



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	Traditional Custodianship and Adat in Tourism: A case of Baduy Community, Indonesia
Author(s)	TUTI ELFRIDA
Degree Grantor	北海道大学
Degree Name	博士(観光学)
Dissertation Number	甲第17012号
Issue Date	2026-06-30
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/doctoral.k17012
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/100065
Type	doctoral thesis
File Information	TUTI_ELFRIDA.pdf, 全文



Traditional Custodianship and *Adat* in Tourism: A Case of Baduy Community, Indonesia

観光における伝統的カストディアンシップとアダット：インドネシアのバドゥイ・
コミュニティを事例として

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Hokkaido University
Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and
Tourism Studies

February 2026

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Foreword

This dissertation represents more than the completion of a doctoral degree. It reflects a sustained process of learning about research, responsibility, and humility in the production of knowledge. Doing a PhD taught me that learning is not only about gaining expertise, but also about rethinking and sometimes unlearning my own assumptions. In studying *adat*-based custodianship and indigenous engagements with tourism, I was continually reminded that knowledge is never neutral, and that understanding requires patience, relational accountability, and respect for boundaries. The research journey unfolded not only in labs, libraries, and field sites but in moments of uncertainty, revision, dialogue, and self-reflection.

Learning during this PhD was not linear. It involved grappling with theory, refining arguments, accepting critique, and recognizing the limits of what could be known. It required acknowledging that research in *adat*-governed contexts is shaped by ethical and epistemic boundaries that demand humility rather than mastery. In this sense, the process mirrored the themes of the dissertation: responsibility, restraint, and attentiveness to relationships. Beyond academic growth, this journey has also been deeply personal. Researching while navigating family life, distance from home, and the demands of scholarly rigor has reshaped my understanding of resilience and care. I have come to see learning as a collective endeavor, sustained by supervisors, peers, family, and community, rather than an individual accomplishment.

If this dissertation contributes to ongoing conversations about indigenous tourism, traditional custodianship, and *adat* governance, it does so because of the many relationships that made its production possible. The PhD journey has taught me that scholarship is not only about advancing knowledge, but about cultivating responsibility in how that knowledge is sought, interpreted, and shared. This work is therefore offered not as a final statement, but as part of a continuing process of learning.

Acknowledgment

As this dissertation is the outcome of a long journey of learning, it would not have been possible without the guidance, patience, and generosity of many people who accompanied me along the way. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Mayumi Okada Sensei, whose guidance, insight, and intellectual generosity shaped this research in profound ways. Her commitment to rigor and clarity continually challenged me to think more carefully, write more precisely, and situate my work with confidence. I am deeply grateful for her trust, support, and encouragement throughout this journey. I am also sincerely thankful to my co-supervisors, Johan Richard Edelman Sensei and Akiko Tashiro Sensei, for their thoughtful feedback, constructive critique, and scholarly mentorship. Their perspectives broadened my analytical lens and strengthened the theoretical and methodological foundations of this dissertation. I am especially grateful for their encouragement at key moments when the research required renewed clarity and direction.

My appreciation extends to my lab mates in S107, whose conversations, laughter, shared struggles, and constant support made the long hours of research and writing much less lonely. The informal discussions, shared meals, and encouragement we gave one another created a meaningful space for learning and growth beyond formal supervision. I would also like to thank the members of *PPIH (Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia Hokkaido)* for providing a sense of community and belonging far from home. Their companionship, cultural familiarity, and mutual support sustained me emotionally and reminded me of the importance of solidarity in academic journeys abroad.

My deepest gratitude belongs to my family. To my beloved husband, Samsul Maarif, thank you for your unwavering support, patience, and belief in me. Your encouragement carried me through moments of doubt and exhaustion, and your partnership made it possible for me to pursue this path fully. To my dear children, Elnadjata Maarif and Aslandariel Maarif, your presence reminded me daily of why learning matters and for whom I strive to build a better future. Your patience during my absences is a gift I will always cherish. I am equally grateful to my extended family for all their prayers, encouragement, and understanding throughout these years.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Center for Higher Education Financing and Assessment (*PPAPT*) of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (*Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi, Sains, dan Teknologi*) for the financial support that made this doctoral journey possible. Finally, I acknowledge with deep respect the Baduy community, whose support and trust made this

research possible. Any insight this dissertation offers is rooted in the knowledge shared with care and responsibility. This work stands as a collective achievement shaped by many hands, heads, and hearts.

In the preparation of this dissertation, AI-based language tools were used selectively to support the refinement of grammar, clarity, and overall readability of the text. Their use was limited to linguistic enhancement and did not contribute to the generation of original ideas, data analysis, or substantive interpretation. All arguments and analyses presented in this study are my own. The use of such tools was intended to ensure that the research is communicated clearly and effectively, particularly in the context of writing in a second language.

Abstract

This dissertation examines how tourism is negotiated, regulated, and evaluated within an *adat*-governed community, focusing on the Baduy of Kanekes, Indonesia. Rather than approaching tourism primarily as an economic sector or development intervention, the study investigates how traditional custodianship and *adat*-based governance shape, and are simultaneously tested, by increasing tourism presence. It asks how custodial responsibilities, territorial authority, and moral-cosmological obligations structure engagement with tourism, and how indigenous knowledge informs the regulation of tourism encounters.

Adopting a qualitative approach, the research is based on fieldwork in Kanekes, incorporating participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and sustained engagement with community members and customary authorities. Through reflexive thematic analysis, the study traces the historical emergence and expansion of tourism in Baduy territory and examines how *adat* institutions and everyday custodial practices respond to these encounters. The research was conducted within community-defined boundaries, recognising that access to knowledge, sacred spaces, and ritual life is governed by relational protocols. In this sense, research itself was undertaken as a negotiated practice within an *adat*-based custodial framework.

The findings demonstrate that tourism in Kanekes is understood primarily as a moral and relational encounter embedded within obligations to land, ancestors, and future generations. *Adat* operates not merely as cultural heritage but as an integrated normative order that shapes how actions are evaluated and regulated. Tourism is therefore subject to indigenous-defined limits of acceptability. Rather than framing participation in terms of growth or visibility, the Baduy approach centres on balance, responsibility, and continuity. Theoretically, the study contributes to scholarship on *adat*-based tourism by conceptualising traditional custodianship as a governing framework that integrates moral, territorial, and epistemic dimensions. By foregrounding governance rather than representation or commodification, the dissertation clarifies how tourism engagement in Kanekes differs from broader categories such as indigenous, ethnic, or cultural tourism.

Methodologically, the research reflects on conducting inquiry within sacred and *adat*-governed contexts, illustrating how knowledge production is shaped by relational access, ethical boundaries, and community-defined thresholds of disclosure. These constraints are treated not as limitations, but as constitutive features of the epistemic environment in which

the study was undertaken. Practically, the findings suggest that engagement with tourism in *adat* territories requires recognition of existing governance systems rather than reliance on externally defined development frameworks. The study highlights the importance of approaching tourism policy and planning with sensitivity to indigenous authority and custodial ethics. Ultimately, this dissertation argues that tourism in the Baduy community is structured through *adat*-based custodianship. By centring responsibility, balance, and intergenerational accountability, the study demonstrates how indigenous governance continues to shape the conditions under which tourism can occur.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by outlining the background and context that frame the research, particularly the increasing intersection between tourism and indigenous governance. It then presents the research aims and questions that guide the inquiry into how traditional custodianship and *adat* shape tourism engagement in the Baduy context. The significance of the study is subsequently discussed, highlighting its contribution to tourism scholarship and broader debates on indigenous governance and knowledge systems. The chapter concludes by presenting the overall structure of the dissertation, providing a roadmap of the chapters that follow.

1.1. Background of Study

The global expansion of tourism into indigenous territories has accelerated, reshaping local landscapes, livelihoods, and cultural dynamics. As mobility increases and tourists seek authentic, place-based experiences, indigenous lands have become notable destinations within national and international tourism circuits (Vandermale & Mason, 2024; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2016). This expansion is not merely a matter of increased visitation. Still, it reflects broader structural forces, including the increasing valuation of heritage, market demand for cultural distinctiveness, and state-led development agendas, that position indigenous territories as valuable assets for tourism (Dam et al., 2025).

As tourism expands into indigenous territories, it is often framed as an economic opportunity, yet it simultaneously places significant pressure on indigenous governance systems, cultural obligations, and environmental ethics (Alamineh et al., 2023). Tourism becomes a site where external market expectations intersect with, and often challenge, long-standing moral obligations, ancestral norms, and relationships with land, requiring communities to navigate disruptions to customary authority and social order (Leleto, 2019; Macleod, 2004). The presence of visitors and the commodification of cultural expressions frequently generate tensions between livelihood pursuits and the maintenance of cultural integrity, spiritual responsibilities, and ecological balance (Cole, 2008; Pemunta et al., 2019). Within these dynamics, indigenous communities must continually negotiate what forms of cultural knowledge can be shared, what must remain protected, and how identities are represented or strategically withheld, in response to external pressures for access, visibility, and participation (Banda et al., 2024; Swardhana & Jenvitchuwong, 2023).

Such dynamics intensify ongoing debates around authority, identity, custodianship, and self-determination, making tourism not merely an economic activity but a deeply cultural and political arena. Since tourism enters spaces where indigenous knowledge and custodial practices have long governed human-environment relations, it often produces friction between external, market-driven expectations and locally grounded moral-ecological principles (Marcinek & Hunt, 2019). These accumulating pressures underscore the need to examine how indigenous peoples negotiate the promises alongside the disruptions of the tourism sectors, especially in contexts where cultural survival and land-based sovereignty remain central to community well-being and collective identity (Dudgeon et al., 2024; Poirier & Neufeld, 2023).

While global scholarship often approaches indigenous peoples through frameworks emphasizing colonial displacement, cultural revival, and assertions of sovereignty (Beckman et al., 2022; Wolfe, 2006), the Indonesian context diverges in important ways. The category *masyarakat adat* (*adat* communities) does not uniformly correspond to international definitions of indigenous peoples. Instead, *adat* communities in Indonesia vary widely in how they conceptualize authority, territory, identity, social norms, and belief systems (Li, 2000; Tyson, 2010). In some regions, *adat* denotes indigenous identity and cultural heritage (Adams, 2020). In others, it functions as a localized legal system (Utama, 2021), a religious-cosmological order (Osawa, 2022), a moral framework, or a mode of governance (Trialfhianty et al., 2025). This uneven conceptualization means that not all who identify as *adat* necessarily fit global indigenous terminologies, and not all indigenous communities in Indonesia articulate their identity primarily through the term of *adat*.

Because of this complexity, *adat* is most accurately understood as a living, situated normative order (Bedner & Arizona, 2019; Priambodo, 2018), sometimes overlapping with indigenous identities, but never fully reducible to them. It encompasses locally grounded systems of authority, ecological ethics, ritual obligations, cosmological interpretations, and normative frameworks that structure everyday life (Acciaioli, 2007; Imamulhadi et al., 2025). Rather than a fixed tradition, *adat* operates as a moral, legal, and cosmological framework through which many communities interpret social change, negotiate external pressures, and sustain relationships with ancestral landscapes (Henley & Davidson, 2008; Von Benda-Beckmann & Von Benda-Beckmann, 2011).

Recognizing this nuance is essential for studying tourism involving *adat* in Indonesia, because global indigenous categories cannot be applied straightforwardly without attention to

adat's distinct moral, epistemological, and institutional foundations. This perspective aligns with scholarship urging that *adat* be approached as a dynamic, context-dependent system rather than a homogeneous cultural essence (Li, 2000). In regions where tourism expands into customary territories, *adat* provides the normative criteria through which communities assess risks and opportunities, determine acceptable forms of engagement, and define what must remain protected from commodification or disturbance (Cole, 2007; Sudrajat, 2021). The centrality of *adat* in mediating human-environment relations, therefore, makes Indonesia a critical site for examining how communities draw on customary authority to navigate the complexities introduced by tourism.

The Baduy, located in Kanekes village, Banten, in the west of Java Island, represent one of Indonesia's *adat* communities and are widely recognized for their distinctive socio-cultural system grounded in *adat*, a holistic moral, ecological, and cosmological order that regulates all aspects of life (Sujana, 2020). The community is internally divided into the Inner Baduy and Outer Baduy, a territorial distinction that reflects varying degrees of ritual responsibility, mobility restrictions, and engagement with outsiders (Alfira & Uekita, 2023). Their core values emphasize simplicity, self-sufficiency, harmony with nature, and strict adherence to ancestral teachings (*pikukuh* in local terms) (Halmahera et al., 2020; Sujana, 2020). Livelihoods are primarily centered on subsistence swidden agriculture, forest stewardship, and the maintenance of ecological balance, with land understood not merely as an economic asset but as a sacred entity entrusted to them.

Baduy's identity is inseparable from their territorial domain of *tanah ulayat* (customary communal land), which is maintained through a system of traditional custodianship rooted in ancestral teachings (Suryani, 2021). This custodianship shapes how the Baduy engage with the outside world, including tourists, and underpins the community's longstanding commitment to safeguarding spiritual balance, environmental integrity, and social order. Unlike indigenous groups, whose engagements with tourism are often mediated through state-led or commercial structures (Widaningrum et al., 2025), the Baduy navigate tourism through an internally governed system that places *adat*, not market incentives, at the center of decision-making. This makes the Baduy a particularly significant case for examining how indigenous knowledge and custodial ethics shape responses to tourism in contemporary contexts.

The Baduy have increasingly become the focus of tourism interest due to their reputation for maintaining customary lifeways, ecological harmony, and cultural distinctiveness (Suryani,

2021; van Zanten, 2021). Over the past three decades, growing numbers of domestic and international visitors seeking cultural authenticity, natural landscapes, and spiritual experiences have entered Baduy territory, particularly in the Outer Baduy areas, where access is more flexible than in the Inner Baduy. This expanding tourism presence introduces a complex mix of pressures and opportunities. While tourism offers potential economic benefits, including income diversification and opportunities for external engagement that may support household resilience, it also heightens the risk of disruption to sacred spaces, cultural boundaries, and moral and ecological commitments central to *adat* life (Herandy, 2022; Pradana et al., 2025; Prasetyo et al., 2021). Uneven visitor behavior, inconsistent regulatory oversight, and internal community debates further intensify these tensions, requiring the Baduy to continually negotiate how tourism intersects with their values, custodial responsibilities, and territorial integrity. In this context, the growth of tourism represents a critical moment in which *adat* authority and cultural continuity are repeatedly tested and renegotiated.

Despite the growing presence of tourism, the Baduy do not approach it passively. Rather, tourism is shaped, negotiated, and governed through *adat*-informed custodianship, including the implementation of *Saba Budaya* Baduy (Praptika et al., 2024). Community leaders and institutional structures assert moral and spatial boundaries that determine where visitors may enter, what activities are permitted, and how interactions unfold. Tourism is thus filtered through a framework that prioritizes the protection of sacred order, ecological balance, and collective well-being. This custodianship does not simply restrict tourism. It also enables certain forms of controlled engagement that align with Baduy values, while redirecting or prohibiting practices that risk undermining *adat* authority (Waluya et al., 2021). In this way, tourism becomes a domain in which the Baduy exercise agency, reaffirm their knowledge system, and sustain their cultural sovereignty amid external pressures.

