
The Aesthetics & Ethics of Zapin Siak in Riau Province

Ainuddin^{1*}, Daryusti²,

^{1,2} Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: ainuddinshum@gmail.com

Langgam Journal is licensed under a [HYPERLINK "http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/"](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)
[Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Abstract. The purpose of this study is to investigate the aesthetic and ethical values in Zapin Siak art, which is practiced by the people in Riau Province. The research uses a qualitative approach with observation, interviews, and documentation techniques on artists and Zapin supporters. This is evidenced by the aesthetic values of Zapin Siak, which can be seen in the harmony of motion, musical accompaniment, simple costumes, and evenly balanced performance patterns that reflect the gentle and orderly character of Malay culture. In the controlled way and posture in which the dancers have performed, in the rules of pairing for those who plaster on their movements without nudity (covered), and in the lyrics where morality and religion make an appearance. Aesthetics and ethics in Zapin Siak cannot be separated from each other to become a complete cultural identity. Modernization changes both the form of performance and the meaning of cultural values, so preservation is important through an understanding of cultural meaning, not just through performance.

Keywords: Cultural Ethics, Local Wisdom, Malay Aesthetics, Traditional Arts, Zapin Siak

INTRODUCTION

Siak Regency is one of the main areas in the growth of Malay culture in Riau Province (Irmayana et al., 2024; Santika & Roza, 2024). This area on the east coast of Sumatra Island is known as the center of Malay history because it was once a territory of the Kingdom of Siak Sri Indrapura. The cultural heritage of Siak is formed from a combination of indigenous Malay values, the teachings of Islam, and various influences brought in through two different trade routes via river boats, for example, local traders, Chinese influence that reached Malacca, and copper notes were obtained through sea trade, so those who seek to consult these cultural traditions. This historical environment led to the emergence of various forms of artistic traditional art (meaning), including Zapin Siak (Fernandes & Idawati Idawati, 2024; Yulinis & Widyarto, 2023).

Zapin is a traditional Malay paired dance art form accompanied by distinctive music such as the gambus and marwas. The term "zapin" is thought to come from the Arabic word "zafn," which translates as rapid foot movement along with the rhythmic pattern (Hendra, 2023; Susanti, 2019). As a form of traditional culture, this indicates that Zapin has roots in a culture culturally influenced by Islamic preaching (Fernandes & Idawati, 2024; Triyani et al., 2020). and the continued interaction between the Malay community and Arab traders. But in its development, Zapin experienced localization of the region so that each region has its own characteristics, including Siak. Zapin Siak's movement is more structured, the musical rhythm is smooth with lyrics that are rich in religious values and life advice. The selection of Zapin as the object of study cannot be separated from its important position in the cultural life of the Malay community. Zapin functions as a vehicle for articulating social values, religion, and collective identity. Art is not only appreciated for its beauty, but also for its manners and meaning in Malay society (Liang Meng & Wang, 2023). Zapin is the combination of

the elements of Beauty and Ethics at once, in which the beautiful movements reflect harmony and rules, as well as the procedure for staging it will represent humility and moral (Jurnal et al., 2022; Mastura & Darwis, 2023).

Zapin is commonly performed in diverse social and cultural contexts. Typically, you can find this performance in Malay weddings, welcoming the guest of honour, and feting Islamic festive seasons as well as state cultural events. In royal and traditional government circles, Zapin was also palace entertainment and a means to teach manners for the community (Irmayana et al., 2024; Yulinis & Widyarto, 2023). Even now, Zapin is still held in cultural and tourism activities as Malay identity. Zapin's presence in various social spaces illustrates that this art type works not only as entertainment, but is also a medium for passing on cultural values.

Though, in changing times, Zapin is among quite serious challenges. Modernization and the gradual change in public taste have changed the role of traditional arts. Zapin, which used to be rich in philosophical and ethical values, now has a shorter time in the performance process and is more inclined towards entertainment (Elfariyah et al., 2025; Erni & Artis, 2025). Aesthetic components still exist in some shows, but the ethical values behind movements and arrangement of performance have started to lose its meaning. Most young people only recognize Zapin as a regional dance or fad without knowing its cultural significance. Scholarly works on Zapin are also still mostly limited. Previous studies have investigated Zapin from various perspectives. (Fernandes & Idawati, 2024) examined the preservation of Istana Siak Zapin through the activities of Sanggar Balairung Sri in Siak Regency. Their findings revealed that art studios play an important role in maintaining the continuity of Zapin traditions and transmitting cultural knowledge to younger generations. However, the study focused primarily on preservation strategies and institutional efforts, while the aesthetic and ethical meanings embodied in Zapin performances were not explored in depth (Hidajat et al., 2022; Martiara et al., 2026; Robby et al., 2024).

