

Cultural Exploration of Outer Baduy: Preserving Woven Fabrics Through Photographic Narratives

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KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

This work documents the preservation process of woven fabric by the Outer Baduy Community through a narrative photo story approach. The observation focuses on the family of Mr. Jamal in Kanekes Village. The weaving activity, passed down through generations by women, reflects obedience to tradition and cultural identity. This study aims to create photographic works that visually and informatively portray the preservation of Baduy Culture. Using a Practice-Based Research method, the author was directly involved in the creation and observation process. The result is a series of photographs that not only document but also deliver educational value about local cultural preservation. The research concludes that visual narrative is an effective medium to convey cultural messages to the wider audience. The urgency of this research lies in the increasing threat of cultural erosion caused by modernization, which can reduce the younger generation's interest in continuing traditional weaving practices. Without proper documentation and dissemination, valuable knowledge and techniques risk disappearing over time. By employing narrative photography, this work not only preserves visual records of the weaving tradition but also provides a medium to raise awareness, inspire cultural pride, and encourage sustainable preservation efforts. Such initiatives are essential to ensure that the Baduy weaving heritage remains a living practice rather than a static artifact of the past.

Narratives Photo Story
Cultural Preservation
Outer Baduy
Baduy Woven Fabric

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon underlying this research is the gradual decline in the intergenerational transmission of traditional weaving skills among the Outer Baduy community, a cultural practice that ideally should be preserved intact as part of their identity. In reality, modernization and exposure to external influences have begun to reduce the younger generation's interest in learning and continuing these traditions. Previous studies on Baduy woven textiles have predominantly focused on anthropological or ethnographic aspects, as well as the symbolic meaning of motifs, with limited exploration of how these preservation efforts can be effectively communicated to wider audiences through visual media.

This creates a research gap in the integration of cultural preservation with narrative visual storytelling. The cultural analysis in this study is also framed by Koentjaraningrat's seven cultural elements theory, which identifies religion, social organization, knowledge, language, art, livelihood, and technology as key components in understanding and preserving traditional societies (Koentjaraningrat, 1990 in Latif et al., 2023). Similar approaches have been applied in installation art representation of Baduy woven fabrics, which enhance aesthetic immersion and philosophical depth as a medium for cultural preservation (Agus, Sadono, & Sintowoko, 2022). Likewise, an

anthropological art perspective using Geertz's interpretive theory reveals the symbolic meaning of weaving as a reflection of social order and belief systems in the Baduy community (Putri & Setyawan, 2020).

The core problem addressed by this study is how to construct an effective visual narrative, using a narrative photo story approach, to document and communicate the preservation process of Outer Baduy handwoven textiles so that the cultural message remains engaging and relevant, particularly for younger audiences. The novelty of this research lies in its application of a practice-based research approach, in which the researcher directly participates in the creation and observation process; the focus on a representative family (Mr. Jamal's) to illustrate both adherence to tradition and adaptation to modern marketing methods; and the integration of documentation with educational and awareness-raising objectives. Baduy woven fabrics are not only functional products but also serve as a medium of cultural communication in tourism promotion, representing local wisdom and reinforcing cultural identity (Fajarwati et al., 2022). The Inner Baduy (Baduy Dalam) fabrics are predominantly white, symbolizing purity and simplicity, whereas the Outer Baduy (Baduy Luar) fabrics feature a wider range of colors such as black, dark blue, red, and golden yellow (Journal ITB, cited in Latif et al., 2023). Below is an example of traditional woven textiles from the Baduy community:



Figure 1. Baduy Woven Fabric (Source: Personal Documentation)

These colors are not merely aesthetic choices; they carry deep philosophical meanings within the life of the Baduy community. This is reflected in one of their traditional sayings: "*Moal aya putih mun teu aya hideung, moal rame dunia mun eweuh warna*," which translates to "There is no white without black; the world would not be vibrant without colors." The preservation of traditional weaving in Outer Baduy has become increasingly important amidst the growing influence of modernization. This study adopts a narrative photo story approach to explore how the family of Pak Jamal has preserved the art of weaving across generations, transforming their home into an informal learning space and utilizing social media platforms to market their woven products.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a visual ethnographic design, implemented through the Practice-Based Research method. The qualitative nature of the study allows for an in-depth exploration of cultural practices, while the visual ethnography framework emphasizes the integration of photographic documentation with ethnographic observation and interpretation. Visual ethnography has previously been applied to the study of Baduy weaving to capture intergenerational skill transmission using participant observation and immersive visual documentation (Maftukha, Yustiono, & Adriati, 2017). The narrative photo story approach aligns with visual literacy principles, where images are structured to tell a coherent and engaging story, enabling audiences to interpret and connect with cultural contexts more effectively (Wulandari, 2021; Tunggul Aji Daru, 2021). Data collection was conducted through three primary techniques: (1) direct observation in Kanekes Village to record the daily weaving activities and cultural contexts of the Outer Baduy community; (2) in-depth interviews with members of Pak Jamal's family to gather personal narratives, cultural values, and insights into their preservation efforts; and (3) photographic documentation using a