Existing scholarship on Baduy tourism has grown in recent decades, yet very few studies place traditional custodianship and *adat* governance at the center of their analytical lens. Much of the literature has examined issues such as cultural representation, tourist perceptions and experiences, local livelihood changes, and economic opportunities arising from tourism. While these works offer valuable insights, they often overlook the deeper moral obligations, value-laden practices of custodianship, and forms of authority that underpin Baduy social life and shape how the community encounters visitors. What remains largely unexamined is how *adat* is actively enacted, negotiated, and transformed through tourism, including the ways Baduy actors assert, reinterpret, or strategically adjust their custodial roles in response to external

pressures. This gap underscores the need for a study that foregrounds *adat*-based custodianship as a key framework for understanding the dynamics of tourism in Baduy.

1.2. Research Aims and Research Questions

This research aims to examine how traditional custodianship and *adat* governance shape, and are simultaneously challenged by, the growing presence of tourism in the Baduy village of Kanekes. It investigates how tourism interacts with the Baduy community's *adat*-based systems of authority, moral order, and territorial regulation, and how the Baduy mobilize their indigenous knowledge and worldview, encompassing ecological custodianship, spiritual obligations, and sociocultural norms, to maintain continuity amid external pressures. Specifically, the study traces the historical development and expansion of tourism in Kanekes, analyzes its implications for *adat* institutions and everyday custodial practices, and explores the strategies through which the Baduy regulate visitor behavior to preserve the integrity of their cultural and territorial order. By locating these dynamics within the broader framework of *adat*-based custodianship, the research highlights the durability, adaptability, and epistemological depth of indigenous knowledge in guiding governance, social regulation, and cultural persistence. Through both individual and collective perspectives, this study provides empirically grounded insights that can support scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in better understanding indigenous-led and *adat*-informed approaches to engaging with tourism.

The following research questions guide this comprehensive inquiry:

1. How are the traditional custodianship practices of the Baduy community influenced and challenged by the increase in tourism activities?
2. In what ways does the Baduy community adapt to, negotiate, or resist tourism while sustaining their *adat*-based governance and cultural practices?
3. Why does the Baduy community continue to prioritize traditional custodianship practices in the face of tourism pressures and opportunities?
4. How do the Baduy community's indigenous knowledge and *adat* principles shape their engagement with tourism and the regulation of visitor interactions?

Taken together, these questions guide the study in examining the complex relationship between *adat*-based custodianship and tourism in the Baduy community. They clarify how traditional governance, *adat*-based values and principles, and territorial ethics shape the community's responses to tourism and the strategies used to regulate visitor presence. By analyzing these interactions, the research demonstrates how *adat* operates as a dynamic and

resilient mode of custodianship in the face of external pressures. More broadly, the study contributes to a deeper conceptual understanding of *adat*-based tourism in Indonesia, distinguishing it from broader international categories such as indigenous, ethnic, or cultural tourism.

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study makes theoretical, empirical, methodological, and practical contributions to the understanding of *adat*-based custodianship and indigenous engagements with tourism in Indonesia. Theoretically, it advances scholarship by foregrounding *adat* not merely as cultural tradition but as a living system of governance, ethics, and knowledge that shapes how indigenous communities respond to external pressures. While global debates on indigenous tourism often emphasize colonial displacement, cultural commodification, and economic participation, these frameworks do not fully capture contexts like Indonesia, where communities such as the Baduy continue to sustain long-standing *adat* systems while navigating state regulation, modernization, and growing tourism interest. By positioning *adat* as an axiological, ontological, and epistemological framework, this study reframes indigenous tourism as a field structured by custodial authority, cosmological obligations, and locally defined boundaries, rather than by external categories of cultural display or economic development.

This theoretical framing challenges dominant approaches rooted in Western community-based tourism models and universal sustainability narratives. Such models tend to conceptualize tourism as a tool for empowerment or resource management, often abstracted from the spiritual, relational, and place-based ethics that guide indigenous life. In contrast, this study proposes an *adat*-centered perspective that recognizes indigenous governance as a dynamic system in which moral authority, ecological custodianship, and ancestral obligations determine the terms of tourism engagement. Through this conceptual integration, the research bridges global discussions on indigenous self-determination with Indonesian scholarship on *adat* as a living normative order, thereby contributing an Indonesian *adat*-grounded perspective to the broader field of indigenous tourism studies.

Empirically, this study provides one of the few detailed, qualitative examinations of tourism in the Baduy community through the lens of *adat* and traditional custodianship. It traces the development of tourism in Kanekes across multiple phases, highlighting how the Baduy have asserted control over access, movement, and visitor behavior through *adat* structures. The

findings illustrate how *adat* institutions, ancestral teachings (*pikukuh*), and ritual obligations regulate tourism in everyday practice, determining what can be shared, what must remain protected, and how external presence is interpreted within existing moral and ecological frameworks. By documenting how tourism becomes embedded within the Baduy's custodial responsibilities, the study demonstrates that tourism is not only an economic encounter, but a site of moral negotiation, cultural continuity, and boundary-making shaped by *adat*-based norms, values, and custodial obligations.

Methodologically, this research contributes to the practice of conducting fieldwork in indigenous and *adat*-governed contexts. It adopts an approach attentive to relational ethics, cultural protocols, and community-defined boundaries, showing how academic inquiry can be aligned with indigenous worldviews. By adhering to *adat*-based norms of conduct, particularly regarding sacred spaces, movement restrictions, and interactions with traditional authorities, the study demonstrates the importance of ethical responsiveness and positionality when conducting research in a sacred landscape. While employing standard qualitative methods such as participant observation, interviews, and extended immersion, the methodological contribution lies in showing how research itself becomes a form of negotiation with *adat* systems, requiring humility, reflexivity, and respect for local moral obligations.

Practically, the study offers insights for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and scholars working in indigenous contexts. It highlights how *adat*-based custodianship functions as a governance framework that regulates tourism behavior and protects cultural and ecological integrity. For policymakers, the findings underscore the need to recognize *adat* authority not as symbolic heritage but as an active regulatory system that must be integrated into tourism policies and district-level planning. For tourism practitioners, the study provides guidance on ethical engagement that respects *adat* boundaries, local sensibilities, and the community's custodial responsibilities. For scholars and institutions, it offers a model for researching in sacred and *adat*-regulated environments, emphasizing relational ethics, cultural sensitivity, and the importance of grounding knowledge production in indigenous epistemologies.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured into nine chapters, each of which is analytically interconnected, collectively developing an analysis of traditional custodianship and *adat*-based engagements with tourism in the Baduy community. Chapter 1 introduces the broader context of tourism's expansion into indigenous territories and situates Indonesia, particularly the Baduy,

within this landscape. It outlines the research aims and questions, framing the study around how *adat* principles, indigenous knowledge, and traditional custodianship shape the community's responses to tourism pressures. The chapter also establishes the significance of the research, highlighting its conceptual, empirical, methodological, and practical contributions to understanding *adat* governance in tourism and the centrality of indigenous custodial ethics in shaping community-visitor relations in Indonesia.

Chapter 2 presents a critical review of relevant literature and is structured into two main parts. The first part focuses on traditional custodianship, examining its relationship with community and modern heritage management systems, as well as its engagement with tourism. This includes a discussion on the conceptual foundations of traditional custodianship, its role within community life, and how it intersects with contemporary tourism practices. The second part addresses *adat* and *masyarakat adat* in Indonesia, exploring the conceptualization of *adat*, its socio-cultural, spiritual, and political dimensions, and the ways tourism interacts with *adat* and *adat* communities. Together, these sections provide a foundational understanding of key concepts and theoretical perspectives that will guide the subsequent analysis of the Baduy case.

Chapter 3 lays the theoretical groundwork of this dissertation by examining the interconnected concepts that underpin traditional custodianship and *adat*-based governance in the Baduy context. It begins by conceptualizing traditional custodianship as a form of moral order and relational responsibility that shapes how communities regulate territory, authority, and human-environment relations. The chapter then turns to indigenous knowledge, defining its epistemological foundations and highlighting its role as a relational, ethical, situated, and responsibility-oriented system guiding everyday decision-making. Building on these perspectives, the chapter discusses *adat* as a localized governance system, emphasizing its integration of authority, knowledge, and morality in structuring social, spiritual, and ecological life. The fourth section synthesizes these three domains: traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, and *adat*, showing how they operate not as separate elements but as a mutually reinforcing governance system. Finally, the chapter introduces an integrated analytical lens for understanding *adat*-informed tourism engagement, outlining how these conceptual foundations help interpret the ways communities negotiate, regulate, and respond to tourism. Collectively, the chapter provides the theoretical lens for analyzing the empirical dynamics presented in the subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology, adopting a constructivist paradigm that acknowledges multiple realities and lived experiences within the Baduy community. The study employs a case study approach, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and secondary data collection to capture the complexities of traditional custodianship and tourism interactions. Reflexive thematic analysis is used to analyze the data, ensuring that the interpretations remain sensitive to the community's perspectives. This chapter also reflects on ethical considerations, the researcher's positionality in conducting fieldwork, limitations, and trustworthiness.

Chapter 5 develops the contextual grounding of this dissertation by situating the Baduy within the wider Indonesian *adat* landscape and examining how their indigenous knowledge, values, or worldview are lived and sustained. This chapter centers on the internal logic of Baduy *adat* and the ways it structures social life, moral practice, and collective governance. The six sections explore key dimensions of Baduy lifeworld, including ancestral continuity, spiritual ecology, embodied ethics, traditional custodianship, spatial boundary-making, and ongoing negotiations of recognition and epistemic sovereignty. Together, these discussions provide the conceptual and ethnographic foundation necessary for understanding how *adat*, indigenous knowledge, and traditional custodianship interrelate in the Baduy context. This grounding is essential for interpreting the dynamics examined in the subsequent chapters, particularly the community's varied responses to tourism.

Chapter 6 traces the development of tourism in the Baduy region and examines how changing patterns of visitation have intersected with the community's *adat*-based ways of life across different historical moments. The chapter moves chronologically, beginning with the pre-tourism period and the community's early, incidental encounters with outsiders, followed by the gradual emergence of tourism interest during the 1990s and 2000s. It then explores the expansion of tourism in the 2000s-2010s, when visitor numbers increased, and various forms of community involvement began to take shape. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the current phase of adaptation, resistance, and reorientation, highlighting how the Baduy negotiate tourism pressures while upholding the moral, ecological, and custodial responsibilities embedded in *adat*. Together, these trajectories provide a historical baseline for understanding contemporary tourism engagement and its implications for traditional custodianship in the following analytical chapters.

Chapter 7 presents the core empirical findings of the study, examining how *adat* and traditional custodianship are enacted, negotiated, and sometimes strained within the evolving tourism landscape of the Baduy. The first section analyzes the multidimensional impacts of tourism on the community, showing how tourism can simultaneously serve as a resource that supports *adat* continuity and collective resilience, while also generating disruptions to moral order, everyday practices, and indigenous lifeways. The second section explores the *adat*-governed responses that emerge from these tensions, tracing a spectrum of strategies ranging from adaptive pathways that sustain continuity through change, to protective measures aimed at guarding the sacred order, to negotiated forms of controlled engagement, and finally to the more uncertain loosening of boundaries that risk unsettling *adat* integrity. Together, these insights offer a grounded understanding of how the Baduy exercises custodial responsibility in real time and under shifting pressures, forming the empirical basis for the deeper analytical synthesis developed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 presents the core discussion of the dissertation under the title Reframing Tourism through *Adat*: Custodianship and Axio-onto-epistemic Authority. This chapter synthesizes the empirical findings, research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework through four main sections. First, it examines how traditional custodianship is reconfigured under tourism pressure, conceptualizing custodianship as an integrated axio-onto-epistemic system and analyzing how tourism acts as a catalyst for contestation while simultaneously enabling forms of indigenous agency. Second, it turns to *adat*-based governance in practice, demonstrating how adaptation, negotiation, resistance, codes of conduct, and selective engagement function as mechanisms through which tourism is regulated without assimilation into external market logics. Third, it explores the axiological foundations of traditional custodianship, explaining why *adat* takes precedence over tourism through intergenerational accountability and a hierarchy of values that prioritizes custodial ethics over economic rationality. Finally, it advances the conceptual argument by framing *adat*-based tourism as a model of engagement structured through axio-onto-epistemic authority, and by distinguishing it from broader categories such as indigenous, ethnic, or cultural tourism. Together, these sections articulate how tourism in Kanekes is reframed through *adat* as a governing moral, ontology, and epistemic order rather than merely an economic activity.

The concluding chapter consolidates the analytical trajectory of the dissertation through five interrelated sections. It begins by revisiting the research questions, drawing together the central findings to demonstrate how each question has been addressed through the empirical

and theoretical discussions. It then turns to revisiting the research objectives, reflecting more broadly on how the study has fulfilled its initial aims concerning traditional custodianship, *adat* governance, indigenous knowledge, and the conceptualization of *adat*-based tourism. The chapter subsequently reengages the contribution of the study by clarifying its theoretical, empirical, and practical significance. This is followed by a section outlining future directions of research, identifying areas that warrant further longitudinal, comparative, and epistemic inquiry. The chapter closes with a reflexive section that reflects on the intellectual and ethical implications of the research journey.

Having outlined the research background, objectives, and questions, this chapter has situated the study within the broader context of increasing tourism engagement in the Baduy community and the centrality of *adat*-based custodianship in shaping these dynamics. The following chapter turns into a critical review of existing literature on traditional custodianship and *adat*. This review provides the broader scholarly context within which this study is positioned by examining how key concepts have been understood, debated, and applied across different settings, while also identifying the conceptual gaps and limitations that remain in existing scholarship.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review engages with a range of interconnected themes, including the concept of traditional custodianship, its relationship with community and modern conservation systems, the interface between traditional custodianship and tourism, and the conceptualization of *adat*, as well as *adat* and tourism engagement in Indonesia. Reviewing previous works regarding these themes provides a critical foundation for identifying key debates, conceptual tensions, and gaps relevant to the studies. It also serves to position the Baduy community and tourism practices within the wider discourse on traditional custodianship and *adat* in Indonesia. By understanding the broader trends and variations in how traditional custodianship and *adat* are enacted and negotiated in tourism contexts, this review supports a more nuanced and grounded analysis of the Baduy case.