Research conducted by (Triyani et al., 2020) analyzed the uniqueness of Malay Zapin choreography. The study found that Zapin possesses distinctive movement patterns, floor designs, and choreographic structures that differentiate it from other Malay dances. Nevertheless, the analysis emphasized technical and choreographic dimensions rather than examining how those movements represent aesthetic ideals and ethical principles within Malay culture. (Yulinis & Widyarto, 2023) investigated Zapin Riau from the perspective of Malay cultural aesthetics. Their findings demonstrated that Zapin reflects values of harmony, balance, and refinement that characterize Malay artistic traditions. Although the study contributed significantly to understanding aesthetic dimensions, the ethical values embedded in performance practices, dancer interactions, and social norms were not discussed comprehensively.

Nora & Efi, (2022) focused on the development of Zapin Bengkalis and identified various transformations that occurred as a result of social and cultural changes. Their research highlighted the adaptability of Zapin in responding to modernization. However, the study paid little attention to how these transformations affect the preservation of aesthetic and ethical values within the tradition. (Mastura & Darwis, 2023) examined Islamic educational values contained in the lyrics of Zapin Api. Their findings showed that Zapin lyrics function as a medium for transmitting religious teachings, moral guidance, and character education. Nevertheless, the study concentrated only on textual aspects of the lyrics and did not investigate ethical values as expressed through bodily movements, performance structures, costumes, and social interactions. (Irawan et al., 2024) analyzed Zapin Selatpanjang using biosemiotic and ethnocoreological approaches. The study successfully identified symbolic meanings represented in movement motifs and cultural signs. However, the research focused mainly on symbolic interpretation and did not explore the relationship between aesthetic appreciation and ethical values in performance practices. Furthermore, (Hendra, 2023) investigated the form and development of Zapin Sayang Serawak, while (Susanti, 2019) explored the philosophical meanings of Zapin Pecah Dua Belas. Both studies enriched scholarly understanding of Zapin traditions through historical and philosophical perspectives. However, neither study specifically addressed Zapin Siak nor examined the integration of aesthetic and ethical dimensions as a unified cultural framework.

Based on the review above, previous studies have predominantly focused on preservation, choreography, symbolism, historical development, lyric interpretation, and cultural aesthetics. However, research specifically examining Zapin Siak remains limited. Furthermore, previous studies tend to discuss aesthetic and ethical dimensions separately rather than examining their interrelationship as a unified cultural system. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the aesthetic and ethical values embodied in Zapin Siak is still lacking. This study contributes to the existing literature by examining aesthetic and ethical values simultaneously within the context of Zapin Siak. Unlike previous studies that focus on choreography, preservation, symbolism, or lyric interpretation, this research investigates how movement, music, costumes, performance structure, and moral values interact in constructing Malay cultural identity (Elyadi & Sriyadi, 2025; Nurmalinga et al., 2018). Because of these conditions, research on Zapin Siak becomes relevant and

important to conduct. This study aims to explore the aesthetic values reflected in Zapin Siak performances, including movement, music, costumes, and performance harmony. In addition, the study examines the ethical values embodied in performance practices, social norms, dancer behavior, and moral messages contained in the art form. Through this approach, the research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Zapin Siak as a cultural heritage that embodies both artistic beauty and ethical wisdom.

The term aesthetics was first introduced systematically in the 18th century by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, FAHA. He is also the one that first initiated aesthetics as an independent branch of philosophy (Erni & Artis, 2025). Baumgarten coined the term *aesthetica* for "the science of beauty and sensory experience." He also points out that aesthetics is all about how we humans perceive beauty with our five senses and not just through logic. From then on, aesthetics evolved into a discipline that studies art, beauty, and artistic experience (Liang Meng & Wang, 2023). The concept of beauty had been broached before Baumgarten by ancient Greeks, including Plato and Aristotle. Plato saw beauty as ideal, aligned with the world of ideas; Aristotle regarded beauty as observable in form, harmony, and order. The talk of aesthetics at the time was still part of general philosophy and not its own discipline during their lifetimes.

Aesthetics was then further developed by Immanuel Kant, whose ideas on aesthetic judgment had a significant impact. His affirmation of beauty is subjective but universal, since all humans possess the capacity to apprehend beauty. The aesthetics of Kant's thought opened the door to the interpretation of art not just as a study, but also as an experience of taste that included phenomena such as human perception, emotion and judgment. As to performing arts, aesthetic value is viewed from 4 major components such as movement, music/cultural heritage preservation of costumes performances (Elfarisyah et al., 2025; Erni & Artis, 2025). The main visual component is movement that builds rhythm and dynamics, while music complements the emotional momentum and your structural shape of performance. The visual dimension is also enriched through costumes and stage design (Joung & Kim, 2018; Lu et al., 2024). All these elements are part of a wholeness that embodies a beauty specific to that culture. Aesthetics pertaining to its definition in Malay art have the values of softness, harmony and balance (Joung & Kim, 2018). Beauty is not ostentatiously showcased, but rather measured movements, courteous gestures and a melding of body with music and performance space. These aesthetic qualities are characteristic of Zapin art, which prioritizes accurate footwork, balanced floor patterns, accompanied by an even and repetitive rhythmic musical accompaniment.