Canon EOS R camera with a 24–105mm lens under natural lighting conditions to ensure authenticity. The research instruments consisted of an observation guide, an interview guide with open-ended questions, field notes, and photographic equipment. Data analysis was carried out through the Interactive Model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves three concurrent activities data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The narrative photo story methodology also resonates with previous works in designing photographic books for textile traditions, such as the Tenun Gedog Pagatan project, which served as an educational and promotional tool for cultural preservation (Pahlefi, Martono, & Yurisma, 2025). Visual data were analyzed using the nine elements of narrative photo storytelling opening, establishing, portrait, interaction, scene, action, detail, signature image, and closer combined with compositional and lighting considerations to strengthen the visual narrative. The validity of the findings was ensured through triangulation (methodological and data source triangulation), member checking with research participants, and prolonged engagement in the field to build trust and obtain accurate cultural representations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research produced a narrative photo story that documents the efforts to preserve handwoven textiles by the Outer Baduy community, specifically through the activities of Pak Jamal's family in Kanekes Village. Adaptation strategies by the Outer Baduy community, such as the selective adoption of modern tools and digital marketing, illustrate the balance between cultural preservation and global engagement (Nurfalah et al., 2023). These strategies mirror the symbolic preservation seen in other textile traditions, such as songket Minangkabau, which embodies philosophical and cultural values that can be explored through hermeneutic qualitative approaches (Budiwirman & Syafwandi, 2019).

The weaving tradition, passed down through generations of Baduy women, serves as a symbol of adherence to customary law as well as a living form of cultural heritage. In this work, the researcher applied a visual approach based on the nine elements of photo storytelling to construct a cohesive narrative from the introduction of the environment, the weaving process, and family interactions, to the use of social media as a preservation strategy. This finding aligns with Latif et al. (2023), who observed that the sustainability of weaving traditions in Gajeboh, Outer Baduy, depends not only on the skill transmission within families but also on the adaptability of the community in facing modernization pressures. The integration of traditional techniques with contemporary marketing strategies, as seen in Pak Jamal's family, demonstrates how cultural resilience can be achieved without compromising the authenticity of the craft. The project was set in Kanekes Village, Lebak Regency, Banten Province, as a representation of a region that continues to uphold traditional practices through the daily activities of its people, symbolizing cultural resilience amidst the forces of modernization. The findings demonstrate that photographic visualization not only captures traditions but also communicates and educates broader audiences about cultural values in a compelling and meaningful way, consistent with prior research emphasizing that visual media can serve as both an archival record and a means of sustaining cultural identity (Agus et al., 2022; Pahlefi et al., 2025).

1. Cultural Preservation Activities



Figure 2. The Neighborhood Around the Village of Baduy (Source:Personal Documentation)

These photographs are the first and second images from the project "*Cultural Exploration of the Outer Baduy: Preserving Handwoven Textiles Through a Narrative Photo Story Perspective*," grouped under the contextual title "*The Surrounding Environment of Baduy Village*." The images are arranged as a dyptich, as they both depict the location and function as interrelated landscape photographs that support one another visually and contextually.

Photo A, titled "*The Iconic Baduy Gateway*," features the welcome monument marking the entrance to the Baduy area. This image represents the "opening" element in the nine elements of visual storytelling, signifying the beginning of the story and the point where the narrative journey starts. The composition follows the rule of thirds, aiming to position elements within the frame harmoniously. The photo was taken using a low-angle shot to emphasize the height and grandeur of the monument. Captured at 1:00 PM, the photo utilizes a long shot format, positioning the camera at a significant distance from the main subject to establish its relation to the surroundings.

Photo B, titled "*Outer Baduy Bamboo Bridge*," shows one of the access bridges located within the Outer Baduy area. This image applies the "establishing" element from the nine storytelling components, providing context and orientation regarding the location. The composition again follows the rule of thirds, placing the main subject on the right side of the frame to emphasize the leading lines created by the bridge, while still revealing silhouettes of traditional Baduy houses in the background. Captured at 7:00 AM, this eye-level shot takes advantage of filtered morning light streaming through the trees. The framing uses a medium shot to position the camera relatively close to the main subject, enhancing its presence within the scene.