2.1. Traditional Custodianship

Custodianship generally refers to a responsibility that extends beyond simply caring for or protecting objects as property (Bendix & Kurzwelly, 2021). It often entails maintaining the safety, security, and proper use of assets under one or collective care, as well as upholding any legal or ethical responsibilities related to their management. However, many scholars also point out that the term ‘traditional custodianship’ may have more specific concepts and definitions. Traditional custodianship can be characterized as the comprehensive body of knowledge, practices, and beliefs regarding the interactions among living beings, including humans, and their environment, which are developed, maintained, and conveyed within a traditional and intergenerational framework (Taylor & Kaplan, 2005). Referred to as the ‘customary system of management’ by Smith & Turk (2013), this practice is a mechanism based on customary law and indigenous knowledge systems, which entails customs, belief systems, traditional knowledge, religious ceremonies, rites, taboos, and community governance structures. It is held to maintain respect for places with cultural and sacred significance for the community (Berkes et al., 2000) and to prevent damage, to conserve, and to ensure the survival of these important assets (Mumma, 2009; Ndoro, 2006), including sacred sites, customary territories, traditional ecological knowledge, and cultural practices.

However, its forms and practices are highly diverse across contexts, shaped by specific cultural, spiritual, and ecological relationships to place (Abungu & Ndoro, 2008; Shen et al., 2012). A common thread in the literature is the emphasis on community-based norms and behavioral controls, such as taboos, access restrictions, and site-care rituals, as mechanisms for

safeguarding sacred or culturally significant places, within their customary territories. In this context, places refer to specific locations, such as ritual spots, springs, ancestral graves, or forest patches, that hold spiritual or cultural meaning, distinct from the broader category of customary land or state-designated heritage sites.

Yet, scholars differ in how they interpret the function of these mechanisms. While some view them primarily as spiritual or custodial responsibilities (Borona, 2014; Jopela, 2010; Khumalo et al., 2018), others stress their role in reinforcing socio-political authority and ecological management (Jopela, 2011; Sanga & Reynolds, 2020). Moreover, while literature often highlights the role of elders and traditional leaders in site management and intergenerational knowledge transfer, less attention is paid to how these roles evolve under modern pressures or contestation within communities themselves. For instance, Smith & Turk (2013) underscore the community's authority in decision-making regarding the conservation of natural and cultural resources. Yet, this view may blur internal power dynamics or marginalize certain voices within that community.

2.2. Traditional Custodianship and Its Tensions with Modern Heritage Management

Previous scholarship literature has consistently emphasized the central role of local communities in traditional custodianship, highlighting that such involvement is not only rooted in the origins of custodial practices but also in their deep interconnection with the social, spiritual, and everyday dimensions of community life (Borona, 2014; Ndoro, 2006). As custodians of values, cosmologies, and traditional knowledge systems, communities perceive heritage sites as more than physical locations. These are understood as living cultural landscapes that sustain collective identity, spiritual meaning, and social continuity. The sacred character of these sites, often associated with ancestral presence, ritual activity, or culturally significant narratives, shapes the norms and responsibilities of safeguarding, including ceremonial obligations, observance of taboos, and the maintenance of oral traditions (Verschuuren et al., 2010). This literature underscores that custodianship is relational and culturally grounded, guided by indigenous epistemologies rather than externally enforced heritage frameworks.

The statement that local people are the proper custodians of sacred and culturally important sites reveals more than a normative assumption. It indicates a necessary reorientation of authority and knowledge within custodial frameworks. Traditional custodianship is not solely about physical preservation but involves the intangible values and worldviews of the living

communities who maintain spiritual and historical ties to those places (Quang et al., 2023), which include spiritual aspects, ancestral relationships, ritual practices, and the embedded meanings (Ndoro, 2006; Verschuuren et al., 2010). Furthermore, the spiritual dimensions of custodianship, such as honoring ancestors or seeking blessings for fertility and prosperity (Abungu & Ndoro, 2008), underscore the non-material values embedded in site protection by the relevant communities. Their internalized and generational knowledge systems justify their position as the main custodians. Additionally, scholars such as Hołuj (2019) and Jopela (2011) rightly highlight that community engagement enhances ownership and strengthens intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Such community-based traditional custodianship is grounded in a relational worldview where land, nature, people, and cosmology are inseparable (Jopela, 2011). Despite traditional custodianship being closely tied to the community, internal dynamics expose the complexities of community relationships with sacred or culturally significant sites. As Jopela (2011) observes that not all individuals within a community perceive themselves as custodians, particularly when sites lack direct familial or ancestral connections. Similarly, Smith & Turk (2013) and Spoon (2010) point out that some community members are unaware of formal management frameworks or find them irrelevant to their everyday lives. These disparities disrupt assumptions of collective identity and uniform responsibility, revealing the contested nature of custodianship within communities themselves.

Research has also extensively documented the erosion of traditional knowledge and a decline in respect for customary practices (Abungu & Githitho, 2012; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). For example, Smith (2006) demonstrates how economic hardship can incentivize overexploitation of natural resources previously protected under customary law, highlighting the direct link between material insecurity and challenges to custodial ethics. Rather than presuming this decline as cultural loss, it must be understood within the broader context of socio-economic transformations and modernization pressures (Smith, 2006). It reveals that traditional custodianship systems, which are often depicted in the literature as cohesive and values-driven frameworks, govern indigenous relationships with sacred sites (Wijesuriya, 2014), tend to overlook internal contestations and generational variations in engagement, which complicate the assumed unity of these systems. It becomes necessary to interrogate how traditional custodianship is distributed, negotiated, and performed.

In addition to the internal complexities, much literature mentions the external challenges to the traditional custodianship, including the imposed modern heritage frameworks that often prioritize material conservation, technical terms, or tourism values. Such frameworks tend to marginalize indigenous and local authority by positioning Western scientific expertise as the standard (Mumma, 2005; Pwiti et al., 2007). Yet, mainstream modern heritage frameworks, such as state or government-led heritage protection, frequently ignore such deep-rooted custodianship to a functional form of local participation, often overlooking the epistemological depth and ontological meanings embedded in these practices.

Frequently framed as objective, scientific, and deeply embedded in legal-bureaucratic structures, formal modern institutions also criticize traditional practices as unscientific, damaging, or antiquated (Jopela, 2010; Pwiti et al., 2007). It adds to the reinforcement of a hierarchical framework in which Western conservation concepts are mainstream and indigenous epistemologies are marginalized (Bwasiri, 2011; Quang et al., 2023). Additionally, state-based heritage management systems, rooted in legal-administrative mechanisms and technical expertise, frequently result in the reclassification of sacred or culturally significant areas as state property (Mumma, 2005). These dynamics, discussed by scholars in the body of literature, not only raise critical questions about the legitimacy of traditional custodianship but also highlight the unequal power relations, with state agencies centralizing the authority to define what constitutes valid and authoritative management expertise. Beyond delegitimizing indigenous agency, this also blurred the pluralism of values and practices that exist within and across local contexts.

Nonetheless, when discussing the modern conservation system, we might be faced with the question of how effective such frameworks are in the context of heritage protection (Zhang et al., 2023). Moreover, state agencies tasked with conservation are frequently under-resourced, suffer from systemic understaffing, and lack sustained engagement with the communities most directly affected by their policies (Jopela, 2011; Mahachi & Kamuhangire, 2008). These structural limitations not only hinder effective implementation but also contribute to the vulnerability and threaten the sustainability of the culturally significant sites. Thus, local community participation together with the entire aspects of the traditional management system remains significant in safeguarding the heritage.

Even if the idea of local participation in formal heritage discourse exists, its recognition often remains rhetorical, where community involvement is promoted, yet inconsistently

institutionalized (Jopela, 2011). Nonetheless, framing communities solely as caretakers rather than as knowledge holders and cultural authorities risks reinforcing a managerial or institutionalized approach to heritage management that marginalizes community knowledge. This evaluative lens raises critical questions about power and legitimacy, about ‘whose knowledge counts’ and ‘who defines appropriate custodianship’. Efforts initially intended to foster inclusive governance should not end up as top-down and expert-driven approaches that exclude non-academic knowledge holders and overlook the experiential dimensions of traditional custodianship (White et al., 2024). This disjuncture underscores the need to critically reassess not only who manages cultural landscapes but also whose knowledge is deemed authoritative in the process.

Calls for hybrid or co-management systems reflect a broader shift from unilateral governance to more dialogic, pluralistic approaches (Abungu & Githitho, 2012; Jopela, 2011). Inclusive collaboration entails more than consultation or symbolic involvement. It requires the redistribution of authority, recognition of indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate and actionable, as well as alignment of conservation goals with the lived values, beliefs, and aspirations of local communities (Smith & Turk, 2013; Xu & Melick, 2007). Rather than viewing local knowledge as supplementary to expert science, it must be understood as central to the ecological, cultural, and spiritual continuity of sites. Scientific insights can offer valuable technical input, but they must be situated alongside and in conversation with community-based understandings of place. More fundamentally, the integration of relevant communities into custodial governance should not be seen merely as the right to participate. It signals the need for a deeper epistemic and institutional transformation. As Jopela (2011) insists that traditional custodianship must be treated not as a supplement to state frameworks but as a foundational pillar of site management.

2.3. Traditional Custodianship and Tourism

The intersection of traditional custodianship and tourism has emerged as a critical area of inquiry, revealing a complex and often contested space where cultural continuity, spiritual practice, and economic interest come together. A substantial body of literature highlights tourism’s potential to support economic development and facilitate intercultural exchange (Ady et al., 2022; Steiner & Reisinger, 2004; Vij et al., 2023). However, when tourism activities expand into areas that hold cultural, ecological, or spiritual significance, including formally designated sacred sites and everyday cultural landscapes and ancestral territories, they

frequently disrupt indigenous knowledge systems and custodial responsibilities rooted in ontological, spiritual, and ecological relations. Numerous scholars have noted how tourism tends to commodify cultural expressions, transforming rituals, symbols, and practices into staged performances adapted to visitor expectations (Shepherd, 2002; Smith & Waterton, 2009; Tuyen, 2023). This trend reflects a broader shift in which sacred meanings are displaced by their economic or aesthetic value, detaching cultural practices from their embeddedness in local cosmologies (Alamineh et al., 2023). Critically, existing research often frames this transformation as a compromise or unintended consequence (Chang et al., 2018; Gumbo, 2024; Richards, 2021), but pays less attention to how custodians themselves negotiate, resist, or reshape such changes.

Beyond symbolic transformation, tourism development also exerts significant material pressures on indigenous landscapes and ecosystems (territories and spaces shaped by cultural and spiritual significance, governed through indigenous knowledge, customary law, and lived relationships with the land). A growing body of literature has documented how sacred and ecologically significant places are increasingly exposed to degradation due to infrastructure expansion, tourist overuse, and environmental disruption, often justified under the discourse of progress and economic development (Almeida et al., 2024; Dudley et al., 2010; Saputro et al., 2024). This trend reflects a broader pattern in which neoliberal tourism models prioritize revenue generation over cultural and ecological integrity. Moreover, centralized governance structures tend to marginalize traditional custodians, as tourism planning and benefit distribution are disproportionately dominated by state and commercial actors (Jaramillo & Hooper, 2019; Jopela, 2011; Quang et al., 2023).

A frequent theme in the literature on tourism and indigenous communities is the marginalization of traditional custodians as passive participants within tourism systems. Rather than being recognized as active agents of cultural and environmental stewardship, indigenous communities are often valued primarily for their symbolic capital, celebrated for their aesthetic or cultural appeal, while excluded from meaningful decision-making processes (Johnston, 2006; Kieyah, 2007; Tuyen, 2023). These dynamics are particularly evident in cases of unregulated or poorly managed tourism, which tend to commodify indigenous territories and practices into consumable experiences for outsiders. This process frequently displaces local authority, disrupts customary governance structures, and contributes to the erosion of communal values and responsibilities (Dudley et al., 2010; Jaramillo & Hooper, 2019; Jopela, 2011). Such patterns reflect a broader critique of tourism as a vehicle that not only produces

economic inequality but also reconfigures power, knowledge, and belonging in places it claims to celebrate. Despite these critiques, limited research has examined how traditional custodianship frameworks are actively negotiated or resisted in response to these pressures. It is deemed necessary to foreground indigenous agency in tourism governance and examine how traditional custodianship practices are reasserted, adapted, or contested in the face of extractive tourism models.

In response to the disruptions posed by tourism, a growing body of literature highlights how indigenous communities have developed culturally grounded strategies to reassert custodial authority and protect the sanctity of sacred sites. These responses frequently involve the enactment of customary laws and culturally specific ethical frameworks that regulate access and behavior within sacred spaces (Abungu & Githitho, 2012; Jopela, 2010; Verschuuren et al., 2021). These protective measures not only prevent physical degradation but also aim to preserve the spiritual and ontological values embedded in the landscape. Scholars have also noted their adaptive qualities, offering structured ways for communities to engage selectively with tourism while maintaining cultural boundaries (Paschen, 2010). Rather than conforming to simplistic binaries of inclusion versus exclusion, these approaches reveal how indigenous custodians negotiate complex dilemmas between safeguarding the cultural and spiritual sacredness of their lifeworld and participating in the tourism economy. However, while these efforts are increasingly acknowledged in the literature (Reddy & Sailesh, 2024; White et al., 2024), there remains limited attention to how such regulatory mechanisms are shaped by broader institutional dynamics or how they interact with state and market forces. It is significant to understand indigenous agency in regulating tourism, especially in contexts where sacredness, legality, and marketability intersect.

Scholars have also emphasized that controlled visitation practices are central to enabling indigenous and local communities to retain agency over the use and governance of their sacred spaces, ensuring that tourism activities align with spiritual and ethical responsibilities rather than undermining them (Githitho, 2003). Through the enforcement of cultural protocols, such as access restrictions, ritual requirements, or guided visits led by community elders, indigenous custodians assert their authority and resist the erosion of sacredness caused by unchecked commercialization. Research also highlights the transformative potential of respectful tourism encounters, which, when grounded in local governance and cultural norms, can foster intercultural understanding and challenge tourists' preconceived notions (McIntosh, 2004; Paschen, 2010). While the literature recognizes the protective function of indigenous protocols,

there remains a gap in understanding how these are actively negotiated and adapted in the face of competing pressures from tourism markets and state policies. Exploring how traditional custodianship frameworks navigate these tensions and articulate context-specific strategies is significant to maintain control over sacred landscapes while engaging with the tourism economy on their own terms.

In conclusion, despite growing recognition of the importance of indigenous custodianship in tourism, significant gaps remain in understanding how traditional custodial responsibilities can be effectively upheld amid expanding tourism pressures. Existing studies highlight the risks of commodification, marginalization, and superficial inclusion of indigenous communities, which often result in the erosion of spiritual and cultural integrity. However, there is limited empirical exploration of how indigenous knowledge, priorities, and governance can be meaningfully centered to foster respectful, reciprocal tourism relationships. The literature calls for a decolonial shift that moves beyond symbolic participation toward empowering indigenous communities to actively define and control tourism engagements. This reorientation requires tourism to function as a reciprocal cultural exchange that supports custodial responsibilities rather than undermining them. Addressing this gap, the present research investigates practical strategies employed by indigenous custodians to assert agency and protect sacred landscapes, offering critical insights into how tourism can be reshaped to sustain both cultural and environmental custodianship.

