

Concept of Traditional Art Training Ulu Ambek in Pariaman, West Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

The *ulu ambek* dance portrays a leader (*datuk*) in his steps, actions, and thoughts for the prosperity of his people. The silat-style movements in *ulu ambek* dance are performed by two individuals in different positions, one attacking and the other defending. However, they never make physical contact. Midway through the performance, they switch positions, with the defender taking turns to attack and the former attacker now defending. *Ulu ambek* dance in Pariaman is a manifestation of historical heritage to maintain its identity because it is related to the ethics and aesthetics of traditional Pariaman society. In the current condition, traditional *ulu ambek* art requires continuity and should be taught to the younger generation. Therefore, there needs to be a training concept that appeals to the younger generation. The training concept includes 1) Building Technical Skills, 2) Unleashing creativity, 3) Exploring Traditional Expression, 4) Strengthening Independence, and 5) Creating a Community. From these concepts, the progress made by the younger generation in building their confidence in traditional art, mainly traditional *ulu ambek* dance in Pariaman, is evident.

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INTRODUCTION

A scientific journal must present phenomena that answer the problems raised in the discussion. The phenomena contained in the *ulu ambek* dance training system in Pariaman, West Sumatra, are discussed in the introduction so that the description of the subject conditions is genuinely worthy of a scientific approach. Some of the phenomena that arise will be used as reasons for this topic to be written about. The training system, which is the starting point of this research, targets the audience of the *Ulu Ambek* performance dance. This is due to the mechanism of natural formation in viewing *ulu ambek* dance as a cultural heritage and a sense of constructive development directed at the Pariaman community as the art owner (Yulinis, 2022).

The training system became a means of activism for the *ulu ambek* dance and the Pariaman community. Changing social conditions often cause traditional art practices to conflict with contemporary art. The surprise will be based on the behaviour of the younger generation infected with technology (Elizar, 2019; Sukri, 2017). These differences will provide the focus for developing an innovative training system for the *ulu ambek* dance. *Ulu ambek* traditional art answers the human need to think about how to lead a tribe as a chief or elder. In this case, the *ulu ambek* dance artwork is to meet human needs and has the values needed by the community. In this aspect, the value of art is something valuable, something noble or good that arises from human activities.

Activities related to the *ulu ambek* dance training system in Pariaman can be seen as an effort to preserve the cultural heritage of ancestors that must be transmitted to the current generation. In addition, it is also a means or component of traditional art education with the noble values of the past. The existence of the *ulu ambek* dance as a traditional Pariaman art can be seen in its spiritual model of appointing a grandfather or headman. This dance is a place to show devotion to the leader, cultural preservation, and educational and entertainment facilities for the Pariaman people. Traditional

performing arts such as *ulu Ambek* dance emphasise the collective values embraced by the Pariaman people (Anisa & Darmawati, 2021; Sari & Darmawati, 2019). The existence of art, especially dance, stems from the framework of collective life. Dance is an intense form of community that increases the power of communication and even expands meaning. The meaning created by collective activity has aesthetic value (Putra et al., 2016).

The history of human life on earth is long, and we are now in the millennium era when the cultural norms of the past have become cultural artefacts. The life of modern man will be different from postmodern human life, especially in the millennium generation, when social strata will have significance as a label. Due to these changes, social behaviour related to cultural life has been considered and theorized (Darmayanti, 2023).

