kembang goyang) unurnya bunga yang hidup di daerah atas. dari bunga-bunga kembang tempelean warnanya orange, bunganya hanya hidup di daerah atas. Ada cerita dari leluhur itu bahwa bunga jelek itu mengusir kejahatan. kenapa satu agar tidak berlebihan, satu itu sudah bagus banget mbak. karena sesulit itu mencari mentul jadi hanya satu itu tok. dan kenapa satu, aku mewakili satu keinginan dari masyarakat pulosari"* (Hasil wawancara tanggal 18 Mei 2024).

2. **Sisir Sirkam:** "The sisir sirkam represents the necessity of incorporating luxury into simplicity."
3. **Sampur:** The "sampur" is consisting of a long piece of cloth made from soft and thin cotton fabric [7]. The use of white sampur has a specific meaning, symbolizing purity and cleanliness. Since the Banyu Panguripan dance is a dance in which every movement represents the Banyu Panguripan tradition—a tradition that expresses hope to God Almighty—it is believed that in asking something from God, one must have a pure and clean heart. As expressed by Obi, the coach of the Banyu Panguripan Dance in 2023:

"The white color is not far from the idea that we have a pure and clean goal" (Interview, May 18, 2024). *"warna putih tidak jauh sebagai pengiat bahwa kita memiliki tujuan suci, tujuan bersih"* (Hasil wawancara tanggal 18 Mei 2024).

4. **Jarik.** The use of jarik, which is a term in the Javanese language for cloth with batik motifs in various patterns [8]. In traditional or contemporary dance performances, the use of jarik cloth often cannot be easily omitted. The use of jarik cloth in dance performances has its own meaning and philosophy, often related to the dance being performed. In the Banyu Panguripan dance, jarik cloth with a mountainous theme is used, which does not feature the motifs commonly known in Pemalang, such as the grombyang, kepiting, or nanas motifs. Obi, the dance coach for the Banyu Panguripan dance in 2023, revealed that the jarik used follows the Banyumasan theme. This is because many Banyumasan jariks highlight the theme of Mount Slamet and nature. Obi expressed this in an interview on May 18, 2024.

"The costume is inspired by elements of nature and water elements. When talking about mountains, they are related to water. Why didn't I choose other colors? Because aesthetically, green fits better. The color of the jarik cloth is taken from Banyumasan. Why didn't I include coastal elements? Because coastal motifs don't fit with mountainous themes. Banyumasan batik often highlights Mount Slamet and nature." (Interview, May 18, 2024).

*"kostum terinspirasi dari unsur-unsur alam, dan unsur-unsur air, kalau ngomongin gunung berkaitan dengan air. kenapa saya tidak mengambil warna lain, karena secara estetik lebih mengena hijau. warna kain jarik diambil dari banyumasan. kenapa aku tidak masuk unsur-unsur pesisir, karena tidak masuk motif-motif pesisir dengan pegunungan. batik banyumasan banyak mengangkat gunung slamet dan alam"* (Hasil wawancara tanggal 18 Mei 2024).

The philosophy behind the use of jarik, which in Javanese society is generally worn by women in their daily lives, carries the meaning of "aja gampang sirik," which in Indonesian means "don't be easily envious." This implies that when wearing jarik, one walks carefully; women will walk more gracefully and appear gentle when wearing jarik [10].

5. **Sanggul:** As in dance performances that carry themes of sacredness, the hair bun accessory, which reflects elegance, is an essential part of a dancer's costume. Hamsar reveals in his book related to hair bun styling that hair buns come in various shapes and sizes, depending on the context of their use and the social status of the individual wearing them. In this regard, the Javanese hair bun not only reflects aesthetic beauty but also holds deep cultural significance in the life of Javanese society [11].
6. **Borokan:** is an ornament placed on the left and right sides, positioned symmetrically. The borokan used is made of ylang-ylang flowers, as these flowers are abundant in highland areas. In an interview with Obi, a dance instructor for the Banyu Panguripan dance in 2023, he revealed that

*"the borokan in the dance holds many meanings. I did not want to use jasmine as an element, because jasmine does not grow in mountainous regions."* (Interview, May 18, 2024).

"borokan yang ada pada tarian ada banyak makna. aku tidak mau mengangkat unsur melati, karena melati tidak hidup di daerah pegunungan" (Hasil wawancara tanggal 18 Mei 2024).

