

# Batimung Tradition in the Life of the Banjar Community in South Kalimantan

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**Abstract:** This study examines the Batimung tradition of the Banjar community in South Kalimantan through a structural functionalism approach. The results show that Batimung, which involves steaming the body with natural ingredients, developed in response to geographical conditions and the social needs of the community. This tradition has social, spiritual and health functions, and reflects the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. The process of implementing Batimung integrates symbolic and ritual elements, while its meaning reflects cultural values such as purity, cleanliness, and social solidarity, which strengthen the collective identity of the Banjar community. The Batimung tradition is a cultural heritage of the Banjar community in South Kalimantan that involves steam bathing with spices known as part of the wedding procession and traditional medicine. This study aims to describe the role of Batimung in the socio-cultural life, health of the Banjar community, and the challenges of preserving it in the modern era. The results show that Batimung not only functions as a beauty and health ritual, but also strengthens cultural identity and the values of mutual cooperation. However, the declining interest of the younger generation and the modernization of traditional spas threaten the sustainability of this tradition. This study recommends cross-generational training and the integration of Batimung in local content education for cultural preservation.

**Keywords:** Batimung tradition, banjar people, south kalimantan

## 1. Introduction

Batimung tradition is one of the cultural heritages of the Banjar community in South Kalimantan which has social, spiritual, and health functions (Kirwanto & Muthiah, 2024). This practice involves the process of steaming the body with natural ingredients such as spices and leaves, which reflects the close relationship between humans and nature in Banjar culture. As part of the collective identity of the community, batimung not only functions as a physical cleansing ritual but also as a means to strengthen social solidarity and maintain spiritual balance (Nimah et al., 2025). This study aims to examine the origins, implementation process and meaning of the Batimung tradition in the context of Banjar culture.

The history of the Batimung tradition shows that this practice has existed since pre-colonialist times, developing in response to the geographical conditions and tropical climate of South Kalimantan. The use of abundant natural materials in the area reflects the ecological adaptation of the Banjar people to their environment. In addition, Batimung is often performed before important events such as weddings or religious rituals, which shows the role of this tradition in strengthening social and spiritual norms (Yolanda et al., 2024). With a structural functionalism approach, this study seeks to understand how the Batimung tradition functions as an important element in the social system of the Banjar people.

In this study, the theory of structural functionalism will be used to understand the Batimung tradition in the Banjar community of South Kalimantan. This theory, developed by Talcott Parsons, emphasizes the importance of every element in society to maintain social balance (Parsons, 1970). The Batimung tradition, as part of local culture, can be seen as one of the elements that contribute to social harmony through its symbolic, ritual and social functions (Syauqi, 2024). With this theory, we can analyze how this tradition plays a role in forming the collective identity of the Banjar community.

The theory of structural functionalism is also relevant to explore the origins of the Batimung tradition. In this perspective, tradition is considered as the result of community adaptation to their environment and social needs.

Batimung, which involves the process of steaming the body with natural materials, most likely developed in response to the geographical and climatic conditions of South Kalimantan (Hadirah, 2022). Thus, this theory allows us to understand how this tradition is rooted in the historical and ecological context of the Banjar community.

In addition, this theory helps explain the process of implementing Batimung as a ritual that has social and symbolic functions. This process involves the use of natural materials such as spices and leaves that not only have health benefits but also spiritual meaning (Opara & Chohan, 2014). Within the framework of structural functionalism, each element in this process can be analyzed as part of a larger system that aims to strengthen social solidarity and maintain balance in society. The meaning of the Batimung tradition can also be analyzed through this theory, especially in the context of the values of cleanliness and purity in Banjar culture (Nurdiyana & Najamudin, 2021). In the perspective of structural functionalism, this meaning is not only important individually but also serves to strengthen social norms and strengthen relationships between members of society.

Using the theory of structural functionalism, this study will examine how the Batimung tradition functions as a social mechanism that supports the sustainability of Banjar culture. This theory allows us to see this tradition not only as a cultural practice, but also as an integral part of a larger social system. Thus, this study will provide a deeper understanding of the role of the Batimung tradition in maintaining the harmony and identity of the Banjar community in South Kalimantan.