Ethics in the context of traditional arts refers to a system of moral values, norms, and behavioral guides that apply in society (Purwaningsih & Ridha, 2024). Ethics are not just reflected in the messages of the art, but also in how the art is practiced. The dancers body language, rules of offence, attitude and types of interactions between the performers reflects what is considered valuable within a certain culture. In the Malay culture, ethics is associated with manners. Manners are a reflection of etiquette, politeness and respect when it comes to social and religious norms. The way people wear their clothes, body language, social communication and language choice are very much influenced by these values (Hasbullah, 2023). Generally in Zapin art, ethics are demonstrated through sober movement and a systematic body order that follows the rules such as courtesy and deference to pairing, praise, audience members, and king or dukan (Irawan et al., 2024).

There is an ethical value through Zapin, as the Zapin performances show. First of all, movement ethics call for humility and self-restraint. Zapin movements are often understated and lack excessive display, following Malay values of civility. Secondly, social relations ethics are evident in the patterns of interaction between dancers, musicians, and the audience. The zapin performances are usually complemented with proper reverence and respect, whilst observing the appropriate societal decorum. Third, symbolic ethics mediate by way of the poem and the cultural context of performance. Many Zapin poems are covered with moral messages, instructions on doing good deeds, and the essence of religious values. Indicating Zapin as a means of broadcasting ethical values culturally (Triyani et al., 2020; Yulinis & Widyarto, 2023).

A lot has been studied zapin, especially zapin Riau based on previous studies. Nevertheless, discussions regarding Siak zapin specifically from diverse perspectives involving different academicians are still narrow. While the study of zapin has been widespread in studying it from the aspect of local culture, others study zapin based on aspects of movement meaning, choreography and history (Fernandes & Idawati, 2024; Triyani et al., 2020; Yulinis & Widyarto, 2023). There is no specific study yet to discuss Siak Zapin in terms of beauty and ethics. This is what makes this research new in comparison to other studies, aimed at answering the following questions: 1). How are aesthetic values manifested in the movements, musical accompaniment, costumes, and performance structures of Zapin Siak?. 2). How are ethical values manifested in the performance practices, social interactions, and moral messages embodied in Zapin Siak?.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs an integrated framework combining aesthetics, ethics, and cultural value transmission. Aesthetic analysis refers to the view that beauty in performing arts is manifested through the harmonious relationship between movement, music, costume, and performance structure. In traditional dance, aesthetic value is not merely determined by visual attractiveness but also by balance, rhythm, unity, and harmony among performance elements. Accordingly, the aesthetic dimension of Zapin Siak is analyzed through four components: (1) movement patterns, (2) musical accompaniment, (3) costumes, and (4) performance structure and spatial arrangement. These components provide the analytical basis for understanding how beauty is constructed within Zapin Siak performances.

The ethical dimension is examined through the perspective of Malay cultural values. In Malay society, ethics is closely associated with adat (custom), courtesy, respect, modesty, self-restraint, and adherence to Islamic principles. Ethical values are reflected not only in verbal messages but also in bodily behavior, social interaction, and performance conventions. Therefore, ethical analysis in this study focuses on dancers' behavior, gender interaction patterns, performance rules, and moral messages conveyed through Zapin lyrics. Furthermore, this study adopts the perspective that traditional art functions as a medium for cultural transmission. Traditional performances do not merely entertain audiences but also communicate social norms, collective identity, and moral values. Through this perspective, aesthetics and ethics are understood as interconnected dimensions that jointly construct the cultural meaning of Zapin Siak. Thus, beauty in Zapin Siak is not separated from moral values; rather, aesthetic expression serves as a vehicle through which ethical principles and Malay cultural wisdom are preserved and transmitted across generations.

METHOD

The study employs qualitative method. It is a qualitative design because it accommodates the objectives of this study that are more concerned with understanding the meanings, values, and symbols contained in Zapin Siak art. Researchers can further allow investigation of aesthetic and ethical aspects that are not merely outwardly visible within the performance itself but extend well beyond it to what endures in how a supportive community continues to interpret and engage with the piece (Alia Balqis & Syah Sinaga, 2024; Rahmawati & Prayogi, 2021). The research was based in Siak Regency, Riau Province, where Zapin art is still actively preserved and performed. The place was chosen because Siak is the center of Malay Zapin development since the Sultanate era, and also an area that maintains Zapin tradition to this day in various forms.