2.4. Conceptualization of *Adat* in Indonesia

Scholars have conceptualized *adat* in Indonesia through diverse disciplinary lenses and approaches, ranging from its legal institutionalization and political instrumentalization to its cultural, moral, and ecological dimensions (Hauser-Schäublin, 2013; Henley & Davidson, 2008; Tyson, 2010). To elaborate on such diversity, this section revisits the conceptualization of *adat* through Benjamin's (2016) tripartite framework of indigeneity, indigeneity, and indigenism, which captures the layered and often contested meanings of those labelled as indigenous people. This framework moves beyond static or essentialized notions of indigeneity by tracing the historical, epistemological, and political conditions through which indigenous identity emerges and transforms. Situating *adat* within this schema offers an interpretive entry point for understanding not only the ontological relations between people and land but also the shifting forms of recognition, negotiation, and governance in Indonesia's development landscape.

Benjamin (2016) distinguishes between indigeneity, indigeneity, and indigenism as interrelated yet distinct conditions of being and belonging. Indigeneity denotes the unselfconscious, lived relationship between people and ancestral places, a mode of existence embodied through everyday practice rather than discursive identity. It is most visible among tribal communities whose social formations and moral orders remain regulated by customary law and sustained through long-standing ecological and territorial intimacy. In contrast, indigeneity arises as a political and discursive response when such embodied relations come under threat from state regulation, capitalist expansion, or development interventions. It signifies a process of claim-making in which indigenous communities assert rights to land and recognition vis-à-vis state and corporate power. Yet, as Duile (2021) observes, these claims often reproduce the same bureaucratic and legal logics that constrain them. Indigenism, meanwhile, refers to the ideological and institutional mobilization of indigenous identity, ranging from local resistance movements defending customary lands to transnational and national frameworks, such as the United Nations' indigenous rights initiatives or state-centered constructs (Benjamin, 2016; Li, 2010). Together, these concepts illuminate the shifting terrains through which indigenous belonging, governance, and politics are continually negotiated.

In Indonesia, the dynamics of indigeneity, indigeneity, and indigenism intersect in multifaceted and often contested ways, reflecting the archipelago's plural histories of place-making, governance, and identity formation. The concept of *adat* operates across these domains, simultaneously functioning as an embodied moral-ecological order and as a discursive and political instrument through which claims to territory, authority, and belonging are negotiated. Etymologically derived from Arabic, the *adat* term was initially introduced to distinguish local customary practices from externally derived religious laws, such as Islamic law (Picard, 1997). Warren (1993) also mentioned that regionally specific traditions encompassing rituals, legal norms, social structures, and spiritual worldviews were gradually absorbed under the label of *adat*.

These localized meanings of *adat* resonate strongly with Benjamin's (2016) notion of indigeneity, a deeply embedded way of being in place that governs relations between people, ancestors, and the non-human world. As such, *adat* is not merely a normative or juridical category but a living moral ecology rooted in locality and continuity. This interrelation between *adat* and indigeneity underscores how *adat* embodies the indigenous attachment to place, anchored in ancestral legitimacy and everyday practice, rather than an abstract legal identity.

Yet even this domain is not free from external pressures, as the lived dimensions of *adat* are increasingly entangled with broader socio-political transformations.

However, as state expansion, corporate extraction, development projects, and other external contacts encroach upon these territories, such communities increasingly articulate indigeneity, claiming recognition and rights within bureaucratic and legal frameworks that often privilege exogenous definitions of property and governance (Henley & Davidson, 2008; Duile, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the discourse of indigeneity has long been entangled with shifting state projects of governance and territorial control. During the Dutch colonial period, *adat* was strategically appropriated as a classificatory instrument to manage the archipelago's sociocultural diversity (Osawa, 2022). Through codification and selective recognition of certain local customs, colonial administrators transformed *adat* from a fluid, community-embedded moral order into a rigid, formalized system suitable for indirect rule (Bamba, 2008). This reconfiguration redefined *adat* as an object of bureaucratic knowledge rather than a lived relational practice, privileging those interpretations that aligned with colonial authority. However, the colonial state's recognition of customary rights was conditional upon their compatibility with administrative rationality and extractive interests, a move that simultaneously fixed and marginalized local autonomy.

Following independence, particularly under the New Order regime under Suharto's presidency (1965-1998), these colonial legacies of managing difference continued, though rearticulated through the state's developmentalist and nationalist ideologies. In previous studies, Bamba (2008) and van Klinken (2003) have demonstrated that *adat* and the rights of *masyarakat adat* (*adat* community) were systematically subordinated to the imperatives of nation-building and centralized control. Accordingly, Hauser-Schäublin (2013) and Persoon (1998) added, in pursuit of modernity and unity, the state reframed *masyarakat adat* as obstacles to progress, often labelling them as primitive or tribal. This discursive framing legitimized large-scale development interventions, including mining, logging, and plantation concessions on *adat* lands, leading to widespread dispossession and ecological degradation (Bamba, 2008; Persoon, 1998). The reduction of *adat* to a legal or administrative problem, rather than a living system of governance, rendered indigeneity intelligible only insofar as it could be domesticated within the state's regulatory framework (Duile, 2021).

Consequently, the articulation of indigeneity in Indonesia has been shaped by enduring tensions between recognition and regulation. While *adat* continues to serve as an expression

of claim-making for indigenous communities, its institutionalization through legal and bureaucratic mechanisms often constrains rather than empowers local agency. Scholars have observed that the legal framing of *adat* rights, particularly within the post-Suharto era, remains entangled in the state's juridical rationality, which privileges territorial sovereignty and developmental imperatives over community-based custodianship (Arizona & Cahyadi, 2013). Within this framework, the recognition of *masyarakat adat* is conditional upon state verification and legal categorization, effectively translating lived and relational forms of belonging into administratively defined units of governance (Bedner & Arizona, 2019). Such legalization not only depoliticizes indigenous struggles but also exposes the limits of legal pluralism, as *adat* law (*hukum adat*) is recognized only insofar as it does not contradict national law (Mulyani, 2023; Tyson, 2010).

This turn to formal recognition has also given rise to indigenism, a broader political and ideological movement through which *adat*-based communities mobilize collectively to challenge marginalization. In the Indonesian context, *indigenism* manifests through the politicization of *adat* as both a discourse and a strategy of resistance. Studies have shown that post-authoritarian *adat* movements strategically reframed *adat* from a cultural identity into a political instrument for asserting land rights, environmental justice, and local autonomy, often in alliance with NGOs and transnational advocacy networks (Li, 2001). These alliances were crucial in situating *masyarakat adat* within global indigenous rights frameworks, thereby transforming local struggles into claims for international recognition under the term indigenous peoples (Hauser-Schäublin, 2013).

Such mobilization is represented most prominently by the *Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* (AMAN) and other advocacy networks engaging both national and global indigenous rights discourses (Tamma & Duile, 2020). However, as scholars such as Li (2010) and Duile (2021) cautioned, the politicization of indigeneity within state-centered and nationalist frameworks risks transforming local, lived attachments to place into abstract territorial categories aligned with bureaucratic interests. Thus, while Indonesia offers a vivid example of how indigeneity, indigeneity, and indigenism intermingle, it also illustrates the tensions between embodied customary life and the political processes that seek to define, manage, or instrumentalize it.

Yet, as critical scholars (Li, 2007; Tyson, 2010; van der Muur et al., 2019) noted, such mobilizations are not free from contradictions. While NGOs and global advocacy networks

have amplified indigenous voices, they also reproduce asymmetries of power through donor-driven agendas and geopolitical interests, which can shape the terms and visibility of *adat*-based claims (Li, 2007). Moreover, under Indonesia's post-reformasi decentralization, *adat* has been increasingly appropriated by local elites to consolidate authority and territorial control, leading to what van der Muur et al. (2019) call elite capture. Thus, while *indigenism* has opened new political spaces for recognition, it has simultaneously generated internal contestations over legitimacy, representation, and the meaning of *adat* itself within *masyarakat adat* (van der Muur et al., 2019; Tyson, 2010).

Ultimately, *adat* should be understood as a non-fixed, fluid, and context-dependent construct rather than a singular or homogenous tradition. Its meanings and manifestations vary widely across the Indonesian archipelago, shaped by diverse ecological settings, historical trajectories, and political encounters. What constitutes *adat* in one region may differ profoundly from another, reflecting distinct local negotiations between continuity and change. This plurality also makes *adat* an inherently contested domain, mobilized by different actors for varying purposes, from asserting indigenous identity and land rights to legitimizing authority or mediating state relations. The unevenness of *adat* practices and interpretations across Indonesia thus calls for an analytical sensitivity to its situated forms and relational dynamics. Approaching *adat* as a living, negotiated, and adaptive system enables a deeper understanding of how it continues to evolve amid contemporary transformations in governance, economy, and cultural spheres.

2.5. *Adat* and Tourism Engagement in Indonesia

Existing literature on the involvement of *adat* in Indonesian tourism frequently categorizes such practices under the broader umbrellas of ethnic tourism, indigenous tourism, or cultural tourism. However, to date, there has been little critical discussion on the distinction between these forms of tourism within the Indonesian context, and categorizations often depend on the preferences or interpretations of the authors (Cole, 2008). This lack of clarity has led to conceptual ambiguity, particularly when applied to tourism practices involving *adat* that may not fit simply into either category. While both ethnic and indigenous tourism involve engagements with cultural traditions and identities, *adat* in Indonesia carries specific historical, political, and legal meanings that differentiate it from generic notions of ethnicity or indigeneity. Therefore, the current body of literature fails to adequately capture the particularities of *adat* as a framework for tourism development. This study addresses this gap

by exploring *adat*-based tourism as a distinct analytical category, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how *adat* functions in the tourism sector and offering an alternative lens beyond existing typologies of tourism.

In discussions of *adat* and tourism engagement, many scholars have examined the potential of *adat*-based resources to serve as key tourism attractions (*daya tarik wisata*), particularly as a strategy to promote more sustainable and community-based tourism models. This body of literature emphasizes the importance of innovation and multi-stakeholder collaboration in enhancing tourism practices that are both economically feasible and culturally inclusive (Andari et al., 2022; Ikasari, 2021; Nur & Ramadhika, 2020; Winarno et al., 2021). Alongside this promotional perspective, other studies have explored the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on *adat* communities. These include the revitalization and preservation of local traditions, the strengthening of community identity and pride (Sanam et al., 2023), and the dynamic processes of cultural modification and negotiation in response to tourist expectations (Abdillah et al., 2022; Adams, 1997; Hutajulu, 1995). However, the literature also acknowledges the potential for tourism to generate intra-community and inter-community tensions, particularly when cultural representations are commodified or misaligned with local values (Adams, 1997; Hitchcock, 2000; Situmorang et al., 2019).

While these studies have advanced our understanding of how culture functions as both a resource and a site of contestation in tourism (Adams, 1997; Klenke, 2013; Picard, 2008), much of the existing literature tends to treat culture and ethnicity in essentialized or generalized terms, often overlooking the complexity of *adat* as a living, evolving system of governance, spirituality, and territoriality. Moreover, limited attention has been given to how *adat*-based frameworks are selectively represented, appropriated, or even sidelined within state-led or market-driven tourism agendas. It is necessary to examine *adat*-based tourism as a form of indigenous agency that engages with power, land, and identity.

Nevertheless, tourism literature often frames *adat* primarily through the commodification of cultural resources, such as customs, rituals, and traditional arts, treating them as distinct and marketable attractions for tourist consumption. Art and performance are frequently positioned as accessible entry points through which *masyarakat adat* are introduced to tourist audiences (Klenke, 2013; Osawa, 2022; Picard, 2008), a framing that tends to essentialize culture by privileging visible, performative expressions over everyday lived practices. This process of touristification, in which selected aspects of indigenous life are

curated, staged, and packaged, risks producing reductive and exoticized representations of indigenous identity (Adams, 1997; Klenke, 2013). Far from ideologically neutral, such representations often align with broader state and market interests that depoliticize indigenous identities by translating *adat* into consumable images of cultural difference (Acciaoli, 1985; Pratiwi et al., 2017). While tourism may increase the visibility of *masyarakat adat*, it frequently does so by instrumentalizing *adat* within narrowly aesthetic frameworks, reinforcing a hierarchy of values in which performative culture is celebrated while cosmological, spiritual, and governance dimensions of *adat* and claims to indigenous self-determination remain marginalized or obscured.

While much of the literature on tourism and *adat* focuses on visible, performative cultural expressions, fewer studies engage with the deeper, less tangible dimensions of *adat*, such as customary values, legal systems, and institutional practices that are often inseparable from ancestral land and spiritual cosmologies. These elements extend beyond symbolic culture. They represent indigenous ontologies that shape how communities understand space, authority, and the sacred. Instead, it frequently produces tensions between *adat*-based systems and external actors, particularly tourists, whose behaviors often contravene local norms and spiritual taboos. Studies have documented instances where tourists, either through ignorance or indifference, disrupt the sanctity of sacred sites, revealing a deeper conflict between tourism's logic of open access and indigenous systems of restriction and reverence (Cole, 2008; Hoskins, 2002; Mahardika et al., 2021). These findings underscore a critical gap in the literature: while the commodification of *adat* for tourism is well explored, the ontological and governance aspects of *adat* remain insufficiently addressed.

A notable strand in the literature on tourism and *adat* highlights the institutionalization of *desa adat* (customary villages) as part of Indonesia's broader tourism development agenda. While framed as a mechanism to recognize and empower indigenous communities, the formalization of *desa adat* has been critiqued for contributing to the homogenization of *adat* under state-sanctioned frameworks (Budiarta et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2024). Scholars argue that this process often privileges standardized and performative elements of culture, such as rituals, traditional dress, and architectural forms, while marginalizing more complex and less visible dimensions of *adat*, including customary governance systems, spiritual beliefs, and environmental custodianship (Drestanta, 2023; Utama, 2020).

These formal categories tend to enforce fixed criteria for recognition, pressuring communities to align with bureaucratic templates that may not reflect the diversity, adaptability, and contested nature of *adat* in practice. Moreover, the promotion of *desa adat* as cultural destinations often reinforces essentialist and commodified portrayals of indigenous life, designed more to serve tourism markets than local interests (Cole, 2008). Taken together, this body of research reveals that while *desa adat* frameworks may offer visibility and economic opportunity, they simultaneously function as instruments of cultural regulation, raising critical questions about who defines *adat*, who benefits from its tourism representation, and what is lost in the process of its institutionalization.

The literature also reveals enduring inequalities in the representation of *adat* communities within Indonesia's tourism landscape, with a tendency to privilege dominant or state-aligned expressions of *adat* while sidelining more localized or less assimilated forms. Tourism initiatives have historically favored cultural expressions considered civilized or marketable, reflecting state-driven narratives of national unity and development (Murti & Ratriyana, 2021; Wood, 1997). Such strategies did not reflect the full diversity of *adat* across the archipelago, but rather legitimized certain traditions while erasing others from public view. This pattern of selective representation continues in contemporary tourism marketing materials, where regional governments frequently showcase dominant symbols and rituals while neglecting the lived realities and cultural expressions of smaller or less integrated *adat* communities. As Murti & Ratriyana (2021) also emphasized, such portrayals reduce cultural diversity to spectacle, often lacking meaningful engagement with local complexities. These portrayals not only essentialize *adat*, but they also risk strengthening internal hierarchies by portraying certain groups as symbolic of the nation while others stay marginal. This dynamic warrants critical attention, as it shapes which forms of *adat* are legitimized in the public sphere and which are excluded from the national tourism narrative.