## **2. Research Methods**

### **2.1 Collection of Historical Data on Batimung Traditions**

In collecting historical data on the Batimung tradition, the method used involves searching for relevant archives and historical documents. Researchers access written sources such as manuscripts, colonial records, and local documents that record the cultural practices of the Banjar community (Munadi & Ilhami, 2021). In addition, researchers also review academic publications and previous research reports that discuss the Batimung tradition. The main focus is to identify the origins of the tradition, changes that have occurred over time, and the relationship of this tradition to the social and geographical context of South Kalimantan (Sriyana, 2025). This process is carried out systematically to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data obtained.

In addition to document searches and historical data collection, researchers also conducted analyses of cultural artifacts related to Batimung, such as the tools used in the process and natural materials that are part of this tradition. Researchers visited local museums and cultural sites to study how these artifacts reflect the values and beliefs of the Banjar community. This analysis was conducted by considering the ecological and social context of the Banjar community, so as to provide insight into how the Batimung tradition developed in response to their environment and social needs.

### **2.2 Observation of the Batimung Implementation Process**

In observing the Batimung implementation process, researchers directly observed this ritual in locations that are still actively implementing the tradition, such as traditional houses or special places in the Banjar community (Noortyani et al., 2023). Observations were carried out using a non-participatory approach where researchers were not involved in the implementation of the ritual but only recorded each stage of the process in detail. Researchers documented the use of tools, natural materials such as spices and leaves, and social interactions that occurred during the ritual. Visual data such as photos and videos were also taken to support further analysis while respecting the privacy and cultural norms of the local community.

In addition to direct observation, researchers also recorded the environmental context and atmosphere surrounding the implementation of Batimung. This includes the arrangement of space, the layout of tools, and the roles of individuals involved in the ritual. Researchers must try to understand how these elements contribute to the symbolic meaning and social function of the Batimung tradition. Observations were carried out repeatedly in several locations to ensure data consistency and identify variations in the implementation of the tradition. This approach allows researchers to gain an in-depth picture of the technical and social aspects of Batimung.

During the observation process, the researcher also recorded the participants' reactions and perceptions of the Batimung tradition. This was done by observing facial expressions, body language, and verbal communication during the ritual. The researcher recorded how participants responded to the physical and emotional effects of the Batimung process, such as a sense of relaxation or spiritual experience. This data was then analyzed to understand the relationship between the implementation of the ritual and the cultural values of the Banjar community. Observations were carried out by maintaining research ethics, including asking permission from participants and ensuring that documentation did not interfere with the course of the ritual.

### **2.3 Interview with Practitioners and Banjar Community**

In interviews with practitioners and the Banjar community, researchers used a semi-structured approach to explore in-depth information about the Batimung tradition. Interviews were conducted with individuals who had direct experience, such as practitioners who lead the Batimung ritual and the community who routinely carry it out. Questions were designed to explore the technical, symbolic, and social aspects of this tradition, including the materials used, the implementation

process, and the meanings felt by the participants. Researchers ensured flexibility in the interviews so that respondents could provide broader and deeper answers, while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

The interviews were conducted in a location that was comfortable for the respondents, such as their homes or the Batimung venue, to create an atmosphere that supported openness. The researchers began with general questions about their experiences with Batimung, before moving on to more specific questions about the origins, changes in traditions, and inherent cultural values. Interviews were recorded with the respondents' permission to ensure data accuracy, and field notes were taken to record nonverbal expressions and context of interactions. This approach helped the researchers understand individual perspectives while also identifying common patterns in the Batimung tradition.

To ensure data diversity, researchers interviewed respondents from various backgrounds, including age, gender, and social status. This was done to gain a more comprehensive view of how the Batimung tradition is understood and practiced in Banjar society. Data obtained from interviews were then analyzed thematically to identify key categories, such as social function, spiritual meaning, and health benefits of Batimung. The results of this analysis were used to complement data from other methods, thus providing a more holistic picture of the Batimung tradition in the context of Banjar culture.

## **2.4 Analysis of Symbolism and Meaning of Batimung Tradition**

In analyzing the symbolism and meaning of the Batimung tradition, researchers used a qualitative approach with thematic analysis methods. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and literature studies were categorized based on main themes such as the symbolism of natural materials, cleansing rituals, and spiritual meanings (Prasetyo, 2023). Researchers identified symbolic elements in the Batimung tradition, such as the use of spices and leaves, and how these elements reflect the cultural values of the Banjar community. The analysis process was carried out repeatedly to ensure consistency of findings, with a focus on the relationship between the symbolism of tradition and the collective identity of the community.