The *ulu ambek* dance training system also aims to explore the aesthetic value of this art. This is also influenced by the values and norms prevailing in Pariaman culture. Therefore, art training is not limited to forming forms but also includes training in values, deepening understanding, and expressing how to see, look, see, and feel, absorbing art through the senses. When it comes to morality, art has the function of discovering and expressing the meaning of the beauty of the universe because art is something noble and sublime in the appreciation of the universe. For lovers of beauty, art is not used directly to express ideas or attitudes but to express life experiences in a work of art.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method, specifically observation, interviews, or document analysis (Satori & Komariah, 2009). This method is used to examine the concept of traditional *ulu ambek* dance training within the Pariaman, West Sumatra community by analysing phenomena and discourse from the perspective of cultural studies. The dancers are paired up, with no limit to the number of dancers. The research was conducted during the appointment of a village chief. The performance is considered adult because the dancers represent the local village. Cultural studies differ from other fields in the humanities. Cultural studies are dynamic and dialectical; being dynamic means constant change, activity, progress, flux, evolution, and responsiveness, not static, fixed, or passive. *Ulu ambek* dance has continually changed over time, before and during the arrival of Islam, through the present era of globalisation. Dialectical means it is based on logical, orderly, and clear reasoning while considering regional aspects. In this context, qualitative methods can analyse various social sciences and humanities issues, such as democracy, race, gender, class, nation, globalisation, freedom, and other social problems. Bogdan and Taylor explain that qualitative methods are a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of human speech or writing and observable behaviour (Sugiyono, 2020).

Denzin and Lincoln (2009) understand that qualitative research studies empirical phenomena (culture) in the field, focusing on explanations and a naturalistic approach to a problem. This research encompasses various data collection fields, such as life histories, personal experiences, interviews, observations, history, visual texts, documentation, etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *ulu ambek* dance is a series of traditional ceremonies in Pariaman, such as the appointment of *Penghulu* or *Datuk* (community leaders in Pariaman). In addition, this dance is also performed in the framework of *Alek Nagari* (a famous festival) in Pariaman. According to (Schechner, 2007; Dekanipa & Setiawan, 2023), the performance terminology in this case is not limited to mere staging events. This basic idea refers to an agreed-upon understanding of performance studies that assumes that anything 'out of the ordinary' or everyday can be studied as a performance or staging. Borrowing Turner's idea, there is a specific difference between 'is' performance and 'as' performance, i.e. something is considered 'is' performance if, in the context of history and social context, rules, uses, and traditions, it is regarded as a performance, which in this case includes religious ceremonies, games, and also the rules of everyday life.

Meanwhile, 'as' performance is used to look at a broader context (Schechner, 2006). The state of *ulu ambek* dance in Pariaman society today is concerning because people are less interested in learning the dance. It is the influence of

globalization that changes power. For this reason, systematic training is needed so that the *ulu ambek* dance remains alive.

Ulu ambek comes from the words "*ulu*" (*ulua*) and "*ambek*." "*ulu*" (*ulua*) means to give, deliver, extend, or present, while "*ambek*" means to hinder or obstruct. In this context, *ulu ambek* dance signifies a performance that presents actions or movements of delivering, extending, and giving in the form of attacks and hindrances.

The *ulu ambek* dance depicts the life of a leader (*datuk, penghulu, raja*) in their steps, actions, and thoughts for the prosperity of their people. In the context of the customs of the Pariaman community, the *ulu ambek* dance is expressed with the phrase "*suntiang-niniak mamak-pmainan nan mudo-mudo*". This means that the *ulu ambek* dance, as a "*suntiang-niniak mamak*," symbolises the greatness of the *niniak mamak* (*panghulu* and *rajo*) in Pariaman, expressed or showcased through culture during the *alek nagari* event. The *ulu ambek* dance is accompanied by a song called "*vokal dampeang*," with a rhythm that profoundly touches the emotions. There is no other musical accompaniment; only the vocal music from the *dampeang* singer accompanies the *ulu ambek* dance. This vocal music's sound (rhythm) is very moving and carries a sad impression.



Picture 1: *Ulu Ambek* Performance
Author's documentation [source]

The *ulu ambek* dance is rooted in the silat tradition, which has developed throughout almost all regions of Minangkabau. The *ulu ambek* dance is performed by two dancers in different positions, with one attacking and the other in a defensive stance. However, during the performance, they never make contact. *Pencak silat* is the oldest martial art in Minangkabau, and its development was in Piaman. Each region in Minangkabau has its unique silat movements and fundamental differences. The movements and styles of *Kumango Silat* differ from those of Piaman Silat. The *ulu ambek* dance has become a form of *pencak silat* or an evolution of silat.

There are several concepts in conducting *ulu ambek* traditional art training, namely: 1) Building Technical Skills, 2) Uncovering creativity, 3) Exploring traditional expression, 4) Strengthening Independence, and 5) Creating Community.