Building on these critical insights, this research explores the overlooked dimensions of *adat* in tourism by moving beyond performative representations and state-sanctioned models such as *desa adat*. Rather than focusing solely on visible cultural expressions or standardized institutional frameworks, this study foregrounds the lived experiences, local governance systems, and spiritual-ecological relationships that underpin *adat*-based custodianship. It explores how *adat* actors navigate and negotiate their agency within tourism processes, particularly in contexts where their values and practices diverge from dominant tourism logics. By doing so, this research not only highlights the plural and contested nature of *adat* but also

interrogates the mechanisms through which certain forms are legitimized while others are silenced. Furthermore, it contributes to a more grounded understanding of how *adat* communities assert custodial authority over cultural landscapes in the face of tourism pressures. This study offers a bottom-up perspective that critically engages with epistemologies, aspirations, and tensions within *adat* communities themselves. Ultimately, it aims to advance a more inclusive and pluralistic approach to *adat*-based tourism governance, one that respects indigenous ontologies and challenges reductive narratives of cultural identity.

While Chapter 2 has critically examined existing scholarship on traditional custodianship and *adat*, it has also identified gaps and limitations. These gaps point to the need for a more integrative conceptual lens that captures the interconnectedness of traditional custodianship and *adat* in practice. In response, the next chapter develops a theoretical framework grounded in traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, and *adat*, conceptualized as an interwoven axio-onto-epistemological system. This framework provides the analytical foundation for interpreting how tourism is understood and governed within the Baduy context.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical foundations that inform the study's examination of tourism engagement within the Baduy community. It begins with traditional custodianship, a concept commonly used to describe the moral, spiritual, and ecological responsibilities of care that communities hold toward their places, lands, and ancestral worlds. It then turns to indigenous knowledge, an epistemological framework that encompasses relational ways of knowing, being, and governing, positioning local practices within global scholarly conversations on indigenous epistemologies. The discussion then moves into *adat*, the specific and place-based governance system through which the Baduy enact custodianship and knowledge in practice. By tracing how these interconnected concepts operate at different scales, from broader indigenous principles to locally specific expressions, the chapter establishes a conceptual basis for understanding how tourism is interpreted, regulated, and selectively engaged with in Baduy territory. Overall, this chapter provides the analytical tools necessary to examine tourism as a domain shaped by moral obligations, cosmological balance, and indigenous ways of knowing, reflecting intertwined axiological, ontological, and epistemological dimensions. While this chapter introduces occasional references to the case to clarify the framework's analytical relevance, detailed empirical analysis is particularly reserved for Chapter 5.

3.1. Traditional Custodianship

3.1.1. *Conceptualizing Traditional Custodianship*

Traditional custodianship refers to the moral and spiritual responsibility of care, rather than legal ownership, over ancestral territories, resources, and sacred sites (Jopela, 2010, 2011). It embodies an enduring relational bond in which humans, the land, and spiritual entities are co-dependent participants in a shared moral universe (CBD Code of Conduct, 2011). Traditional custodianship thus expresses an ethic of reciprocity (Borona, 2014; Menzies et al., 2024). People do not merely own or manage land, but they belong to it. This reciprocal belonging forms the ontological basis of indigenous stewardship, the lived practice of caring for the land in ways that affirm identity, ancestry, and spiritual continuity (Menzies et al., 2024).

Unlike Western notions of property and conservation, traditional custodianship operates through responsibility rather than control. It entails ongoing obligations to sustain ecological and moral balance, guided by ancestral teachings and ritual observances (Berkes et al., 2000). Knowledge, labor, and ritual care are intertwined as acts of renewal, maintaining not only the

physical vitality of the land or site but also its spiritual potency (see Figure 3.1). As Dudgeon et al. (2024) and Suchet-Pearson et al. (2013) observed, to care for the country is to maintain the relational web that makes life possible, as neglect or exploitation represents not only ecological harm but also a moral failure.

It is important to remain reflexive and avoid treating traditional custodianship merely as environmental management, as this would reduce it to a technical practice and overlook its spiritual and ancestral dimensions. Traditional custodianship, therefore, should be understood as a relational and cosmological practice, a lived expression of the reciprocal ethics (Avrami et al., 2019). In this way, traditional custodianship bridges the moral and the material, the sacred and the ecological. It transforms an asset from an object of possession into a relative of responsibility (Banda et al., 2024). Within the Baduy worldview, this relational responsibility constitutes the essence of both *adat* and life itself, a continuous enactment of gratitude, restraint, and care toward the world that sustains them.

3.1.2. Traditional Custodianship as Governance, Moral Order, and Responsibility

Traditional custodianship is inseparable from ancestral authority and the spatial organization of indigenous territories (Osei & Asantewa, 2025). In many indigenous societies, landscapes are not simply inhabited spaces but living domains ordered through ancestral teachings that define moral, ecological, and ritual obligations. Traditional custodianship, therefore, operates as a relational system of governance that safeguards both the integrity of the land and the continuity of ancestral presence (Jopela, 2010). This relational governance, exemplified in the work of Berkes et al. (2000), is grounded in responsibilities to human and non-human beings, emphasizing care rather than coercive forms of authority.

Across diverse indigenous contexts, traditional custodianship functions as a mechanism for maintaining territorial integrity amid external pressures, including state development agendas, extractive interests, and market-oriented management systems (Domínguez & Luoma, 2020). Ritual obligations, prohibitions, and moral duties toward land, forest, and water sustain ecological balance while asserting community autonomy from externally imposed systems (Domínguez & Luoma, 2020; Jopela, 2011). These practices should not be reduced to political resistance. Rather, they express deep attachment to ancestral order and a refusal to compromise the moral and spiritual ecologies that anchor indigenous identity and continuity (Borona, 2014; Domínguez & Luoma, 2020).

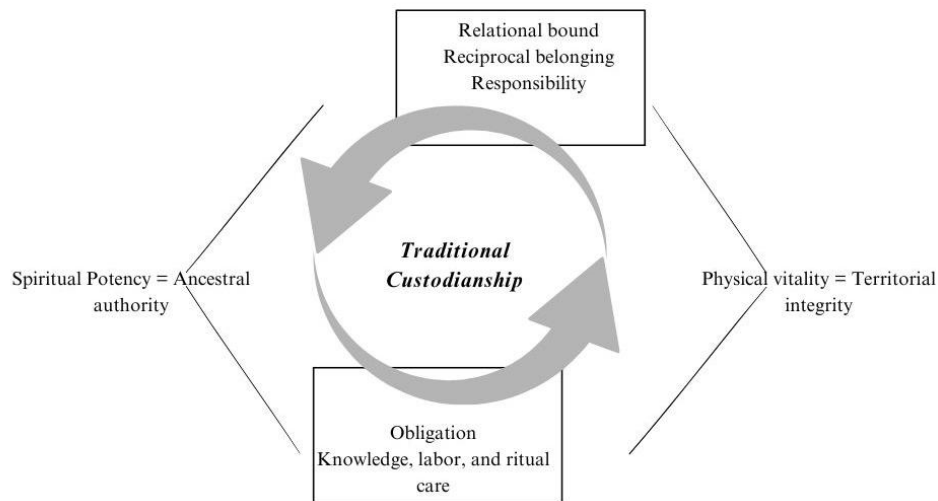


Figure 3.1. The Conceptualization of Traditional Custodianship

Source, Author, (Jopela, 2010; Osei & Asantewa, 2025)

From a theoretical standpoint, ancestral authority embodies ontological and epistemological continuity (Godbole et al., 2010). Land becomes a living archive where rituals, myths, and ecological practices intersect, and where knowledge is reproduced across generations. In this framework, elders or traditional leaders are not simply administrative figures but custodians of cosmic balance, as well as mediators between human communities, the natural world, and the unseen realm (Borona, 2014; Jopela, 2010). Their authority demonstrates that territorial integrity is not merely physical, but also moral and cosmological, grounded in the maintenance of harmony among all beings and forces that constitute the world (Verschuuren et al., 2010), as shown in Figure 3.1. Understanding traditional custodianship in this relational and responsibility-based sense allows for a decolonial reading of governance, one that prioritizes obligation over ownership, care over control, and reciprocity over regulation (Jopela, 2011). This perspective forms the foundation for examining how communities, including the Baduy, enact custodial ethics in the face of contemporary challenges such as tourism, development, and state intervention.

3.2. Indigenous Knowledge System

3.2.1. *Defining Indigenous Knowledge*

Indigenous knowledge refers to relational, place-based understandings developed through long-term interactions with land, water, flora, fauna, and spiritual beings (Carrin, 2024). It is a cumulative system of knowing transmitted orally and experientially across generations, grounded in community practices of observation, participation, and moral responsibility toward

the environment (Nakashima et al., 2002). Rather than emerging from detached intellectual inquiry, indigenous knowledge is generated through lived interdependence between humans and non-humans, reflecting the ethical obligations and stewardship responsibilities emphasized in traditional custodianship (Aikman, 2025; Carrin, 2024).

From this perspective, indigenous knowledge is inseparable from the ethical and cosmological orders that regulate social and ecological relations. It is not simply a repository of environmental information but a mode of being that aligns social conduct, ecological balance, and spiritual responsibility (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Romm, 2017). Its legitimacy derives from community consensus and ancestral continuity, rather than from the epistemic norms of objectivity or replicability that dominate Western scientific paradigms (Aikenhead & Ogawa, 2007). This means that knowledge is validated through shared experience, moral responsibility, and long-term relational engagement with land and ancestors, criteria that reflect a fundamentally different understanding of what counts as truth and how it should be generated.

At the same time, scholarship cautions against drawing rigid binaries between indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Gaerrang (2017) and Lauter (2023) argue that these represent overlapping and interacting epistemic worlds rather than mutually exclusive ontologies, which also indicate that these are plural, evolving, and continuously negotiated. Recognizing this plurality allows a decolonial understanding of knowledge, where indigenous epistemologies are treated as dynamic, legitimate systems that engage with, adapt to, and sometimes resist dominant frameworks.

In the Baduy context, indigenous knowledge is expressed through ecological practices such as rotational agriculture, forest and water preservation, and the ritualization of everyday life (Iskandar, 1998; Saleh et al., 2020). These practices embody intertwined spiritual and ecological intelligence that maintains balance between human needs and environmental integrity. Understanding Baduy knowledge, therefore, requires attention to the broader moral and relational system that informs it, a system later articulated through the concept of *adat*.

3.2.2. Indigenous Knowledge as Epistemological Ethics and Responsibility

The epistemological character of indigenous knowledge lies in its relational ontology, emphasizing that knowledge is not an object to be possessed but a living practice enacted through ongoing relationships among humans, non-humans, and spiritual forces (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Shrestha et al., 2025). Knowing, in this sense, is not an abstract cognitive

act but a performative engagement with the world (Romm, 2024). It unfolds through participation, observation, ritual, and storytelling, where learning is inseparable from doing, being, and sustaining relational responsibilities. Indigenous knowledge is thus inseparable from ethical obligations, where to know is simultaneously to act responsibly toward the land, community, and the unseen forces that sustain life.

Indigenous epistemologies prioritize holism over fragmentation (Allen, 2023). They integrate material, spiritual, ecological, and social dimensions into a single continuum of life, contrasting sharply with the fragmentation typical of Western knowledge systems, which often separate nature from culture, spirit from matter, and science from belief (Hickey, 2020; Jarwar et al., 2024). Within indigenous frameworks, such separations are not only analytically inadequate but ethically problematic, as they disrupt the reciprocal obligations that sustain harmony within the web of life. Knowledge is thus inseparable from responsibility. It is produced, validated, and enacted in ways that uphold relational, ecological, and moral integrity. Crucially, indigenous knowledge is context-bound and situated, emerging from particular landscapes, histories, and social relations (Carm, 2014; Malapane et al., 2024). As Simandan (2019) observes, the notion of situated knowledge emphasizes that all knowing is inherently spatial and relational, produced in, shaped by, and intelligible through specific places and experiences. This positionality renders indigenous epistemologies inherently plural, adaptive, and responsive to both environmental and social change, while remaining anchored in intergenerational obligations and moral responsibility.

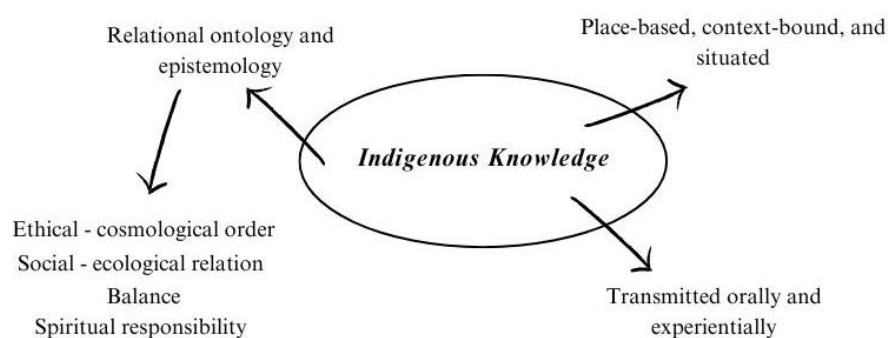


Figure 3.2. Conceptualization of Indigenous Knowledge

Source: Author, based on Simandan (2019), Mirraoopu (2003), Shrestha et al. (2025), Aikman (2025), and Carrin (2024)

In practice, indigenous knowledge is inseparable from traditional custodianship. Among the Baduy, knowledge is transmitted orally through narratives, prohibitions, and daily maintenance practices (Astheria et al., 2021; Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017; van Zanten, 2021). Rules regarding land clearing, water use, or forest access are not merely technical guidelines but expressions of cosmological, ethical, and ecological order (Hakim, 2006; Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017). Knowledge is enacted and reaffirmed through ritualized acts such as planting season ceremonies, cleansing rites, and communal decision-making led by elders. These practices collectively reproduce a way of knowing that is experiential, ethically grounded, and spiritually charged, a continuous dialogue between humans, ancestors, and the environment. In this way, Baduy knowledge positions the community as active custodians, sustaining both the material and moral integrity of their territory, and provides the epistemological foundation for understanding how traditional custodianship operates in practice.

3.2.3. Indigenous Knowledge as Situated Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is inherently situated, produced within specific social, ecological, and historical contexts, and intelligible only within those circumstances (Simandan, 2019). Rather than existing as universal truths, indigenous epistemologies emerge from the lived practices, responsibilities, and relational engagements of communities. As such, knowledge is inseparable from the particular landscapes, languages, and sociocultural norms in which it is embedded. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, Simandan (2019) also emphasizes the spatial dimension of situated knowledge, noting that the authority and relevance of any knowledge system are grounded in the places and contexts of its production.