The subjects of the research are Zapin dancers, cultural figures, art teachers, and others directly involved in the preservation of Zapin. We employed purposive sampling in which subjects (i.e., informants) are chosen because the researcher wants to prove or cannot achieve, and about the richness of information on the aesthetic and ethical values of Zapin. The informants in this study were selected purposively based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in the preservation and performance of Zapin Siak. The selection aimed to obtain comprehensive information regarding the aesthetic and ethical values embodied in Zapin Siak. The profile of the research informants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of Research Informants

Interview Date	Informant Category	Role
12 February 2026	Zalfan (Malay Cultural Figure)	Expert on Malay cultural values and Zapin traditions
28 March 2026	Indah (Senior Zapin Dancer)	Active performer of Zapin Siak
25 February 2026	Hadi (Art Teacher and Zapin Instructor)	Trainer involved in teaching and preserving Zapin
15 March 2026	Putra (Zapin Musician)	Gambus and marwas player in Zapin performances
05 April 2026	Aji (Community Figure)	Community member involved in cultural preservation

The data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was conducted by selecting, classifying, and simplifying information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Subsequently, the data were organized and displayed according to themes related to the aesthetic and ethical values of Zapin Siak. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying findings

through continuous comparison of data sources and field evidence. This process enabled the researchers to identify patterns, meanings, and cultural values embedded in Zapin Siak performances.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, including cultural figures, dancers, musicians, art teachers, and community members. Technique triangulation was carried out by comparing data gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checking was undertaken by confirming several interview findings with key informants to ensure the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. These procedures were applied to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Data were collected using three primary techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during Zapin performances, cultural festivals, and routine rehearsals held in art studios (Robby et al., 2024). Through observation, the researcher identified aesthetic elements such as movement patterns, musical accompaniment, costumes, and stage arrangements, as well as ethical aspects reflected in dancers' interactions, performance conventions, and social behavior during performances.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with cultural figures, Zapin performers, art instructors, musicians, and community members involved in the preservation of Zapin Siak. The interviews aimed to explore participants' perspectives regarding the meanings, values, and cultural functions of Zapin Siak within Malay society. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for participants to share their experiences and interpretations in greater depth. Documentation was also employed to support and enrich the research data. The collected documents included photographs, video recordings of performances, interview records, and relevant literature concerning the history, development, and cultural significance of Zapin Siak.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

A. Result

Table 2 : Aesthetic Values Identified in Zapin Siak

Aesthetic Element	Observation Findings	Aesthetic Meaning
Movement	Synchronized footwork, controlled body posture, and restrained gestures	Harmony, balance, refinement, and discipline
Music	Integration of gambus and marwas rhythms with dance movements	Rhythmic unity and aesthetic coherence
Costume	Modest Malay clothing with simple ornamentation	Elegance, cultural identity, and modesty
Spatial Arrangement	Symmetrical formations and coordinated movement patterns	Visual balance and harmony
Performance Structure	Integration of movement, music, costume, and space	Holistic aesthetic experience

The analytical results showed that the aesthetic dimension in Siak Zapin can be seen from the relationship between movement, music, costume, arrangement of space, and performance structure. Whereas the allure of most pants derives from a dominant feature overpowering all others, the aesthetic value of Zapin Siak is manifested through the harmony of movement, music, costumes, and performance structure. These findings support the theoretical framework employed in this study, which views aesthetic experience in traditional performing arts as emerging from the integration of multiple performance elements.

The aesthetic appeal of Zapin Siak is strongly reflected in its footwork patterns, which constitute the central element of the choreography. The movements of the upper body and hands complement the footwork and contribute to the overall visual harmony of the performance. Very little spotlight-like use of hands. The dancers maintain an upright posture throughout the performance, demonstrating body control, balance, and precision. These qualities contribute to the elegance and refinement that characterize Zapin Siak. The visual control and lovely line have always figured in the dancer's word. Facial expressions are generally restrained and subtle, reflecting the values of modesty and self-control that are deeply rooted in Malay culture. This command of the physical is accompanied by a visual idiom that has been purposely cultivated and distinguishes

Siak Zapin from more emotionally expressive stage genres. Field observations revealed that dancers consistently performed synchronized footwork and controlled upper-body movements throughout the performance. The dancers maintained balance and coordination while following the rhythm of the accompanying music. Informant 2 (Senior Zapin Dancer) stated: “The beauty of Zapin Siak lies in the harmony of movement and the cohesiveness of the dancers (Interview, 28 March 2026). Every step must follow the rhythm to create balance, which reflects the character and refinement of Malay culture. The arrangement of the music establishes a tone of aesthetic appreciation. The interaction between the gambus and the marwas suggests a polyrhythmic space that conveys the dance's tempo and emotional coloration. During the observation, changes in the tempo of the gambus and marwas were consistently followed by corresponding changes in the dancers’ movement patterns. The synchronization between music and movement created a unified aesthetic experience throughout the performance. *Informant 4 (Zapin Musician) explained: “The gambus and marwas provide the rhythmic foundation of Zapin. When the rhythm and movements blend, the audience can experience the beauty of the performance as a whole” (Interview, 15 March 2026).*

The stickiness with which what lives as interlocking rhythm elements comes in and out, grabbing or releasing parts of rhythmic units is one way facets are fragmented. There is a constant stabilization to what you hear that contributes to this constellation for dance. The thoroughness of your movement patterning (Coupe et al., 2012; Becker & Leuthold, 2006) directly correlates to the modulation of speed. These establish a counter line to the lithe, carefully weighed movements, or they work as the quick impulses that shoot kinetic power into space but maintain unity between legs and arms.