Building Technical Skill

Digital technology has led to the spread of a pluralistic culture that inevitably contains many different ideologies that contradict the ideology on which the art was built. Technology has brought about changes in ethics and aesthetics that have long existed in traditional societies. The influence of technology makes ethics and aesthetics universal. Changes in cultural ethics and aesthetics are always associated with the conditions of a culture immersed in modernisation (Budianto, 2007; Zuhri & Sumaryati, 2022).

Ulu ambek dance was originally a silat tradition that developed in most of the Pariaman region in West Sumatra. In this case, Silat is the oldest martial art in Minangkabau and Piaman. Each area in Minangkabau has its silat movements,

which have fundamental differences. *Kumango silat* movements and styles are different from *Piaman silat* movements. The *ulu ambek* dance movement in Pariaman is a development of *pencak silat*. From this *pencak silat* dance, the *ulu ambek* dance was born. *Ulu ambek* dance shows the strength of a leader (*datuk*) who acts and thinks for the welfare of his people. Two people play the *silat ulu ambek* jumping game with different positions, one attacking and the other defending. However, they never touch each other. In the middle of the match, the two people switch positions, the defender takes turns attacking, and the one who struck first becomes the defender (Harsih & Elida, 2019).

Developing the technical skills of the younger generation in learning the *ulu ambek* dance is very important. These technical skills are adapted to the current trend of the younger generation, which is associated with change. Traditional culture or art is not something that cannot be changed; in fact, tradition is combined with many different human actions and promoted comprehensively. It is people who make things according to these traditions. People accept it, reject it, or change it. This is why culture is a story of change. Culture, which is the overall lifestyle traits of members of a society that are learned and shared within a society, is not a direct result of biological inheritance. For Sanderson, culture includes technology, knowledge, and organised patterns of action and thought. Therefore, in the face of the many definitions of culture, we must choose the meaning considered representative to preserve cultural heritage.

The technical skills that *ulu ambek* must master are those directly related to the ethics and aesthetics of the art itself. Debates about the ethics and aesthetics of art will always confront a society that generally considers itself modern, perhaps even postmodern, and therefore finds maintaining the tradition of artistic identity a step backwards because it has to defend something outdated. Preserving the nation's cultural identity is not an obsession with returning society to the corridors of history or tracing the past, but rather an effort to find meaning in the traditional ideological system of society. A nation is not born from a fragment of another nation's culture but from a rich source of culture. This culture has marked the history of civilisations around the world. Psychologically, this historical belief will bring pride and loyalty to promote and advance the nation's noble values and good traditions (Fauzi & Sahrul, 2018).

The technical skills of the *ulu ambek* dance in Pariaman society are often supported by a social system with strong roots in the community that supports it. In this case, the art of *ulu ambek* is an inseparable part of the cultural community, especially for the people who live in rural areas and the *nagari* (village) of Pariaman. Traditional art is a means of unifying the community and conveying the cultural values that the supporting community embraces. Apart from being a means of entertainment, it also functions as a vehicle for ceremonies. Thus, the function of traditional art has a deep philosophical value and is rooted in the history and culture of the Minangkabau people. *Alek Nagari*, also known as the People's Festival, is a symbol of the *Nagari* community (*anak nagari*), which aims to establish cultural friendships in a participatory and lasting manner. The Minangkabau cultural context in *Alek Nagari*, in addition to functioning as a bridge of friendship, also functions as an expression space to maintain and develop the inherent cultural spirit.

In the course of culture, between the cultural heritage of the past and the culture of the present and future, there will always be changes in the perception of culture itself. Cultural change transforms existing social structures, known as social, spiritual, and material civilisations, into different social structures. To find out the cultural identity related to the ethics and aesthetics of the traditional community, it is necessary to trace the history of cultural life. Relics of the past in traditional arts are not just meaningless exhibits but valuable historical relics.