For the Baduy, knowledge practices, including forest management, water use, ritual observances, and agricultural cycles, reflect this situatedness. These practices are not abstract technical rules but contextually informed decisions, shaped by moral obligations to ancestors, spiritual entities, and ecological systems (Iskandar, 1998; Saleh et al., 2020; van Zanten, 2021). Rules regarding resource use, seasonal planting, and sacred zones are embedded within relational practices that continuously negotiate community well-being, environmental balance, and social cohesion.

Conceptualizing indigenous knowledge as situated also highlights its dynamic and dialogic character. Contemporary indigenous communities do not live in isolation from non-indigenous knowledge systems. Instead, their epistemologies evolve through encounters with

external actors, technologies, and ideas, while remaining anchored in ancestral obligations and moral principles (Gaerrang, 2017; Lauter, 2023). Such encounters do not dilute indigenous knowledge into a hybridized or subordinate form. Rather, they allow for adaptive responses that preserve ethical, ecological, and spiritual coherence.

This lens challenges the notion that indigenous knowledge is primitive, static, or unchanging. Instead, it positions communities like the Baduy as contemporary knowledge holders, whose epistemic authority emerges from ongoing reflection, careful consideration, and relational accountability. Knowledge is actively co-produced through participation, intergenerational dialogue, and negotiation with both human and non-human actors. In this sense, situated knowledge provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how indigenous knowledge informs traditional custodianship, guiding governance, resource management, and engagement with external pressures, including tourism.

3.3. *Adat* as a Localized Governance System

3.3.1. Conceptualizing the Adat

Across Indonesian scholarship, *adat* has been conceptualized through multiple and sometimes overlapping lenses, as a discourse of identity and recognition (Henley & Davidson, 2008; Li, 2001), as a legal and institutional system of customary rights (Arizona & Cahyadi, 2013), and as a cultural framework encompassing values, beliefs, and social practices (Acciaoli, 2007). These diverse scholarly interpretations underscore that *adat* is not a singular or fixed concept, but a fluid, historically shaped, and context-dependent category. Different indigenous communities articulate and practice *adat* in varied ways, shaped by their ecologies, political histories, cosmologies, and social relations, which makes it impossible to treat *adat* as a uniform system.

While acknowledging this plurality, this study approaches *adat* primarily as a living governance system or as a dynamic, normative, and ecological order that structures relations among people, the natural environment, and the spiritual realm. This framing aligns with constructivist and decolonial perspectives that view *adat* not as a static cultural residue or merely a legal category, but as a relational ontology and epistemology enacted and negotiated in daily life (Müller, 2013). Through this lens, *adat* becomes a moral and cosmological framework that regulates social behavior, defines appropriate relationships within and beyond the community, and sustains ecological balance (Rumpia, 2020).

Adat encompasses customary law, moral codes, cosmological beliefs, and ecological ethics, functioning as a living law embedded in the rhythms of everyday practice (Von Benda-Beckmann & Von Benda-Beckmann, 2011). Rather than signifying tradition in a narrow cultural sense, *adat* provides a holistic framework through which communities organize social order, fulfill spiritual obligations, and maintain relations with both human and non-human worlds (Imamulhadi et al., 2025). Scholars such as Picard (1997) and Warren (1993) have emphasized that *adat* operates as a moral and symbolic order guiding how people live in alignment with natural and spiritual forces, while Acciaioli (2007) highlights its role as a normative as well as axiological, ontological, and epistemological system shaping local understandings of justice, responsibility, and the continuity of life.

In many Indonesian contexts, *adat* functions as a localized governance system that regulates land tenure, ritual practice, marriage arrangements, conflict resolution, and environmental stewardship, often preceding and operating alongside state law (Bedner & Arizona, 2019). Its authority does not derive from formalized legislation but from ancestral legitimacy, communal consensus, and ritual sanction (Arizona & Cahyadi, 2013). This renders *adat* a resilient and self-sustaining moral order that persists even amid state interventions and shifting socio-political dynamics. Crucially, *adat* is not a monolithic or unchanging institution. As (Li, 2007) notes, *adat* is historically contingent and continually reshaped through the interplay of local cosmologies, environmental conditions, and external influences such as state governance, market expansion, and world religions. This diversity resists the essentialization of *adat* as a timeless cultural legacy and instead positions it as a dynamic field of practice, a continually negotiated system through which communities mediate between continuity and change, stability and adaptation (Imamulhadi et al., 2025).

3.3.2. *Adat as Integration of Authority, Knowledge, and Morality*

Adat functions as a system in which authority, knowledge, and moral order are inseparable, forming a unified framework for governing social and ecological life. In many Indonesian communities, *adat* operates as a mode of self-regulation and collective governance, as presented in Figure 3.3, where leadership derives not from formal institutions but from ancestral authority, ritual sanction, and consensus-based decision-making. Scholars such as Siallagan (2024) and Warren (2007) emphasize that *adat* is grounded in moral authority rather than coercive power, ensuring that governance aligns with communal welfare and cosmological ethics. Similarly, Vel & Makambombu (2019) note that *adat* embodies both social control and

ecological principles, embedding local mechanisms for conflict resolution, land-use regulation, and environmental stewardship within a broader cosmological framework.

Within the Baduy community, this integration of authority and morality is materially expressed through the community's spatial, social, and ritual organization. The division of territory into *Tangtu*, *Panamping*, and *Dangka* reflects more than geographic separation. It encodes moral hierarchies, ritual obligations, and differentiated relationships with the outside world (Alfira & Uekita, 2023; Hasim et al., 2025). *Tangtu* adheres most strictly to ancestral prohibitions, while *Panamping* and *Dangka* act as mediating zones where selective engagement with outsiders and economic activities is more permissible (Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017). These spatial distinctions are inseparable from the knowledge practices that guide agricultural systems, ritual observance, and everyday behavior (Alfira, 2022; Iskandar, 1998). In this sense, *adat* functions simultaneously as a moral compass, an epistemological guide, and a governance mechanism that orders relations between people, land, ancestors, and visitors.

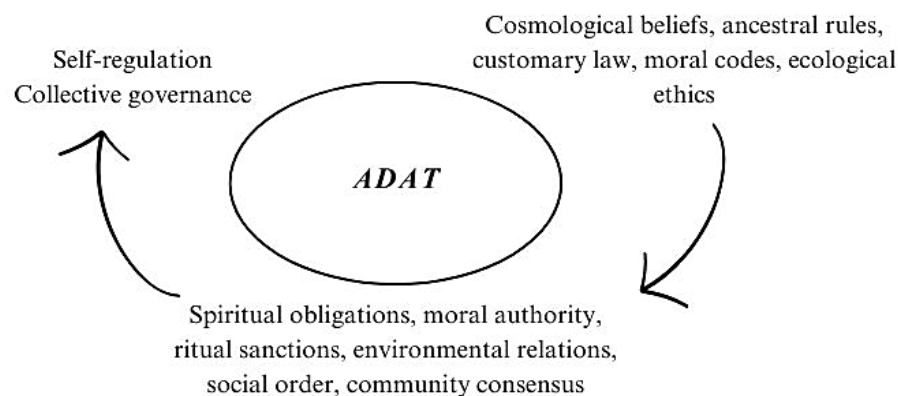


Figure 3.3. Conceptualization of *Adat* as a Governance Practice

Source: Author, based on Imamulhadi et al. (2025); Warren (2007); Picard, (1997); and Siallagan (2024)

At the same time, *adat* must not be understood as a fixed or isolated system. As Li (2007) argues, indigenous governance systems are dynamic, negotiated, and historically contingent, shaped by ongoing encounters with the state, markets, and external actors. For communities such as the Baduy, *adat* authority interacts with state administrative structures, development interventions, and tourism activities (Cole, 2008; Warren, 2007). These encounters necessitate adaptive interpretations of ancestral principles, adjustments that maintain moral coherence while permitting forms of engagement considered necessary or

beneficial. Such adaptations demonstrate that *adat* is not a relic of pre-modern order but a living, interpretive practice that integrates inherited knowledge with contemporary realities.

Understanding *adat* as an integration of authority, knowledge, and morality thus requires acknowledging its fluidity and dialogic nature. *Adat* is neither a romanticized ideal nor a closed moral universe. Its legitimacy rests on the community's collective commitment to sustain ancestral teachings through practice, negotiation, and reinterpretation. In this way, *adat*-based governance expresses a form of indigenous self-determination grounded not in separation from the world but in the capacity to uphold moral and cosmological integrity while navigating social and political change.

3.4. Integrating Traditional Custodianship, Indigenous Knowledge, and *Adat*

3.4.1. Conceptual Integration

Traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, and *adat* constitute an interconnected epistemic and moral framework that shapes how communities interpret, organize, and act upon their relationships with land, ancestors, and external actors. While each concept has its own intellectual background, they share common ground in their emphasis on relational responsibility, moral judgement, and the maintenance of socio-ecological balance. Traditional custodianship provides the overarching ethos of responsibility, where authority emerges from caring for land, guarding sacred spaces, and upholding inherited obligations (Jopela, 2010; Peaty, 2011). Indigenous knowledge furnishes the practical, interpretive, and experiential capacities needed to sustain this custodial role, including ecological awareness, ritual expertise, and everyday decision-making grounded in local ontologies (Suchet-Pearson et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, *adat* operates as the institutional and normative structure that binds these responsibilities and knowledge systems into a coherent governance order. It integrates moral codes, spiritual conventions, ecological rules, and social ethics into a living system of authority that regulates action and provides legitimacy (Persoon & Schefold, 2017). Through *adat*, custodianship gains procedural expression, ritualized prohibitions, territorial rules, sanctions, and collective obligations, while indigenous knowledge gains the social, ritual, and moral foundation through which it is reproduced, transmitted, and adapted.

These three concepts also mutually reinforce each other. Traditional custodianship requires indigenous knowledge to diagnose environmental change and maintain cosmological balance, while *adat* ensures continuity of these obligations across generations through structured norms and narrative memory. At the same time, indigenous knowledge is never static. It evolves in dialogue with custodial responsibilities and *adat* governance, allowing communities to respond to new pressures, such as tourism, without abandoning moral authority or relational ethics (Li, 2007; Sasaoka & Laumonier, 2012). Their integration thus forms a dynamic system in which authority, knowledge, and responsibility are co-produced and continuously negotiated.

3.4.2. Implications for Governance, Agency, and Decision-Making

The integration of traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, and *adat* constitutes a governance system where authority is grounded not merely in formal hierarchy but in relational legitimacy, with those who care for the land, obey ancestral law, and maintain ecological and moral balance being authorized to decide (Akhmar et al., 2023; Maria, 2018). Decision-making becomes inseparable from moral and ontological considerations, where choices must ensure the well-being of land, ancestors, and future generations. This produces a distinctive form of agency, one that is collective, obligation-driven, and deeply tied to the ethical evaluation of potential risks or disturbances.

In this framework, governance is less about instrumental management and more about safeguarding the integrity of relationships between humans and nonhuman beings, between custodians and territory, and between community members and their ancestral obligations. *Adat* provides the normative compass, specifying what is permitted, prohibited, or negotiable (Imamulhadi et al., 2025). Indigenous knowledge informs how decisions are interpreted in practices (Wheeler & Root-Bernstein, 2020). Nonetheless, traditional custodianship connects these decisions in a wider system of responsibilities extending beyond the present moment (CBD Code of Conduct, 2011). This integrated system also shapes how communities respond to external engagements, including tourism. In doing so, communities exercise a form of agency that is not reactive but grounded in indigenous governance logics, allowing them to selectively adopt, adapt, or reject tourism practices in ways that remain consistent with *adat* and custodial obligations.

3.5. Integrating Traditional Custodianship, Indigenous Knowledge, and *Adat* in Tourism Engagement: A Reflexive Analytical Lens

Having examined traditional custodianship as an ethical practice of caring for land and ancestors, indigenous knowledge as a relational and situated epistemology, and *adat* as a living system of governance and moral order, it becomes clear that these domains do not operate in isolation. Rather, they form a mutually reinforcing unit. Traditional custodianship enacts the ethical responsibilities that bind people to place and ancestral ties (Borona, 2014; Jopela, 2011). Indigenous knowledge provides the interpretive and experiential grounding through which ecological rhythms, social relations, and spiritual meanings are understood (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Nakashima et al., 2002). *Adat* supplies the normative structure, cosmological guidance, and regulatory authority through which these responsibilities and knowledges are organized, maintained, and transmitted (Imamulhadi et al., 2025; Rumpia, 2020). These three dimensions together form the socio-moral architecture that shapes Baduy engagements with the outside world.

Within this integrated system, tourism engagement becomes a contemporary site where traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, and *adat* are activated, negotiated, and reinterpreted. Tourism is not an external intrusion but a context in which the community evaluates how openness toward visitors can coexist with obligations of protection, balance, and restraint. Through the lens of *adat* and indigenous knowledge, tourism is framed not as a market opportunity but as a moral, ecological, and cosmological relationship, one that must enhance, or at least not risk, the ancestral order and territorial integrity (Asriyani & Verheijen, 2020). In this configuration, traditional custodianship guides community decisions on what can be shared, what must remain safeguarded, and how interactions with visitors should unfold so as not to compromise spiritual or ecological balance (Jopela, 2011; Menzies et al., 2024).

This integrative lens reveals that tourism governance in indigenous contexts is not merely managerial. It is a relational and ethical field, continuously shaped by overlapping considerations of custodial responsibility, situated knowledge, and *adat*-based governance. Decisions about acceptable practices, visitor pathways, limits on access, and the selective disclosure of cultural knowledge emerge from the interplay of these systems. Rather than reflecting a fixed or homogeneous rulebook, *adat*-based governance operates as an ongoing negotiation between moral obligations, practical custodianship, and dynamic epistemologies (Queirós, 2023). Tourism becomes one of the arenas where this negotiation is most visible.

A reflexive stance is essential in interpreting these processes. Recognizing that traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, and *adat* are dynamic, adaptive, and context-dependent prevents the researcher from imposing essentialist assumptions about timeless tradition or static indigenous identity (Aikenhead & Ogawa, 2007). Reflexivity foregrounds that these systems are continually re-enacted and reinvented in response to shifting internal priorities and external pressures, including increasingly complex tourism encounters. It also acknowledges the researcher's own positionality and interpretive limits, emphasizing the need to engage these systems on their own epistemic terms rather than through externally imposed analytical categories.

Integrating traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, *adat*, and tourism engagement thus provides a holistic, relational, and context-sensitive analytical framework. It highlights balance, reciprocity, and moral accountability as foundational principles that guide indigenous governance and human-environment relations (Menzies et al., 2024). At the same time, it affirms the epistemic legitimacy of indigenous ways of knowing and recognizes traditional custodianship as the lived expression of these interrelated systems (Hird, 2025). Through this reflexive approach, the study remains attentive to both the internal logic of indigenous worldviews and the external forces that shape the contemporary articulation of *adat*-based governance in tourism contexts.