Details of costume do that, too, zeroing in on and reinforcing an aesthetic identity. The dancers wear loose, muted Malay costumes with no decoration. The male dancers are mostly dressed in long-sleeved shirts and trousers, all under a headpiece that tells the story of tradition; the female dancers’ dresses are conservative enough to allow for karate moves, not worrying so much about what all shows. They lose the kinetic simplicity of the garments, but their aesthetic values are intact in this medium. The elegance comes not as much from a big, grand spectacle, but more so from synchronized relationships of visually-constraining design in material.

This ordering of space further creates aesthetic harmony. Zapin Siak is designed with symmetrical structures and paired compositions. The spatial arrangement of Zapin Siak is characterized by symmetrical formations and balanced movement patterns. These spatial structures create visual harmony and contribute to the overall aesthetic unity of the performance. Beauty does not come from gorgeously, theatrically elaborate razzmatazz, but from synchronized rela aesthetic aspects, the findings show that moral values are embedded in Zapin Siak performances.

Table 3: Ethical Values Identified in Zapin Siak

Ethical Aspect	Observation and Interview Findings	Ethical Meaning
Interaction Between Male and Female Dancers	Physical distance is maintained and direct contact is avoided	Respect, propriety, and adherence to Islamic values
Performance Conduct	Dancers display restrained movements and respectful gestures	Modesty and self-control
Educational Function	Zapin is used to teach discipline, courtesy, and social values	Moral education and character formation
Song Lyrics	Lyrics contain advice on religion, morality, and social relations	Transmission of cultural and ethical values
Cultural Practice	Zapin is performed in traditional and community events	Preservation of Malay identity and social harmony

These directions are evidenced in ethical aspects of bodily practices, behaviours in relational spaces, performance practice and the political conditions of song lyrics. Action-inhibition is one of the most palpable forms of ethicality. Those gestures are restrained, leaning more toward demure than predatorial or aggressive modesty is a cultural virtue. Especially in dance duets, ethical values are exposed. Throughout the performance, this show From a choreographic men and women keep their distance from each other in a respectful manner. Very little physical contact is made and there are strict boundaries in place with space.

Field observations showed that male and female dancers consistently maintained a respectful physical distance throughout the performance. No direct physical contact was observed, and all interactions followed established performance conventions that emphasized propriety and mutual respect. This observation was supported by Informant I (Malay Cultural Figure), who stated: “*The distance maintained between male and female dancers is not merely a dance convention. It reflects Malay courtesy and respect for Islamic teachings, which form the foundation of social life in Siak*”(Interview, 12 February 2026). Similarly, Informant 3 (Art Teacher and Zapin Instructor) explained: “When teaching Zapin, we do not only teach movement techniques. We also teach discipline, courtesy, and respect for others because these values are inseparable from the dance itself” (Interview, 25 February 2026). These findings indicate that ethical values in Zapin Siak are embodied through performance practices, social interactions, and behavioral norms that reflect Malay cultural values.

Practitioners claim to consciously exercise such conventions (even when there were no settlers or laws) because they represent Malay social values and Islamic moral systems. But it’s also ethics that deflates performer-audience interaction. Here we find that gestures of respect are a characteristic of performances, and slight bowing or held positions with suggested curvature, which create humility from the very beginning of the performance. So, in response to that, modern audiences are careful and work hard to hone their instincts. Absurdly, it also puts out up Zapin. Both Heraclius and his rival, Semi opposed Limon do n’t want to pan Zarpin in front of an audience due to the theater box preserving a better quality audio recording than any on-site attempt achieved so they agree with each other tacitly. Orinos passerby is e50-element.

The meaning of words that may add ethical significance in poems such as this one or others like it is a whole new language itself. Here are just a few examples: Syair Azzap is especially well received and sung in the context of moral education, religious advice, and social commentary all recorded but never published. By contrast, this type of lyrics cultivates a degree of warmth between old participants of a demonstration, who bring their own content and regular messages that need to be taught. However, for young listeners, the meaning of song lyrics might mean much less than how its rhythm and song style sound, which hints at a change in terms of reception. At such performative sites, the ethical is disclosed.

Observation of several Zapin performances revealed that song lyrics were frequently used to convey messages about morality, religious values, social relationships, and community life. These messages were delivered through poetic language and remained an integral part of the performance. Informant 5 (Community Figure) explained: “The lyrics of Zapin contain advice about life, religion, and social relationships. Through these lyrics, younger generations can understand the values that are highly respected within Malay society”. Informant 5 (Community Figure) explained: “The lyrics of Zapin contain advice about life, religion, and social relationships” (Interview, 05 April 2026). This statement confirms that Zapin lyrics function not only as artistic expressions but also as a medium for transmitting moral teachings and cultural knowledge.

Zapin Is performed during cultural/ritual events, but also can be traditional ceremonies, and following dharma came out for funerals with beauty. It is an exercise in context, a carefully nuanced invocation of context that communicates and maintains said difference. In this case, Zapin is not only something one should be speaking of in writing but also explaining to others about How did such a shift occur The outcomes, on the other hand, are changes of modernity. In other recent interpretations of classical music without these obvious signs I now think of some recent expansions, say both shorter durational readings and faster metronomic work in larger outdoor spaces a deliberate emphasis has been placed upon what may be seen. Eureka! But waves of song production will change, either distilling good songs from current sources or cashing in on diffraction of the atom streams. And these adaptations are evidence for the fact that the negotiation between tradition and adaptation is always ongoing.