#### **D. Contribution of Banyu Panguripan Dance to the Understanding of the Sacredness of Banyu Panguripan Tradition**

The presence of the Banyu Panguripan Dance in the Banyu Panguripan Tradition, packaged by the Wong Gunung Festival, enhances the understanding of the sacredness of water collected from various springs through the purification process. This branding effort has made the Banyu Panguripan Tradition a distinctive cultural symbol of Pulosari District. The creation of the Banyu Panguripan Dance as an icon of the Wong Gunung Festival contributes to:

1. **Cultural Preservation and Development:** The Banyu Panguripan Dance is an effort to preserve the Banyu Panguripan Tradition in Pulosari District. This effort aims to maintain the belief in the sacredness of this tradition among the local community. The development of the Banyu Panguripan Dance serves as a means to communicate the importance of preserving local traditions through movement.
2. **Expression of Spirituality:** The Banyu Panguripan Dance serves as a means of spiritual expression for the creators and performers. Each movement expresses the sacredness of the Banyu Panguripan Tradition, which is linked to the relationship with God. The dance also helps the audience understand the storyline and philosophical meaning conveyed through each movement.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The **Banyu Panguripan Dance** is a movement that tells the story of the Banyu Panguripan tradition in the Pulosari subdistrict. The Banyu Panguripan dance was first created in 2016 to serve as a performance in the series of events at the Wong Gunung Festival. The community represents the Banyu Panguripan dance as a dance imbued with sacredness and mystical value. This is also associated with the fact that the dance is performed by seven female dancers who are still virgins, and includes ritual processes such as fasting carried out by the dance instructor of the Banyu Panguripan dance. This dance symbolizes a cultural meaning, representing a plea to God for the ease and abundance of water in the Pulosari subdistrict.

The Banyu Panguripan Dance narrates the packaging of the Banyu Panguripan Tradition in Pulosari District. First created in 2016 for the Wong Gunung Festival, the dance is seen by the community as sacred and magical, with symbolic connections to the number of dancers (seven unmarried women) and the ritual processes like fasting performed by the dance instructor. The Banyu Panguripan Dance carries cultural significance, symbolizing a plea to God for the ease and abundance of water in Pulosari District.

## REFERENCES

- [1] E. P. Sari. Budijanto. S. Susilo, *Tradisi Sekura Cakak Buah Masyarakat Adat Saibatin Lampung Barat dalam Kacamata Geografi*. Jakarta: Guepedia, 2021.
- [2] K. E. Nottingham, *Agama dan Masyarakat: Satau Pengantar Sosiologi Agama*. Jakarta: CV. Rajawali. 1954.
- [3] Soedarsono, *The State Ritual Dance Drama in The Court of Yogyakarta*. Yogyakarta: Universitas Gajah Mada Press, 1984.
- [4] H. R. B. Mangoensong, S. Yanuartuti, “Analisis Teknik Gerak Tari Tradisional Dengan Menggunakan Ilmu Kinesiologi”, *Jurnal Seni Tari*, vol. 18, no. 2. pp. 72 – 77, 2020.
- [5] Suyanto, “Makna Sakral dalam Tradisi Budaya Jawa”, *Jurnal Lako.n Pengkajian dan Penciptaan Wayang*. vol. XV, no. 2, pp. 69 – 75, 2018.
- [6] L. Azoni, Indrayuda, “Nilai-nilai sakral Tari Tauh dalam Upacara Kenduri Sko pada Masyarakat Desa Pulau Sangkar”, *Jurnal Kata*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 53 – 64, 2023
- [7] F. L. Akanfani, A. F. Hendie, A. K. Daud, D. Kristina, I. Padakari. “Tari Topeng Betawi: Kajian Filosofi dan Kajian Simbolis”. *Geter: Jurnal Seni Drama Tari dan Musik*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 90 – 100, 2022.
- [8] [10] M.K. Ardi, “*Busana Jawa*”. 2022. Busana Jawa: Jarik. <https://javanologi.uns.ac.id/2022/11/07/jarik/>
- [9] I. Fic, K. Doubalova. *Myth, History, and Art*. Published by Elsevier. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, pp. 339-343, 2014.
- [11] I. Hamsar. *Penataan Sanggul Jilid I*. Penerbit Tahta Media Group, 2024.