In the post-processing stage of both photos, the author adjusted shadow exposure, warmed the overall tone, and removed distracting elements, such as power cables obstructing the view of the monument.

2. Lighting Diagram

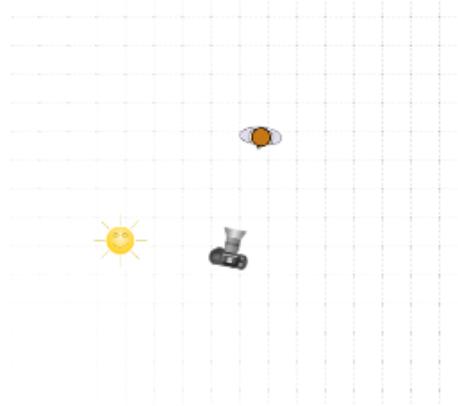


Figure 3. Lighting Diagram Photo A (Source:Personal Documentation)

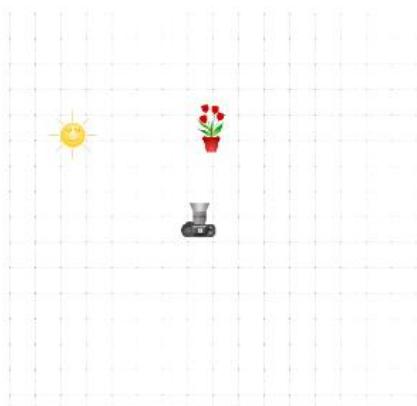


Figure 4. Lighting Diagram Photo B (Source:Personal Documentation)

3. Cultural Preservation Activities



Figure 5. Mr. Jamal's Family (Source:Personal Documentation)

These photographs are arranged using the triptych composition technique, based on the narrative that focuses on the family and their home elements that remain visually and thematically connected.

Photo A, titled "*Portrait of Pak Jamal's Family*", features members of Pak Jamal's household: Pak Jamal, Ibu Arsih, Sanadi, and Janah. The visual storytelling element used in this photo is portrait, which highlights the individuals being represented in the story. The composition applies a centered layout, aiming to create a more formal pose. Captured using an eye-level angle at 11:00 AM, the image uses a close-up format, placing the camera close to the subjects to emphasize their expressions and presence. A major challenge during this shoot was gathering all family members in the same place and at the same time, as the village was holding a wedding ceremony, which kept each family member occupied with different responsibilities.

Photo B, titled "*The Porch Where Tradition Is Rooted*", shows the traditional Baduy house that serves as the residence of Pak Jamal's family. The element used here is establishing, which presents the location and its surroundings. The composition is centered, placing the main subject in the middle of the frame. Taken at 10:00 AM, the photo uses an eye-level angle and a medium shot, capturing the house from a distance that is neither too close nor too far, effectively contextualizing the space.

Photo C, titled "*Gallery of Memories*", also portrays the residence of Pak Jamal's family. However, this image focuses more on the details of the front porch, where several family photographs are displayed. The photo continues to use the establishing element, with a centered composition that places the subject in the middle of the frame to draw attention to the family photos hanging on the wall. Captured at 10:30 AM using an eye-level angle and close-up format, this image brings the viewer closer to the visual symbols of memory and heritage. The main challenge in capturing this photo was the lighting, as the sunlight was coming from behind the house, making exposure control difficult. To overcome this, the author increased the ISO setting and enhanced the image further during post-processing.

In the editing phase for all three photographs, the author adjusted the lighting and shadows, and enhanced the overall tone to create a slightly warmer atmosphere.

4. Cultural Preservation Activities



Figure 6. Cultural Preservation Activities (Source: Personal Documentation)

These photographs are arranged using the polyptych composition technique, chosen for its ability to present multiple interconnected efforts of cultural preservation that support one another within a cohesive narrative.

Photo A, titled “*Antih*”, depicts Janah and her aunt, Ibu Kuyun, as they wind yarn together using a traditional thread-winding tool called *antih*, from which the photo takes its name. The visual storytelling element used in this photo is interaction, illustrating individuals engaging in daily social and familial life alongside cultural practice. This scene reflects a key preservation effort intergenerational knowledge transfer. The composition is centered, to maintain focus on the main subject: the activity being performed. Captured at 10:30 AM, the photo uses an eye-level angle and a close-up format, positioning the viewer near the subject to emphasize intimacy and connection.