B. Discussion

This strong finding suggests that the aesthetic of Zapin Siak is relational, so it did not a decorative aesthetic in the conclusion. This finding is consistent with previous studies on Malay performing arts, which emphasize harmony, balance, and integration among performance elements as the primary sources of aesthetic value. For example, research on traditional Malay dance has shown that aesthetic appreciation is often derived from the coordination of movement, music, and costume rather than from visual extravagance. However, the present study extends these findings by demonstrating that in Zapin Siak, aesthetic value is also closely associated with cultural refinement and social restraint, which reflect the broader philosophical values of Malay society.

The findings also reveal a close relationship between musical rhythm and dance movement. The synchronization between gambus and marwas rhythms and dancers’ movements contributes significantly to

the overall aesthetic experience. This supports the view that traditional performing arts should be understood as integrated artistic systems in which multiple performance elements function together to create meaning and aesthetic value. The simplicity of the costume further reinforces the aesthetic character of Zapin Siak. Rather than emphasizing ornamentation, the costumes reflect Malay cultural values of modesty, elegance, and social propriety. This finding demonstrates that aesthetic appreciation in Zapin Siak is closely associated with cultural identity and symbolic meaning.

This finding demonstrates that musical accompaniment constitutes an essential component in the construction of aesthetic experience within Zapin Siak. These findings support previous research indicating that traditional Malay performing arts function not only as entertainment but also as a medium for transmitting moral and cultural values. Similar studies have reported that values such as respect, modesty, and social harmony are embedded within artistic practices and performance conventions. Nevertheless, the present study highlights that these ethical values are expressed not only through song lyrics but also through bodily practices, spatial arrangements, and performer interactions. This finding contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between artistic expression and moral education in Malay culture.

The ethical values identified in Zapin Siak reflect fundamental principles of Malay culture, particularly modesty, respect, social harmony, and adherence to Islamic values. These principles are manifested through restrained body movements, the maintenance of appropriate distance between male and female dancers, respect toward audiences, and compliance with established performance conventions. Such findings indicate that ethical values in Zapin Siak are not merely conveyed through verbal messages or song lyrics, but are embodied in the dancers' behavior and performance practices. This supports the perspective that ethics in traditional Malay arts are expressed through actions, gestures, and social interactions that conform to cultural norms. Consequently, Zapin Siak functions not only as an artistic performance but also as a cultural medium through which moral values, social etiquette, and collective identity are transmitted from one generation to another. The inseparable relationship between artistic expression and moral conduct demonstrates that beauty in Zapin Siak is closely connected with the ethical ideals upheld by the Malay community.

The findings further demonstrate that Zapin lyrics function as a medium for transmitting ethical teachings. Interview data revealed that the lyrics commonly contain messages related to religion, morality, social responsibility, and community life. However, several informants noted that younger audiences tend to focus more on musical rhythm and performance aspects than on the symbolic meanings contained in the lyrics. This indicates a shift in the reception of traditional cultural messages among younger generations. This finding is consistent with previous studies on cultural transmission in traditional performing arts, which have reported that younger generations often engage more strongly with the entertainment aspects of a performance than with its symbolic or educational content. Similar tendencies have been identified in studies of Malay cultural performances, where modernization and digital media have influenced patterns of cultural reception. However, the present study demonstrates that although aesthetic appreciation of Zapin Siak remains strong among younger audiences, understanding of the ethical messages embedded in the lyrics has gradually declined. This finding suggests the need for cultural preservation efforts that not only maintain performance practices but also strengthen the transmission of cultural meanings and moral values to younger generations.

This change in reception of the audience moves from participatory to consumptive cultural allusion. Zapin, a custom saturated with meanings and values, the findings suggest that generational differences influence the interpretation of Zapin performances. Older audiences generally possess a deeper understanding of the cultural and ethical messages embedded within the performance, whereas younger audiences are often more attracted to its visual and musical aspects. This condition presents a challenge for the transmission of cultural knowledge and intangible heritage. And such a shift does raise some of the important questions about the sustainability of intangible cultural knowledge. The study's key finding you can't disentangle aesthetics and ethics. The Sapin Siak virtue and character can not run counter to moral formation, it is inscribed or inscribes ports of ethics education within limits. Discipline inspires elegance, visual framing creates shared imagination, and cultural humility nurtures taste. This tangle is a headache for modernist values of the artistic that want to scrape aesthetics and ethical heft into two neat piles.