The researcher also used narrative analysis method to understand the meaning of Batimung tradition from the perspective of participants and practitioners. Narratives obtained from interviews were analyzed to reveal individual experiences related to Batimung ritual, including perceived spiritual and social aspects. The researcher examined how these narratives reflect values such as cleanliness, purity, and social solidarity in Banjar culture. The analysis was conducted by considering the cultural and historical context of Banjar society, so that it can provide deep insight into the role of symbolism in strengthening social norms (Lisdariani et al., 2025).

As part of the symbolism analysis, the researcher also conducted a semiotic study of cultural artifacts related to Batimung, such as tools and materials used in the ritual. The researcher identified visual and textual signs that reflect the symbolic meaning of this tradition, as well as how these signs function in the cultural communication of the Banjar community. This study was conducted by comparing data obtained from observations and interviews with semiotic theories, so as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Batimung symbolism contributes to the cultural identity of the Banjar community.

## **2.5 Literature Study on Banjar Culture and Traditions**

In the literature study on Banjar culture and tradition, researchers collected data from various written sources, such as books, scientific articles, and relevant research reports. The main focus was to edit the cultural and social context of the Banjar community that is the background of the Batimung tradition. Researchers also utilized academic journals that discuss the anthropological, historical, and ecological aspects of the Banjar community to understand how this tradition developed. These sources were critically analyzed to evaluate the accuracy of the information and the relevance of the data to the research objectives. This approach ensures that the literature used provides a strong theoretical basis for further analysis.

In addition, researchers also accessed local documents such as manuscripts, archives, and historical records that record the cultural practices of the Banjar community (Katelaar et al., 2005). These documents were obtained from regional libraries, museums, and cultural institutions in South Kalimantan. Researchers evolution of the Batimung tradition. The data obtained were then compared with secondary literature to validate the accuracy and consistency of the information. This process was carried out systematically to ensure that the literature analysis covered various perspectives relevant to the Batimung tradition.

The researcher also used a comparative approach in the literature study to compare the Batimung tradition with similar practices in other cultures. This was done to identify the unique elements that distinguish the Batimung tradition in the context of Banjar culture. The researcher utilized cultural and anthropological theories to analyze the relationship between the Batimung tradition and the social values of the Banjar community. This study was conducted by considering the geographical and historical context of South Kalimantan, so that it can provide a deeper understanding of how this tradition functions in maintaining the collective identity of the Banjar community (Chalmers, 2007).

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 The Origin and History of the Batimung Tradition in Banjar Society

The results of the study show that the Batimung tradition has strong historical roots in the Banjar community, which most likely developed as a response to the geographical and climatic conditions of South Kalimantan. Based on the analysis of historical documents and interviews with local historians, Batimung was originally used as a traditional method to maintain body health through evaporation with natural ingredients. This practice is influenced by local knowledge about the benefits of spices and leaves, which have been used for generations in traditional Banjar medicine.

Searches of local archives and manuscripts reveal that the Batimung tradition has existed since pre-colonial times, with evidence that the practice is often carried out as part of preparations for important events, such as weddings or religious rituals. In addition, this tradition also has a significant social function, where the Batimung session is often a moment for family or community members to gather. In this context, Batimung not only functions as an individual ritual, but also as a means of strengthening social relations and building solidarity among community members. The existence of this social dimension shows that Batimung has a broader role in the lives of the Banjar community, beyond health and spiritual purposes.

Interviews with community leaders confirmed that Batimung not only serves as a physical cleansing method, but also has a spiritual dimension that is closely related to local beliefs about purity and cleanliness. This shows that this tradition has been an integral part of Banjar culture for centuries. In addition, analysis of cultural artifacts such as Batimung tools shows the evolution of the forms and materials used, reflecting the community's adaptation to social and technological changes. For example, traditional tools made of clay bamboo are now often replaced by more modern materials, without losing the essence of the ritual. This change reflects the ability of the Banjar community to maintain tradition while adapting to the times, which is one of the factors in the sustainability of Batimung.