Unpacking Creativity

The *ulu ambek* traditional dance serves as an object of creativity for the younger generation in Pariaman. Trainers and performers jointly look for other movement opportunities that do not violate existing regulations. As a performing art, this traditional dance not only presents something that already exists but also offers something that can be developed. Creativity, in this sense, includes, among other things, the authenticity of the *ulu ambek* traditional art because this art also contains rituals that, in certain parts, cannot be violated. Creativity also includes fluidity, flexibility, and elaboration, which is the ability to play to the best of one's ability with performance details. Artists must be creative to have flexibility in responding to the many changes that occur in the reality of life (Harun, N, & Yusril., 2023; N, 2011).

Creativity in the *ulu ambek* traditional dance in Pariaman is not the monopoly of trainers alone. However, it is also necessary for everyone, including players and spectators, to have it. At least everyone outside the trainer can balance the trainer's creativity in conducting the *ulu ambek* dance training. The results of creative training are intended for everyone, not just certain circles, especially connoisseurs of the results of creativity in the traditional world. The audience of *ulu ambek* traditional art has the function of a connoisseur who receives surprising offers presented from the results of the training. Burning creativity as a creative space filler offers an alternative to traditional community art. The concept of tradition is combined with current conditions in an interaction that does not eliminate the important elements of the art.

Creating creative traditional art is not easy because it can conflict with the rules that should not be violated in traditional art. The instructor must combine the related elements into a unified whole. The participating elements are also human, with their creativity and meaning. This means that in a movement, the player will have his interpretation, so when moving and expressing, the form of his presence is a form of interpretation of the player. If this happens, there will be a difference in meaning. For this reason, the coach must be able to integrate all basic abilities into something indeed agreed upon.

To fill this creative space, the primary step for *ulu ambek* dance teachers is to be sensitive and imaginative. His sensibility can determine what needs to be maintained and what can be developed, and thanks to his creativity, he can recreate the scene well, rich, impactful, dynamic, complete with details, and accurate. Other factors, such as the performers, team members, and others, will carry out the trainer's ideas. In the *ulu ambek* dance training system, space for creativity is important because the younger generation is interested in what already exists and wants new things to be enjoyed together. The current generation is familiar with the concept of modernisation.

A person's ability to analyse a culture to communicate with him self will be closely related to his ability to break away from the culture around him. Van Peursen created three diagrams of human development, namely the mythological stage, the ontological stage, and the functional stage. The mythological stage is the stage where humans' attitudes feel surrounded by supernatural forces that surround them, especially the power of the gods in the universe, as depicted in the myths of the gods. The country is called primitive. The ontological context is the attitude of people who no longer live under the siege of mystical forces but want to consider everything freely. People began to move away from what they once perceived as a siege. It seeks to develop a teaching or theory about the essential nature of things (ontology) and stuff in their details (science). The functional stage corresponds to the attitudes and thoughts increasingly evident in modern man. He is no longer fascinated by his environment, no longer coldly distanced from the object of his inquiry. He wants to establish new relationships and connections with everything in his environment (Triyanto, 2008).

Creative space is associated with the communication system in art, related to human behaviour, and meets the needs of thinking and feeling humans through what they see. Audiences or art lovers who come to see *ulu ambek* dance performances must have many expectations of what they will see. Thoughts and emotions have formed their framework so that when what they see does not match their expectations, negative and positive reactions will appear. Creativity in artistic communication serves as a bridge that connects the audience's mind with what they see. A good *ulu ambek* dance performance can penetrate deeply into the minds and emotions of its audience, from which comes feedback in the form of rebuttals or statements of similar attitudes or support. The purpose of art is to offer alternatives to human thoughts and feelings (Ulfa & Handayaningrum, 2022).

Exploring the Expression of Tradition

Ulu ambek traditional dance in Pariaman functions as a space to express the trainer's creativity and imagination, and the training of the young generation. All supporters of the *ulu ambek* dance are elements that produce expressive work. The trainer departs from the standard provisions in the *ulu ambek* dance and captures the expressions contained in these provisions. Then, teach the younger generation with updated patterns, giving birth to new expressions. As a traditional art in Pariaman, the ability of traditional people to transform themselves will cross the boundaries provided by their existence and enter into a new personality, an extension of themselves, even into a different reality. The expression of traditional art is a total expression (Elvandari, 2020).