From the perspective of cultural sustainability, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research showing that traditional performing arts play an important role in preserving cultural identity and transmitting social values across generations. Similar studies on Malay cultural traditions have emphasized that artistic performances function not only as entertainment but also as cultural education. However, the present study demonstrates that in Zapin Siak, aesthetic and ethical values are closely interconnected and expressed simultaneously through movement, music, costumes, performance conventions, and song lyrics. This finding provides a more comprehensive understanding of how artistic and moral dimensions interact within a traditional Malay performance. Therefore, preservation efforts should focus not only on maintaining

choreographic forms but also on safeguarding the cultural meanings and moral values embedded within the tradition. This approach is essential to ensure the continued relevance of Zapin Siak in contemporary society.

If ethical meanings accrue in the act of practice, not just in performance staging, then preservation too must reckon with interpretive understanding. To sustainably generate beauty and ethics both in terms of direction will also need crit-culture, documentation and anthropology. It is also, after all, Zapin Siak the original cultural conflation permitted at all its mutative possibilities in which aesthetic form and ethical philosophy are mutually interdependent. Its reinvention is tied to whether communities and cultural institutions can adapt and create value. So looking after Zapin is not just about preserving something of a cultural/doctrine-based dance form, but in some ways the seventh space that the aesthetic creates through reunion can certainly magnify dignity and identity in a time of startling metamorphosis.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study's results show that the Zapin Siak have aesthetic and ethical values, which are inter-regional and integrated. Aesthetic value: The underlying coherence of physical movement, music, costumes and execution designs some kind of beauty which is smooth and deliberate without being ostentatious. The nature of beauty Zapin Siak is not constructed by a visual ornamentation or architectural splendor, but the balance elements which characterize izzah and balance in Malay reflect civilize culture. The ethical values of Zapin Siak can be seen in the posture and performing rules of dancers, social relations as well as moral messages found in lyrics. Following a steady rhythm, the moves are where they belong no one wanders off-line as they share the same space and never compromise propriety in their partnered transactions nor performance protocols that adhere to conventional conventions. Zapin is not only a platform for entertainment but also a dissemination of cultural values. In Zapin, though, ethics are not frozen in the speech, but they are reliving and come from performative practices that still stay alive among the people of the community.

But the study also charts changes caused by modernization. The flashiest of entertainment has simplified Zapin performances in form and lowered their significance. And it could damage younger generations' understanding of the ethical values that the tradition is supposed to embed. This is a problem because the aesthetic and ethical values of an art performance have a limited time span, so that Zapin Siak can not only rely on the activities of Zapp SI increasing his phenomenon but must be balanced with cultural education efforts. Zapin Siak overall is a cultural heritage that not only artistically beautiful, but also values moral or local wisdom. Its existence echoes the Malay view of the world, where beauty and courtesy coexist in a singular cultural expression.

This study contributes significantly to the development of Malay cultural arts studies, particularly in enriching the understanding of symbolic meanings, philosophical values, and the role of tradition in shaping cultural identity within the community. The findings can serve as both theoretical and empirical references for future research focusing on the preservation and reinterpretation of Malay cultural heritage in contemporary contexts. However, this study is limited by the relatively small number of informants, which means that the diversity of perspectives obtained may not fully represent the broader cultural community under investigation. This limitation suggests that the depth of interpretation could be further expanded by increasing the number and diversity of participants in future studies. Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to involve a wider and more diverse range of informants, including artists, traditional leaders, and younger generations in a more balanced proportion. Additionally, subsequent studies are encouraged to combine qualitative approaches with visual analysis or in-depth ethnographic methods to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of cultural meaning dynamics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All praises to Allah SWT who has given me strength and a long life so that I can be able to complete this journal. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor for helping me all the way on writing this journal by putting in their time and sharing their knowledge. I hope that this journal will be helpful to people from different backgrounds and especially within the academic community.