In sum, this theoretical framework positions traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, *adat*, and tourism engagement as interwoven dimensions of a living governance system. Viewed in sequence, traditional custodianship provides the ethical foundation through which responsibilities to land, ancestors, and community are enacted; indigenous knowledge offers the epistemological grounding that guides how people interpret and respond to their social-ecological world; and *adat* supplies the normative and institutional structure through which moral judgment, authority, and collective order are maintained. When tourism enters this configuration, it becomes an arena where these interconnected systems are activated, negotiated, and reaffirmed. Together, they offer an integrative lens for understanding how communities such as the Baduy sustain territorial integrity, manage relations with outsiders, and engage with tourism while upholding moral, ecological, and spiritual balance. At its core, the framework underscores the relational and dynamic character of indigenous governance, where ancestral obligations, local ways of knowing, and everyday custodial practices continually shape and are reshaped by contemporary encounters, including those arising from tourism.

Moving forward, the methodology chapter draws directly from this conceptual foundation. It outlines how the research design, data collection, and analytical strategies are guided by the principles embedded in this framework: attentiveness to the ethical responsibilities of traditional custodianship, respect for indigenous epistemologies, and sensitivity to the normative authority of *adat* as a living governance system. Crucially, the chapter also incorporates a reflexive approach to the researcher's positionality, acknowledging that studying tourism within an *adat*-governed landscape requires ongoing self-awareness regarding interpretation, representation, and power. By aligning methodological choices with these theoretical insights, the study seeks to produce findings that are analytically rigorous, ethically grounded, and culturally attuned to the lived realities of the Baduy community.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework guiding this research. It begins by presenting the study's ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological foundations, which collectively reflect a constructivist paradigm that values multiple realities and co-constructed knowledge. Within this paradigm, the research is guided by a qualitative approach that emphasizes contextual understanding, meaning-making, and the lived experiences of the Baduy's *adat* actors. The chapter also addresses the researcher's positionality and reflexivity, acknowledging the influence of the researcher's background, assumptions, and interactions with participants on the research process. The data collection strategies employed include participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and the use of secondary sources to provide contextual depth and triangulation. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, enabling a continuous and interpretive engagement with the data. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and respect for local cultural protocols, are discussed to demonstrate the study's commitment to responsible and respectful research practices. The chapter concludes by addressing the study's limitations and the strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

4.1. Research Paradigm

The research paradigm in this study actively shapes how the Baduy community, *adat*-based custodianship, and tourism are encountered, interpreted, and represented, rather than functioning as a detached philosophical backdrop. A research paradigm may be broadly understood as a constellation of beliefs and assumptions that guide inquiry (Guba, 1990), reflecting how reality is understood and how knowledge is considered possible (Mertens, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). In this research, however, the paradigm is not treated as an abstract framework imposed in advance. Instead, it has evolved through sustained engagement with the Baduy's *adat* worldview, where knowledge is relational, embedded in everyday practice, and inseparable from moral responsibility. The paradigm thus emerges through the research process itself, shaped by encounters, negotiations, and ethical commitments developed in the field.

This study treats the four interrelated principles of research paradigms, namely ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology, as interdependent and mutually constitutive (Killion & Fisher, 2018), as shown in Figure 4.1. Ontology concerns assumptions about what constitutes

reality, while epistemology addresses the nature of knowing and the relationship between those who seek knowledge and what is known (Klein, 2005). Axiology foregrounds the role of values, ethics, and moral commitments, emphasizing that research is never value-neutral but is always shaped by what is considered meaningful, appropriate, and responsible. Meanwhile, methodology translates these assumptions into concrete strategies for inquiry, guiding decisions about engagement, interaction, and interpretation. Taken together, these principles form a coherent framework that informs how research is designed, enacted, and justified, rather than functioning as isolated philosophical categories.

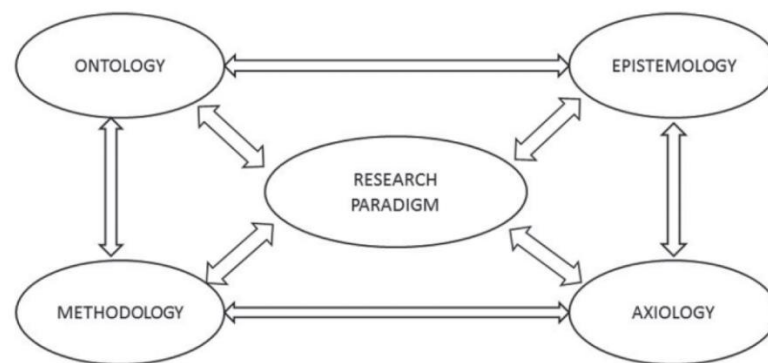


Figure 4.1. Interconnectedness of the Research Paradigm and Its Components

Source: Killion & Fisher, 2018, p. 12

This study adopts constructivism as its guiding research paradigm because it offers a coherent philosophical basis for engaging with knowledge as situated, relational, and produced through interaction rather than detached observation. Rather than treating meaning as something that exists independently of social context, constructivism foregrounds how realities are formed, negotiated, and sustained through everyday practices and relationships (Radel, 2018). From this perspective, the limitations of positivist approaches are not simply methodological but philosophical, particularly their tendency to abstract knowledge from lived contexts and to privilege distance, neutrality, and verification over interpretation and engagement (Schwandt, 1994). The choice of constructivism in this study is therefore grounded in its ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological commitments, which together provide a framework for understanding knowledge as multiple, co-constructed, and ethically embedded within the research process.

Ontologically, this study departs from positivist assumptions of a single, objective reality that exists independently of human consciousness and is governed by universal laws (Sarantakos, 1998). Instead, it adopts a constructivist understanding of reality as relational,

processual, and socially produced through interaction and interpretation (Baker, 2022; Charmaz, 2006; Radel, 2018). This orientation is particularly important for a study concerned with *adat*, where meanings are not fixed or codified but enacted through everyday practices, moral obligations, and relationships between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. Ontology in this study, therefore, treats reality not as something to be measured or verified, but as something that unfolds through lived experience and ongoing negotiation.

These ontological assumptions directly inform the epistemological stance of the research. Rather than positioning the researcher as a detached observer who extracts neutral facts, this study follows a constructivist epistemology in which knowledge is understood as co-constructed through relationships between the researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 1994). Knowledge emerges through dialogue, shared presence, and interpretive engagement, rather than through distance or control. In the Baduy context, where knowledge is embedded in oral traditions, communal life, and *adat* practice, this epistemological position required attentiveness to how meanings are conveyed implicitly and relationally. Consequently, the knowledge produced here is situated and relational, developed with participants rather than about them (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Axiologically, the study rejects the notion of value-free inquiry associated with positivist traditions (Christians, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Instead, it recognizes that values, ethics, and positionality are integral to all stages of the research process (Alcoff & Potter, 1993). In this study, axiology was enacted through ongoing reflexivity, attention to power relations, and commitments to respect, reciprocity, and accountability (Lincoln, 2009). Ethical engagement was grounded not only in institutional procedures but also in the moral framework of Baduy *adat*, where values function as a guiding compass for social relations and interactions with outsiders. As such, axiology operated as a lived and relational practice, shaping decisions around access, consent, representation, and knowledge sharing.

Methodologically, these ontological, epistemological, and axiological commitments translate into an emphasis on qualitative, interpretive, and immersive research strategies. Rather than seeking generalizable laws through experimentation or measurement (Willis, 2007), the study prioritizes depth, context, and meaning. Immersion in everyday routines, where appropriate, enabled an understanding of how tourism is practiced, negotiated, and regulated within the rhythms of daily life. Methodology here is therefore not a neutral technique but a relational practice shaped by presence, trust, and responsiveness (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

In light of the above discussion, a constructivist paradigm provides an appropriate and coherent foundation for this study, as it aligns with the Baduy's *adat*-based worldview and the relational nature of traditional custodianship. Rather than treating reality, knowledge, and values as fixed or externally defined, constructivism enables an interpretive engagement with how meanings are produced, negotiated, and sustained within lived social contexts. This orientation is particularly suited to examining tourism in Baduy society, where cosmology, customary law, and social relations are inseparable from collective identity and ancestral land. As such, constructivism offers a culturally responsive framework for analyzing how *adat* and traditional custodial responsibilities are enacted and reconfigured in encounters with tourism.

4.2. Positionality and Reflexivity

In this qualitative inquiry, I recognize that my situatedness and positionality are not peripheral considerations but integral to how knowledge is produced and understood. Making my own positioning visible, both in relation to participants and within the broader research context, has been widely recognized as central to the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative work (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Killion & Fisher, 2018). I do not approach the field as a neutral researcher who simply records social realities. Rather, I participate in the ongoing construction of meaning through my presence, interactions, and interpretive choices (Dredge & Hales, 2012). My decision to engage with the community, case, and phenomenon is therefore not value-free. It carries political and ethical implications that intersect with local interests, expectations, and existing power relations. Reflexivity, in this sense, requires sustained attention to how I understand and present myself in the field, as well as how trust, authority, and accountability are negotiated in the research process, and how empirical materials are gathered and interpreted (Killion & Fisher, 2018). Rather than assuming a detached or apolitical stance, I acknowledge that my personal perspectives, prior knowledge, and values inevitably shape the research encounter. For this reason, continual critical self-examination has been necessary throughout every stage of the qualitative research process.

This research in the Baduy community village sprang from concerns about the immense tourism activity that has taken place over the last decade. The Baduy community was upset by the increasing number of tourist visits to Kanekes village (where the Baduy community resides) alongside the lack of visitor awareness of the people, culture, and environment they visit. Various mass media outlets reported the news about the Baduy people's wish to be eliminated from Indonesian tourist destinations in 2020 (Nazmudin, 2020; Praptika et al., 2024). According to those reports, the influx of visitors in Kanekes village has had a severe influence

on the Baduy population, endangering their way of life and customs. I was concerned by how tourism negatively impacts the community that consistently safeguards natural and cultural resources. The high volume of tourism in Baduy, coupled with media reports on the community's resistance to tourism, sparked my interest in learning more about this *adat* community. Media coverage portrays the Baduy as an *adat* community with distinct traditional practices threatened by tourism's negative impacts, prompting calls for protective measures and recommendations to preserve their cultural heritage (Intan, 2020; Kustiani & Setiawan, 2020).

My understanding of the Baduy community has been shaped primarily through readings and discussions that foreground their commitments to environmental stewardship, cultural continuity, and traditional custodianship. While I do not have personal or familial connections with the Baduy, my engagement with their context has been guided by an interest in how *adat* operates as part of a broader moral, epistemological, and governance framework shaping social life and relations with outsiders. As a lecturer at one of the universities in Indonesia, I am particularly attentive to how such frameworks complicate dominant assumptions within tourism education, which often privilege economic rationality and managerial approaches. Drawing on this study, the integration of *adat*-based and custodianship-oriented perspectives into the curriculum offers students critical insights into the ethical, relational, and cultural dimensions of tourism practice in Indonesia. Such pedagogical engagement extends beyond introducing *adat* as content, encouraging future tourism professionals to reflect on responsibility, power, and accountability when engaging with indigenous and *adat* communities.

In this research, I position myself as an outsider, not a member of the Baduy community, although I hold concerns that align closely with those of community insiders. I am deeply concerned about the challenges the Baduy face in relation to tourism, and I hope that this research can contribute meaningfully to the continuity of their cultural identity, traditional knowledge, and natural environment. I am honored to have been welcomed by the Baduy community, whose openness and hospitality enabled me to carry out this research. Their generosity has provided invaluable insights into their cultural landscape and the complexities they navigate in maintaining their way of life. I have approached this research with a strong commitment to respect and cultural sensitivity, and I am mindful of the responsibilities that come with representing indigenous perspectives. Furthermore, I recognize that access to

participants was significantly shaped by the role of social connections and trust, which were essential in facilitating meaningful engagement throughout the fieldwork process.

In this study, I built relationships with various individuals, including both members and non-members of the Baduy community, who later offered recommendations regarding potential research participants. These referrals played a crucial role in establishing trust, as informants were more inclined to participate based on endorsements from people they knew. Guided by a reflexive awareness of my role, I aimed to raise broader public awareness, particularly among government authorities, tourism operators, and visitors, about the distinctiveness of the Baduy as a destination. Tourism practices in this community cannot be straightforwardly equated with dominant or generic tourism models, as the Baduy constitute an *adat* community living within a sacred landscape governed by particular cultural and spiritual restrictions. Through extended engagement and immersion in the field, I came to appreciate and internalize the community's deeply held values concerning environmental balance and spiritual integrity. During this process, I experienced a strong sense of sensitivity, empathy, and solidarity, which heightened my attentiveness to the concerns expressed by community members, particularly regarding their relationships and interactions with tourists.

4.3. Data Collections

4.3.1. Case Study: The Baduy Community

The Baduy Community, situated in Kanekes Village, Lebak Regency, Banten, Indonesia, the westernmost province on the Indonesian island of Java, was the site of this study. It is located approximately 150 km from the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta. Around 8,734 people are living in this village (the village where only Baduy people live), which is divided into 68 smaller hamlets (sub-villages). Institutionally, the Baduy people are divided into three groups: *Tangtu*, *Panamping*, and *Dangka*. The *Tangtu* group is made up of the Inner Baduy (as shown in Figure 4.2 as Baduy Dalam), who live in the most remote area of the Baduy region and closely practice the *Adat*. The *Panamping* and *Dangka* community groups, on the other hand, are known as the Outer Baduy (as presented in Figure 4.2 as Baduy Luar) because they are scattered around the Baduy area and reside in many outer sub-villages, as well as other villages.

The majority of the villagers are subsistence farmers. However, they tend to market the surplus of agricultural products outside of the Baduy community. The Baduy population's economy is now based not solely on farming and trading, but also on tourism-related jobs. The rich cultural and ecological sustainability found in Baduy is the primary attraction, particularly

for urban dwellers. This research will focus on the three hamlets of Cibeo, Kaduketug, and Gajeboh (presented in Figure 4.2 and circled in red), as these areas are where most villagers engaged in tourism activities reside and where the majority of tourists visit. This targeted approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the way that the Baduy people maintain traditional custodianship practices in tourism. During this fieldwork, I stayed at the border area of the Kanekes village, close to the entrance to the village. Overall, I completed fieldwork for 73 days, which occurred over five periods of visit, in May (15 days), June (14 days), July to August 2023 (14 days), October to November 2024 (20 days), and May 2025 (10 days).