The task of *Ulu Ambek*, a traditional dance instructor, is to think of alternatives to increase the younger generation's interest in their love for traditional arts. This alternative form is a traditional form of reality in the world of expression and imagination of the performers. The performers themselves, the roles, are the result of the trainer's expressive invention and are a set of possibilities that he develops and differs from the existing ones. Expression and imagination are different from fantasy. Imaginative expression creates things that can exist or happen, while imagination creates things that do not exist and never have existed. Imaginative representation departs from existing (traditional) reality and is reflected through performance. In contrast, imagination imagines something that has never existed, even if it will later exist. Imaginary expression deviates from reality, and fantasy precedes reality.

The art of *ulu ambek* dance serves as a place to provide imagination space for the artist. The trainer tries to take the object of traditional art (*ulu ambek*) to enable his imagination. As a result of imagination, *ulu ambek* dance or other works of art cannot be considered as something that is lying and also cannot be viewed as something true when associated with concrete reality issues (Hidayatet et al., 2019; Anggraini & Hasnawati, 2018). The truth of reality is the truth of what happened, while the truth of art is the truth of imagination. The truth of imagination is only a reflection of the truth of reality, not the truth of reality itself—the desire to combine traditional and modern methods results from the imagination of existing concepts. The traditional function of imagination, which is far removed from the current generation, is used creatively by the present. Combining the two main concepts aims to bring together different enthusiasts of the *ulu ambek* dance.

The beauty of tradition, the sophistication of the modern, and the art of tradition as the past exercise the space of imagination. Traditional *ulu ambek* dance as a discourse receives greater attention because, in this area, the trainer finds something different. The traditional art of *ulu ambek* is critical during the ceremony of the *Penghulu's* appointment. Expressing an imagination that departs from traditional art with its own rules is difficult if the artist who wants to develop imagination is bound by absolute truth. The difference lies only in time, environmental atmosphere, clothing, social customs and culture, moral values, psychology, and behaviour. For this reason, there is nothing wrong with bringing back *the ulu ambek* dance in a different version.

The way trainers explore traditional arts differs from how the academic world does. The existing facts about prohibitions and taboos should be the trainer's primary concern. Exploring traditional arts opens the doors of imagination, makes the past come alive, and finds its identity aligned with current events. However, of course, it is still within the corridor and does not violate the rules of tradition. The coach does not work alone in realising his imagination. Players, dampening, and other elements are united in a container that can create aesthetic *ulu ambek* dance art. The trainer unites his imagination with the supporters as a whole. Imagery has a huge role in the function of the *ulu ambek* traditional dance. The presence of imagination will change the community's mindset towards the problems performed.

Ulu ambek traditional dance is a part of culture that cannot be separated from communication because this dance conveys a message about something that can benefit the community. The understanding of traditional presentation depends on the ability to communicate artistically with the audience. Communication is associated with human behaviour and satisfaction when meeting the needs of interacting with others. *Ulu ambek* dance is also a form of human behaviour when communicating with the community. However, when the behaviour does not match what the target community imagines, it will cause misunderstanding of the behaviour, and the manifestation of errors can also be in the form of adverse reactions and positive reactions (Syam, 2017).

Strengthening Independence

The concept of fostering the traditional art of *ulu ambek* in Pariaman must include increasing independence so as not to be eroded by the waves of globalisation. Suppose art and culture follow the flow of globalisation. In that case, the most detrimental result is that the moral and aesthetic concepts formed in a country or a society will be modified, updated, and defined by the country itself, combined, and finally form a unified whole. Redesigning something that already exists, most trainers and cultural figures are caught in this kind of conflict. They will be considered creative and their artworks of quality if recognised by developed countries, regardless of whether they contain their people's cultural and life values.

Therefore, cultural educators and observers need to know the boundaries between what is allowed and not allowed in the development of traditional arts from *ulu ambek* to Pariaman.