Interviews with Batimung practitioners also revealed that this tradition has a close relationship with Banjar cultural values, such as respect for nature and social solidarity. Practitioners explained that natural materials used in Batimung are passed down from generation to generation. This shows that the Batimung tradition does not also reflect the harmonious relationship between humans and the environment in Banjar culture.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that the origins and history of the Batimung tradition reflect the complex interaction between ecological, social, and cultural factors in Banjar society. This tradition developed as a response to physical and spiritual needs, as well as being a mechanism to strengthen the collective identity of the community. By using a structural fundamentalism approach, this study has succeeded in revealing how the Batimung tradition functions as an important element in the social system of Banjar society, which continues to survive despite the changing times.

#### 3.2 Batimung Ritual Implementation Process: Stages and Main Elements

The process of carrying out the Batimung ritual begins with the preparation of natural ingredients which are the main elements in this tradition. Based on observations, ingredients such as leaves, spices, and roots are specifically selected based on their health benefits and symbolic meaning. Practitioners usually wash and mix these ingredients with great care, reflecting the values of cleanliness and purity which are the core of the tradition. This process is carried out in a special room that has been prepared, showing the importance of spatial arrangement in maintaining the sanctity of the Batimung ritual.

The next stage is the evaporation process, where the prepared natural ingredients are put into a container filled with hot water. Observations show that traditional containers such as clay *perjuk* are still used in several locations., although modern containers are also being used. The steam produced from the mixture of natural ingredients is then directed onto the body of the participant using a cloth or special tool. The interaction between the steam and the body is considered to be the essence of the ritual, which aims to cleanse the body physically and spiritually.

During the steaming process, participants usually sit or lie in a closed room designed to maintain the concentration of steam. Observations show that the atmosphere of the room plays an important role in this ritual, with dim lighting and natural aromas creating a relaxing atmosphere. Practitioners often guide participants to breathe deeply, which not only helps the cleansing process but also has a calming effect. This stage reflects the harmony between the physical and emotional elements in the Batimung tradition.

Social elements are also an important part of the implementation of Batimung. Based on interviews with participants, this ritual is often carried out in groups, especially before important events such as marriage. Social interactions during the ritual, such as sharing experiences and stories, strengthen relationships between community members. Practitioners also play a role as mediators, ensuring that each participant feels comfortable and understands the meaning of each stage of the ritual. This shows that Batimung functions not only as an individual practice but also as a social mechanism.

The results of the analysis show that each element in the Batimung process has a deep symbolic meaning. For example, the use of natural materials reflects the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, while the arrangement of space and ritual atmosphere reflect the spiritual values of the Banjar community. Observations and interviews revealed that the stages in Batimung are designed to create a balance between physical, emotional, and social aspects. Thus, this tradition not only functions as a method of cleansing but also as a means to strengthen cultural identity and social solidarity

### 3.3 Symbolic and Spiritual Meanings in the Batimung Tradition

The results of the study show that the Batimung tradition has a deep symbolic meaning, especially in the use of natural ingredients such as spices and leaves. Based on interviews with practitioners, these ingredients are not only chosen because of their health benefits, but also because of their inherent spiritual value. For example, certain leaves are considered to have positive energy that can help the spiritual cleansing process. This reflects the close relationship between humans and nature in Banjar culture where nature is seen as a source of spiritual strength and balance in life.

The process of steaming in Batimung also has a significant spiritual dimension. Observations show that the steam produced from natural materials is considered a medium for eliminating negative energy and purifying the body. Practitioners often guide participants to breathe deeply during this process, which not only helps relaxation but also strengthens the spiritual connection. In Banjar culture, this steaming is seen as a symbol of transformation, where the body and soul are cleansed to achieve a more harmonious and holy state.

The spiritual meaning of Batimung is also reflected in the arrangement of the space and the ritual atmosphere. Observations show that the implementation space is designed in such a way as to create an atmosphere that supports meditation and reflection. Dim lighting and the aroma of natural materials create a calm environment, allowing participants to focus on the spiritual process. Interviews with participants revealed that this atmosphere helped them feel closer to spiritual values, such as purity and cleanliness, which are at the heart of the Batimung tradition.