REFERENCES

- Alia Balqis, L., & Syah Sinaga, S. (2024). Cultural Meaning and Values of the Beriuk Tinjal Dance at the Rengganis Art Studio. *Ekspresi Seni : Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Dan Karya Seni*, 26(2), 303–313. <https://doi.org/10.26887/ekspresi.v26i1.4957>
- Elfariyah, D., Agustin, D., Ariska, I., & Syekh Abdul Halim Hasan Binjai, I. (2025). The Role of Dance Studios as a Medium for Preserving Traditional Arts in the Era of Modernization. In *Journal of Contemporary Gender and Child Studies (JCGCS)* (Vol. 4, Number 2). <https://zia-research.com/index.php/jcgcs>
- Elyadi, M. N., & Sriyadi. (2025). Regional Identity through Dance: Ethnic Symbolism in Piring and Bedhaya Dance Traditions. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 23(7), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.9734/arjass/2025/v23i7721>
- Erni, & Artis. (2025). Nusantara Jurnal for Southeast Asian Islamic Studies MENGELOLA TRADISI, MERAWAT IDENTITAS. *Nusantara: Jurnal for Southeast Asian Islamic Studies*, 21(1), 62–75. <https://doi.org/10.24014/nusantara.v20i1.36407>
- Febriana Fernandes, & Idawati Idawati. (2024). Pelestarian Tari Zapin Istana Siak oleh Sanggar Balairung Sri Kecamatan Siak Kabupaten Siak Provinsi Riau. *Imajinasi : Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan, Seni, Dan Teknologi*, 1(2), 01–09. <https://doi.org/10.62383/imajinasi.v1i2.109>
- Hasbullah. (2023). The Values Of Entrepreneurship In A Malay Culture. *Asia Pacific Journal on Religion and Society (APJRS)*, 7(1), 2023. <http://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/asiapacific/index>
- Hendra, D. F. (2023). Tari Zapin Sayang Serawak: Bentuk Dan Perkembangan. *SEIKAT: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik Dan Hukum*, 2(1), 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.55681/seikat.v2i1.365>
- Hidajat, R., Laksana, R., Suharyanto, A., Wiflihani, W., Arrizqi, M., Rochayati, R., & Razak, A. (2022, December 29). *The Symbolic Battle of Coastal Culture in Zapin Dance in Palembang*. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.18-9-2022.2326041>
- Irawan, P., Martiara, R., & setyastuti. (2024). Analisis Biosemiotik dan Etnokoreologi dalam Zapin Selatpanjang pada Motif Langkah Asas Jalan. *JOGED : Jurnal Seni Tari*, 23(1), 1–16.
- Irmayana, I., Batu Bara, F. A., & Siregar, Y. D. (2024). Dampak Kerajaan Siak Sri Indrapura terhadap Kebudayaan Melayu di Riau. *Hijaz: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 3(3), 69–76. <https://doi.org/10.57251/hij.v3i3.1474>
- Joung, J., & Kim, J. (2018, June 28). Interactive effect of tempo and rhythm on the emotional perception of dance movements. *ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3212721.3212844>
- Jurnal, H., Gani, A., Nasution, J., Fakultas, D., Tarbiyah, I., Uin, K., Utara, S., Hasibuan, A. R., Fakultas, M., Megarani, O., Suryaningsih Ge', R., William, J., Ps, I. V, Estate, M., Percut, K., & Tuan, S. (2022). Peran Tari Zapin dalam Dakwah Islam Di Sumatera Utara. *JURNAL SOSIAL HUMANIORA DAN PENDIDIKAN*, 2(3), 127–137.
- Liang Meng, Z., & Wang, J. (2023). Aesthetics in Art. *Scineer Publishing*, 1(1), 1–2.
- Martiara, R., Hidajat, R., Jamilah, & Sahnir, N. (2026). Aesthetic Transformation of Zapin Dance in Malay-Javanese Cultural Perspective. *ARRUS Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(2), 226–240. <https://doi.org/10.35877/soshum4799>

- Mastura, A., & Darwis, M. (2023). Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Pada Syair Tari Zapin Api Di Desa Teluk Rhu Kecamatan Rupert Utara. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dan Keislaman*, 3(3), 285–293. <https://doi.org/10.55883/jipkis.v3i3.82>
- Nora, S., & Efi, A. (2022). Perkembangan Tari Zapin Bengkalis. *Gorga : Jurnal Seni Rupa*, 11.
- Nurmalinda, Roswandi, & Al-Qusar, D. A. (2018). Musik Silat Pangian (Gondang Siamo) Dalam Upacara Pernikahan Di Kelurahan Tebing Tinggi Okura Kecamatan Rumbai Pesisir Kota Pekanbaru. *Jurnal KOBA*, 5(1), 73–83.
- Purwaningsih, E., & Ridha, R. (2024). The Role of Traditional Cultural Values in Character Education. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 22(2), 5305–5314. <https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.00396>
- Rahmawati, I., & Prayogi, R. (2021). Pelestarian Nilai-Nilai Budaya Pada Kesenian Kuda Lumping Di Kecamatan Tambusai Utara. *Jurnal Budaya Nusantara*, 5(1), 1–6.
- Robby, R. H., Iziq, I. E. I., Afaf, M. 'Afaf H., & Surasak, S. J. (2024). Expression of Cultural Diversity Through Creation of Zapin Nusantara Berlelgang Dance. *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya*, 39(4), 529–538. <https://doi.org/10.31091/mudra.v39i4.2247>
- Santika, M., & Roza, E. (2024). The Kingdom of Siak a Symbol of Islamic Civilization in East Riau. *Jurnal Al-Kifayah: Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan*, 2(2), 380–391. <https://doi.org/10.53398/ja.v2i2.451>
- Susanti, D. (2019, October 8). Philosophical Meaning of Zapin Pecah Dua Belas Dance In Pelalawan District, Riau Province. *SEWORD FRESSH*. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.27-4-2019.2286830>
- Triyani, R., Masunah, J., & Nugraheni, T. (2020a). The Uniqueness of Malay Zapin Dance Choreography. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 19, 101–102.
- Triyani, R., Masunah, J., & Nugraheni, T. (2020b). *The Uniqueness of Malay Zapin Dance Choreography*. <https://doi.org/http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.
- Yulinis, & Widyarto, R. (2023). Zapin Riau Dalam Kajian Estetika Budaya Melayu. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kajian Seni*, 8(1).