Culture will survive if it has unique and universal characteristics. If it only has unique characteristics and is not universal, it will quickly disappear and perish over time. To distinguish what is unique and universal from what is unique but not universal, you must be aware of the culture itself. This awareness is emerging among governments, social scientists, and cultural experts. Traditional arts today still play an important role as spectacles that guide and organise people's lives, or at least the communities that support them. If you were to give advice, what would it be, and is it still relevant to today's often unpredictable life? Without mentioning challenges related to economic aspects, traditional arts can survive in this increasingly unlimited constellation of life (Lestari et al., 2020)

Regarding the issue of the survival of traditional *ulu ambek* art in Pariaman, it often affects a person's lifestyle and social life. The development of traditional arts in society does not seem to run smoothly because of changes in the lives of each group and each tribe. The conditions at that time were less favourable for expanding the repertoire of traditional art movements. The above events are deliberately understood as a creative process that occurs based on the inspiration of other traditional art forms and occurs naturally in a relatively short period. The experience of an ancient traditional artist is an exciting element to find out how sensitive and diverse his creative process is. This rich experience moves one away from thinking only about questions of form and towards questions of content beyond the audience. Here, we will see how an artist of traditional art can situate himself in the context of modern life.

The strengthening of the independence of the traditional art of *ulu ambek* causes Traditional dance movements to change form within a structured structure. Its crystallisation is no longer in a rigid system of syntagmatic relationships, but its elements change in flexible pattern relationships. There can be very smooth and fast movements. Public demand for traditional art has changed. Although it has become a sight in the city, the reciprocal demand also seems limited to certain circles. When it comes to traditional performing arts related to rituals, they are causally prominent in a particular society. This is because the need to support community groups in performing these rituals will continue to recur (Budianto, 2007).

The increasing independence leads to cultural heritage identity. The term cultural heritage identity is nothing more than an ideological concept trying to be applied to the existing cultural environment. Identity in traditional societies is fixed, strong, and stable, serving as a function of previous social roles and a traditional myth system that provides religious sanctions for identification. The ideological concept reinforcing independence is the strength of the cultural value system and vital ideas inherited by the nation, thus awakening elements of self-identity that must be developed and manifested in daily behaviour. The issue of increasing independence is also closely related to cultural creativity. Cultural ideology seeks to create conditions for creative potential to develop optimally.

Favourable situations will only emerge and flourish through intellectual breadth and creativity, accompanied by an appreciation of success or achievement. There is also a sense of openness to the influence of foreign cultures that may arise. Of course, openness and creative freedom often come with risks. These risks will impact cultural life, thus raising concerns about the concept of cultural identity understood in a narrow sense. Cultural identity is limited only to preventing changes in the cultural values contained in objects deemed to have fundamental value. This misconception is often used to prevent changes in a culture. This mistake makes culture silent and static, even when culture is dynamic (Ahimsa-Putra, 2015).

Creating a Community

Another concept of *ulu ambek* traditional art training is to create a community to sustain the art. So far, *ulu ambek* dance training has been sporadic and incidental. Indeed, there are many cultural art communities that, from an artistic perspective, are excellent and attractive, but their sustainability is not as expected. After engaging in activities in the initial stage, the group does not function well for subsequent activities. Even cultural communities, especially traditional arts, are still alive today and refuse to fade. However, such institutions are essential to provide aesthetic sustenance to

the broader community as a platform for artists to express themselves, earn a living, preserve the arts, and support various related fields (Yusa et al., 2021; Masunah, 2021).

Generally, traditional art community management fails due to poor organisation. If organised and managed well, traditional art communities will benefit the entire community and artists. One aspect that can strengthen the sustainability of traditional arts is deep support by strengthening the core community. Suppose traditional artistic activities are based on the commitment of all parties supporting them to present them holistically, altruistically, and based on friendship ethics. In that case, these activities can last long. The presence of traditional arts in *Ulu Ambek* cannot be denied in the cultural context of its community. Cultural activities such as beliefs, social gatherings, cooperation, and agricultural cycles colour the nature and characteristics of the *ulu ambek* arts. All forms and functions of *ulu ambek* arts will show the connection between artists and their community. The gap between artists, supporting communities, and customs has become the three pillars that are now considered very effective in preserving the tradition of performing arts in Pariaman.