The symbolic dimension in Batimung is also seen in the social interactions that occur during the ritual. Based on interviews, participants often share experiences and stories that reflect the values of togetherness and solidarity. Practitioners explain that this ritual is not only intended for individual cleansing but also to strengthen relationships between community members. This shows that Batimung functions as a means to connect spiritual aspects with social values, creating harmony between individuals and communities.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that the symbolic and spiritual meanings in the Batimung tradition function as a mechanism to strengthen the cultural identity of the Banjar community. The symbolism of natural materials, ritual atmosphere, and social interactions reflect deep values, such as harmonious relationships with nature, purity, and solidarity. By using a structural functionalism approach, this study successfully reveals how symbolic and spiritual elements in Batimung contribute to the sustainability of culture and social balance of the Banjar community.

### 3.4 The Role of Batimung Tradition in Strengthening Social Solidarity of Banjar Society

The results of the study show that the Batimung tradition in the Banjar community is greatly influenced by the geographical conditions of South Kalimantan which has a tropical climate. The consolidation of natural materials such as leaves and spices in the Batimung process reflects the community's adaptation to the abundant natural resources in the region. Interviews with practitioners revealed that the natural environment plays an important role in shaping the practice and symbolism of the Batimung tradition.

In addition to environmental factors, local culture also contributes to the evolution of the Batimung tradition. Based on the analysis of historical documents, Batimung originally functioned as a method of cleansing the body and soul before important events, such as weddings or religious rituals. This practice then developed into part of the cultural identity of the Banjar people, reflecting the values of purity, cleanliness, and solidarity. Observations show that these cultural elements continue to be maintained, despite changes in the form of tools and materials used. Social and technological changes also influence the evolution of the Batimung tradition, without losing its ritual essence. Observations of Batimung tools reveal that traditional containers such as clay pots are now often replaced by modern materials, such as stainless steel. Interviews with local people indicate that these changes were made to increase efficiency without reducing the symbolic meaning of the ritual. This adaptation reflects the ability of the Banjar community to maintain tradition while innovating in accordance with the times.

The ecological dimension is also evident in the way the Banjar community maintains the sustainability of the Batimung tradition. Interviews revealed that the natural materials used in rituals are often obtained through community cooperation, reflecting the values of mutual cooperation. Practitioners explained that the use of local materials not only supports the implementation of rituals but also preserves the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. This shows that the Batimung tradition functions as a mechanism to maintain ecological balance while strengthening social solidarity.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that the evolution of the Batimung tradition is the result of complex interactions between environmental factors, local culture, and social change. Observations and interviews revealed that this tradition continues to develop in response to the needs of the community, while maintaining the core values that characterize how the environment and local culture contribute to the sustainability of the Batimung tradition in Banjar society.

## 4. Conclusion

The results of the study show that the Batimung tradition is an integral part of the Banjar community culture that developed in response to the geographical conditions of South Kalimantan and their social needs. This tradition not only functions as a method of physical cleansing but also has a deep spiritual dimension, reflecting the values of holiness, cleanliness and harmonious relationships with nature. By using a structural functionalism approach, this study

successfully revealed that Batimung plays an important role in strengthening the collective identity of the Banjar community, as well as being a social mechanism that supports harmony and community solidarity.

In addition, the Batimung tradition is also a means to strengthen relations between generations in Banjar society. The process of carrying out this ritual often involves interaction between parents and children, where cultural values and knowledge about natural materials used in Batimung are passed down directly. This shared activity not only strengthens family ties but also becomes a medium to preserve cultural heritage from generation to generation. Thus, Batimung functions as a bridge connecting past, present, and future generations in the context of Banjar culture.

The evolution of the Batimung tradition shows the ability of the Banjar community to adapt to social and technological changes without losing the essence of its rituals. The use of natural materials such as spices and leaves, as well as the change of traditional tools to more modern ones, reflect innovations that still maintain the symbolic meaning of tradition. Observations and interviews reveal that these elements continue to be maintained as part of the cultural identity of the Banjar community, as well as being a means to maintain ecological balance and strengthen social relations between community members.

Overall, the Batimung tradition not only functions as a cultural practice but also as a mechanism to maintain the social and ecological sustainability of the Banjar community. The interaction between the physical, spiritual, and social aspects in this tradition reflects the deep values that characterize Banjar culture. This study shows that through the symbolism of natural materials, ritual atmosphere and community cooperation, Batimung remains relevant as an important element in facing the changing times.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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