Photo B, titled “*Traditional Guidance by Adult Women*”, shows Janah attentively observing her aunt weaving. The photo again uses the interaction element to highlight the involvement of young individuals in cultural learning environments facilitated by family members. This learning process represents an active form of preservation, fueled by the child's own curiosity. The centered composition places the main subject in the middle of the frame to deliver the narrative clearly. The image was captured at 9:30 AM, using an eye-level angle and a close-up format to capture Janah's focused expression.

Photo C, titled “*Perseverance in Learning*”, features Janah practicing the weaving technique under her aunt's supervision. The visual storytelling element here is action, portraying Janah as the central subject engaging in the actual weaving process a vital act of cultural preservation. This demonstrates how family plays an essential role in transmitting traditional knowledge to younger generations, particularly in the face of modernization that threatens cultural curiosity. The rule of thirds composition places the main subject on the left side of the frame, allowing the activity itself to be fully visible. Captured at 10:20 AM from an eye-level angle, the photo uses a close-up format to highlight the concentration and effort involved in the process.

Photo D, titled “*Threaded Details*”, presents a close-up of Ibu Kuyun's hands meticulously aligning the threads on the loom. The storytelling element used is detail, which focuses on a specific moment in the weaving process arranging the threads to prevent tangling and looseness. The composition is centered, drawing attention to the working hands. Taken from a high angle at 11:00 AM, this close-up shot places the viewer directly above the action, emphasizing the craftsmanship and precision involved.

In the editing process of all four photographs, the author adjusted lighting and shadows, and enhanced the overall tone to create a slightly warmer atmosphere.

5. Cultural Preservation Activities



Figure 7. Cultural Preservation Activities (Source: Personal Documentation)

Photo A, titled “*Cloth and Hope on Bamboo Floor*,” features Sanadi photographing woven textiles that are ready to be marketed on social media. The visual storytelling element used here is signature, representing a key moment in the narrative of preserving traditional weaving its marketing. Sanadi carries out the same task as Pak Jamal, focusing on the promotion and sale of woven products through digital platforms. Besides aiming to support the family’s economy, this activity also serves as a tangible form of cultural preservation connecting the Baduy community with the outside world. The composition follows the rule of thirds, and the photo was taken from an eye-level angle at 11:00 AM. It uses a medium shot format, placing the subject at a moderate distance to balance context and clarity.

Photo B, titled “*Digitizing Heritage Through a Phone*,” presents a detailed perspective of Sanadi photographing the woven fabric, ready to be promoted online. The storytelling element applied in this photo is detail, focusing specifically on the activity capturing the moment on the phone screen. The composition also follows the rule of thirds, with a high-angle shot used to reveal the process from above. Captured at 11:20 AM, the photo uses a close-up format to bring the viewer closer to the subject and highlight the interaction between traditional craft and modern technology.

During the editing stage of both images, the author adjusted lighting and shadow, and enhanced the overall tone to create a slightly warmer atmosphere.

6. A Small Step To Escort The Observer Home



Figure 8. Small Steps to Escort the Observer Home (Source: Personal Documentation)

The photograph titled “*Small Steps Escorting the Observer Home*” serves as the final and only single image concluding the project “*Cultural Exploration of Outer Baduy: Preserving the Woven Fabric through a Narrative Photo Story Perspective*.” This image captures Janah walking toward the path leading out of Baduy. The photograph was taken in the late morning at approximately 11:30 AM.

The narrative photo story element applied in this image is closer, which signifies the closing frame of the story. The walking pose facing forward, with Janah’s back turned toward the photographer, symbolizes departure from the village. The composition employed follows the rule of thirds, providing visual balance and focus.

The angle used in this photograph is eye level, allowing viewers to perceive the image in a natural and equal perspective. In the editing stage, the author only adjusted the brightness and contrast, and slightly warmed the overall tone.

CONCLUSION

Through a narrative photo story approach and the Practice-Based Research method, the author successfully documented the cultural preservation process of woven fabric among the Outer Baduy community, particularly the family of Pak Jamal in Kanekes Village. The traditional weaving activity, passed down through generations, holds not only economic value but also reflects the enduring strength of tradition amidst modernization. The use of photographic techniques such as available light, narrative composition, and the exploration of the nine elements of photo storytelling enhances the visual narrative with both informative and emotional depth. Direct observation, interviews, and in-depth documentation allowed the author to gain insights into local customs, social structures, and

the active involvement of Pak Jamal's family in preserving cultural heritage.

This project demonstrates that the narrative photo story approach is effective in representing the efforts to preserve the woven fabric tradition of the Outer Baduy community. Through journalistic photography practice and direct field engagement, this work conveys cultural values, the process of heritage transmission, and the community's adaptation to modern influences. The documentation is expected to serve as a reference in visual cultural studies and as an educational medium for the broader public.

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