The presence of traditional *ulu ambek* arts is not only understood partially or only seen from the perspective of art or the artists themselves, but is strongly correlated with its cultural context. The cultural context becomes an icon in forming a public space holistically. Coaches must realise that strengthening the artistic community base can be achieved if fellow artists have emotional ties in their commitment to building a conducive artistic climate. The strength built together will solidify the role of artists with their various creative processes. From the strength that has been built, it is necessary to agree to build networks among artists so that communication media can be created. If their network is strong, surely the strength of the traditional community can take root more deeply.

Furthermore, Law No. 5 of 2017 concerning the advancement of culture emphasises that the government acts as a facilitator in supporting the advancement of culture in terms of protection, development, utilisation, and fostering (Indonesia, 2017; Idris, 2020). Similarly, traditional art communities and policymakers can monitor cultural promotion programs to ensure they align with their objectives. Over time, the ideological struggle to correct these perceptions will uncover various issues that both support and contradict them. This dialectic process must be carried out collectively to identify agreed-upon elements, ultimately empowering the traditional *ulu ambek* art. Personal ego between artists and performers must now be set aside, primarily focusing on building grassroots empowerment through deliberate democratic struggles. There is ample evidence that traditional art organizations rooted in grassroots communities will endure and withstand the test of time.

The journey of the *ulu ambek* dance is inseparable from the traditional behaviours of the Pariaman community. This indicates that the development of modern artistic groups is not the same as the development of traditional *ulu ambek* dance groups or other forms of traditional arts. Established groups have no real impact on broader societal activities. They only cater to specific circles. The reasons behind a group's formation or sudden disappearance are never fully explored. The presence of communities reflects the need for a modern social order, free from national boundaries and geographical regions, including religion and culture, thereby threatening the continuity of traditional *ulu ambek* art. Previously, there was no community training on traditional *ulu ambek* arts, which could cause societal controversy. Debates are likely to intensify as ethnic and cultural identities in each country become more consolidated (Sahrul & Zebua, 2020)

To avoid such confrontations, political solidarity in communal life is needed. Living together is considered the order of human life in the modern era, free from all obstacles and limitations. These thoughts seem very noble, but when applied, developed countries still hold strategic and determining positions. Art communities experience progress and create new pressures on regional autonomy. Culture fades over time because those who possess it no longer use it. This can be seen in traditional arts that are less appreciated by society today. The younger generation is more familiar with modern art from other cultures.

CONCLUSION

The *ulu ambek* dance training in Pariaman needs to be conducted as effectively as possible because it is related to the sustainability of this traditional art, especially in the current era of globalisation. The journey of the *ulu ambek* dance has continually changed over time, from before the arrival of Islam through the Islamic era to the present era of globalisation. These changes signify that the *ulu ambek* dance is a highly dynamic art form. Not only did religious ideology affect it, but political ideology also affected it from the colonial era to the era of independence. During the independence era, the dynamics were also marked by the Old Order, New Order, and Reform Order. As part of the traditional ceremonies in Pariaman, the *ulu ambek* dance has important elements and supporting elements that drive the art forward. All these elements merge into one performance that supports each other.

Meanwhile, visually, *ulu ambek* dance is cultural-specific, meaning it is local and unique according to the conditions of its cultural life. Therefore, the beauty that emerges is relative in that it can only be understood or enjoyed by the people of Pariaman who have and support that culture. The same goes for the concept of training.

Ulu ambek dance is an art that depicts the dynamic expression of society, which can be seen in the essence of human creativity. The social dynamics supporting the *ulu ambek* dance are the factors behind its continuity. Education also plays an important role in the dynamics of the *ulu ambek* dance in Pariaman. *Ulu ambek* dance is used as an educational tool to educate generations to become artists and nurture them to be more moral. The factor of customary rituals leads to the purpose of the *ulu ambek* dance, which is a tool to showcase culture within the community. Traditional art is a factor that leads to the values of art itself, which are related to learning lifestyles and attitudes that have ethics and aesthetics delineated by customs in Pariaman. In the future, it is hoped that digital platforms can be explored for *ulu ambek* training, and further research could focus on the potential for creative collaboration between the *ulu ambek* dance and other ethnic dances across Asia.

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