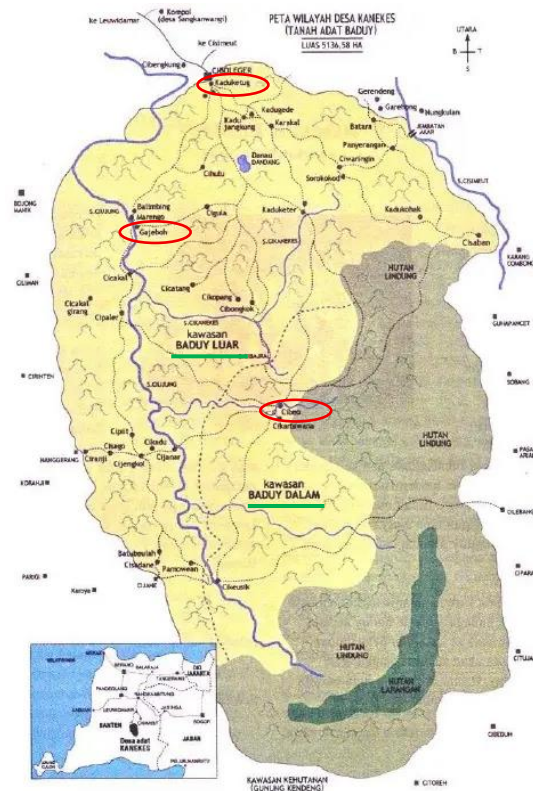


Figure 4.2. The Kanekes Village Map

Source: Erwinantu, 2012

4.3.2. Participant Observation

Participant observation was employed as a central method in this research to capture the everyday realities of the Baduy community and their engagement with tourism. This approach allowed me for close observation and participation in routine activities, providing a deeper understanding of social relations, *adat*-based practices, and local perspectives that might not be accessible through interviews alone. As Belsky (2004) notes, participant observation

facilitates immersion in the field, enabling researchers to grasp the nuances of community life as they unfold in their natural settings. In the context of the Baduy, where customs and daily practices are tightly interwoven with *adat* and ecological ethics, such immersion is essential to understanding how traditional custodianship operates within tourism dynamics. At the same time, I recognized that this method required substantial time, sensitivity, and negotiation of access. It also demands ongoing reflexivity regarding how my presence and positionality shape the field experience (Radel, 2018). To ensure credibility and show respect for indigenous knowledge systems, I sought to foreground the voices and interpretations of the Baduy themselves, rather than imposing external analytical frames.

From the outset of my research journey, I recognized that I could not be fully immersed in the Baduy community, given the need to respect their traditions. Accordingly, drawing on Gold's (2006) typology of participant observation, I adopted a flexible role, shifting between a complete observer, an observer as a participant, or a participant as an observer, depending on the context and the individuals involved in the interaction. This approach was necessary due to varying levels of access to daily activities and types of knowledge available to outsiders, including researchers. Furthermore, as a woman, my mobility and access were inherently limited, given the strong gender roles within the Baduy community. To ensure mutual comfort and respect, I also consciously set boundaries on my participant observation during this research.

Participant observation began with participation in an open trip, during which a complete observer role was assumed, aligned with the position of a tourist or visitor. This initial phase enabled observation of the interactions between the local guide and open trip participants throughout the journey. The open trip also served as an initial point of contact with community members involved in tourism, providing a foundation for building relationships and establishing rapport, an essential step for conducting more in-depth and collaborative research in later phases. Following this stage, initial connections were formed with several Baduy individuals engaged in tourism activities, including the guide who facilitated the trip and the host family in Inner Baduy who provided accommodation. Communication with these individuals was maintained as a foundational effort to foster individual relationships. Additionally, during time spent in the Baduy area, further relationships with community members were developed through spontaneous encounters, such as informal conversations and interactions with local vendors, including the purchase of souvenirs in Kaduketug.

In the later stages, participant observation involved engagement in a range of everyday activities, such as observing women weaving in front of their homes, an activity that not only results in textile production but also serves as a cultural attraction for visitors interested in witnessing traditional weaving practices firsthand. Observations also included craftsmen producing *koja*, a traditional bag made from the bark of the *teureup* tree, as well as accompanying informants in their *saung* (traditional huts) during farming and agricultural work. On other occasions, time was spent sitting on the verandas of houses in Outer Baduy, informally accompanying individuals as they sold food and beverages to visitors, providing opportunities for unstructured yet meaningful interactions.

Kaduketug hamlet, as the village's entrance and initial point of arrival for visitors, experiences higher visitor traffic compared to other hamlets. The pattern of interactions between community members and visitors and the passersby, often engaged in selling souvenirs and agricultural products, was closely examined. Tourism activities tend to intensify during weekends, with a notable increase in visitor numbers compared to weekdays. However, observations were also conducted on weekdays to capture the residents' typical daily routines in a more natural context. Periodic visits to the Baduy community were incorporated into the research process, allowing for intervals of reflection and enabling deeper insights and a refined understanding of the community's traditional custodianship practices within the tourism context.

Additionally, participant observation in Gajeboh hamlet focused on documenting the dynamics of tourism interactions and everyday practices within the community. Attention was given to observing visitor behavior, particularly how tourists engaged with the surrounding environment and interacted with residents. A key aspect of the participant observation involved accompanying and observing local women as they spun thread and wove fabric, activities that hold cultural significance and often attract visitor interest. The observation also included identifying the facilities available for overnight guests, providing insight into the community's preparedness to accommodate tourism. Additionally, the behavior of local hosts in welcoming and interacting with visitors was closely observed, offering a valuable understanding of the social norms, expectations, and degrees of hospitality extended in this setting.

Lastly, participant observation in Cibeo hamlet centered on understanding the mechanisms of tourism facilitation and the host-guest relationship within an Inner Baduy context. This included following a local guide throughout the process of guiding and hosting

visitors, which offered insight into how *adat* norms are communicated and negotiated during tourism encounters. Attention was also given to identifying the types and conditions of facilities provided for overnight guests, including sleeping arrangements and the use of basic amenities, which reflect both the community's hospitality and its adherence to traditional living standards. Furthermore, visitor behavior was observed, particularly that of guests staying overnight and utilizing public facilities, such as bathing areas and communal spaces. These observations shed light on how tourists adapt to and interact with the local environment and social expectations, as well as how the Baduy community navigates the presence of outsiders in a sacred and highly regulated space.

4.3.3. *Semi-structured Interview*

Semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain in-depth and contextually grounded narratives about the Baduy community's engagement with tourism and the ways in which *adat*-based custodianship is understood and practiced. This approach was considered appropriate for generating experiential data that captures individual and collective perspectives within a flexible conversational framework. Unlike structured interviews, the semi-structured format allowed questions to evolve in response to participants' narratives, enabling deeper exploration of locally significant concepts and the meanings attached to them (Clark et al., 1998; Seidman, 2006). The method's adaptability was particularly valuable in a setting where communication is guided by politeness, restraint, and etiquette, requiring sensitivity to local norms and rhythms of conversation. Establishing rapport was therefore essential, not merely as a methodological step but as an ethical practice that recognized the relational nature of knowledge production (Roulston, 2022).

While semi-structured interviews offer opportunities for nuanced, descriptive accounts that enable empathetic engagement with participants (Finn et al., 2000; Picken, 2018), they also present challenges related to researcher influence and participant self-presentation (Henderson, 1991). However, these challenges were mitigated by designing open-ended questions that encouraged reflection, rather than eliciting predetermined responses (McIntosh & Morse, 2015), and by practicing active and responsive listening (McGrath et al., 2019). Through this approach, I sought to make the interview process a dialogical space that balanced attentiveness to participants' voices with critical reflexivity about my own positionality and interpretive role as the researcher.

In addition to participant observation, semi-structured interviews were carried out to deepen the understanding of how tourism practices are experienced and negotiated within the Baduy community. Rather than following a rigid structure, the interviews unfolded as conversational exchanges shaped by local norms of communication and respect. This approach created space for participants to narrate their experiences and interpretations in their own terms, allowing meanings to emerge naturally through dialogue (Kvale, 1996). The flexibility of the conversations also reflected the community's preference for oral interaction over formal questioning, fostering trust and mutual engagement. Interviews were conducted with a diverse group of participants, including local guides and porters, sellers of handicrafts and agricultural products, hosts who receive overnight guests, traditional elders, members of tourism-related organizations, and local craftsmen, selected purposively from both the Inner and Outer Baduy. This selection ensured that multiple perspectives central to tourism encounters and *adat* custodianship were represented in the data.

Table 4.1. List of the Interview Participants of the Baduy People

Number	Code	Gender	Age (approximately)	Hamlet
1	LL1	Male	52	Inner Baduy
2	LL2	Male	48	Inner Baduy
3	LL3	Male	63	Inner Baduy
4	LL4	Male	43	Outer Baduy
5	LL5	Male	57	Outer Baduy
6	LG1	Male	37	Inner Baduy
7	LG2	Male	23	Inner Baduy
8	LG3	Male	35	Outer Baduy
9	LG4	Male	43	Outer Baduy
10	LG5	Male	55	Inner Baduy
11	LG6	Male	56	Outer Baduy
12	LH1	Male	40	Outer Baduy
13	LH1	Female	30	Inner Baduy
14	LH2	Female	29	Outer Baduy
15	LO1	Male	55	Outer Baduy
16	LO2	Male	44	Outer Baduy

17	LC1	Male	46	Outer Baduy
18	LC2	Female	29	Outer Baduy
19	LS1	Female	25	Outer Baduy
20	LS2	Male	36	Outer Baduy

Source: The Researcher's Data

The gender composition of the interview participants, comprising 16 men and 4 women, as shown in Table 1, reflects the gendered nature of social and economic roles within the Baduy community. Men are more visibly involved in tourism-related activities such as guiding visitors, managing tourism activities, carrying visitors' goods as porters, and engaging in discussions with outsiders. Moreover, positions within the *adat* institution are exclusively held by men, further shaping the representation of male voices in matters related to governance and authority. Conversely, women's participation in tourism tends to be more domestic and craft-based, such as weaving and selling souvenirs, and often occurs within the household sphere¹. These dynamics influenced both the accessibility of potential participants and the scope of information relevant to the study's focus on custodianship and tourism practices.

Semi-structured interviews were designed to explore the characteristics and components of tourism as practiced within the Baduy community. Informants were asked about strategies for safeguarding customs and traditions, as well as the protection of natural and cultural assets. The interviews also examined local experiences with tourism-related activities and their interactions with visitors in their roles as custodians. A key area of inquiry involved how community members conceptualize and develop *adat*-based tourism as a means of protecting and sustaining *adat*. Most interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, as many individuals actively involved in tourism are fluent in the language. However, the Baduy language was used in interviews with two traditional elders, with translation support provided by a former Baduy member who hosted me in a neighboring village. Interview durations ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. While the majority were audio-recorded, three interviews conducted in Inner Baduy hamlets were not recorded due to prohibitions on the use of electronic devices. In such instances, detailed note-taking was employed to capture key phrases and essential responses, ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the data for subsequent analysis.

Prior to each interview, the research objectives and intentions were clearly explained to all participants to obtain their verbal consent. In the context of the Baduy community, verbal consent was prioritized over written consent due to several culturally grounded considerations.

The community maintains strong oral traditions and social norms that place greater value on verbal agreements than on written documentation. Honoring these practices fosters trust, respects cultural sensitivities, and promotes meaningful cooperation. Moreover, although written culture has gradually entered the community through external and modern influences, many members continue to adhere to oral modes of communication as part of their customary way of life. Consequently, verbal consent emerges as a culturally appropriate and inclusive approach that accommodates all members of the community, regardless of their engagement with written or oral forms of expression.

Some participants initially expressed concern regarding the purpose of the interview, fearing that their responses might lead to negative consequences in the future. To address these concerns, the research objectives were clearly communicated, along with assurances that the information shared would remain anonymous. Participants were informed of their right to decline answering any questions they found uncomfortable and to terminate the interview at any point. During the preliminary phase of fieldwork, formal ethical approval was not sought, as this stage was exploratory in nature, aimed at acquiring general insights into the Baduy community and their involvement in tourism. This early engagement primarily served to build familiarity with the community and establish the foundation for more in-depth inquiry. However, for the second phase of fieldwork, ethical approval was formally obtained, reflecting the transition to a deeper investigation of traditional custodianship practices. Securing ethical clearance for this stage ensured adherence to principles of participant welfare, privacy, and informed consent, in alignment with established research ethics standards.

4.3.4. *Secondary Data Collection*

Secondary data were reviewed to complement primary data and to provide a historical and contextual understanding of the Baduy community, their *adat* practices, and engagements with tourism. These sources included prior ethnographic studies, academic literature on Baduy society and tourism, and relevant local policy documents, which offered insights into dimensions not directly observable during fieldwork (Taherdoost, 2021; Vartanian, 2010). In particular, earlier ethnographic work helped situate contemporary practices of traditional custodianship within longer-standing constructions of Baduy *adat*, while policy documentation informed the analysis of *adat*-based governance in tourism contexts. Secondary sources were critically assessed for relevance and credibility, and were used in conjunction with primary data from interviews and participant observation to support triangulation and interpretation (Irwin & Winterton, 2011; Martins et al., 2018; Rubin & Babbie, 2008).

4.4. Data Analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis as an interpretive and iterative approach to qualitative inquiry (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). This approach offered a systematic yet flexible means of identifying, interpreting, and reporting patterns of meaning across the dataset, while explicitly acknowledging the researcher's active role in meaning-making. Consistent with Denzin & Lincoln's (2011) understanding of qualitative research, the analysis attended to phenomena as they unfold in natural settings, with meaning derived from participants' accounts of lived experience.

Furthermore, an inductive orientation guided coding and theme development, allowing patterns to emerge from the data rather than being shaped by predefined categories. Analysis focused primarily on surface or manifest meanings, using an experiential lens to foreground participants' perspectives and understandings as articulated in their narratives. Meaning-making was treated as a recursive process, developed through repeated engagement with the data, reflexive interpretation, and theoretical sensitivity. Adopting a constructivist and relativist stance (Mills et al., 2006; Radel, 2018), the analysis engaged with the plurality of realities expressed across the dataset, ensuring that participants' meanings guided interpretation while reflexivity remained central throughout the analytical process.

The analytical process began with prolonged familiarization with interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and textual materials, involving repeated reading to develop a holistic sense of the dataset. During this stage, I produced analytic notes that recorded early impressions, questions, and emerging patterns, while also attending to how my assumptions, prior knowledge, and positionality shaped what became most noticeable. Familiarization was approached as an interpretive and reflexive practice rather than a preliminary technical step, allowing meanings to surface gradually through sustained immersion and attentiveness to nuance.

Following familiarization, the data were subjected to a systematic and reflexive coding process in which concise codes were generated to capture significant meanings across interviews, fieldnotes, policy documents, and other relevant materials, with attention to patterns recurring across participants and contexts (Lochmiller, 2021; Saldaña, 2015). These patterned codes were progressively clustered into broader analytic categories that served as the foundation for theme development. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to support data organization, code management, and cross-data comparison, facilitating the

merging, refinement, and reorganization of codes and themes while interpretive judgement remained central to the analysis.

Accordingly, themes were developed not as descriptive summaries but as interpretive accounts that explained how meanings, values, and practices were articulated, negotiated, and sustained across the dataset. Throughout the process, themes were reviewed and refined in relation to both the coded extracts and the dataset, to strengthen analytic coherence and depth. Writing functioned as an integral part of the analytic process, through which interpretations were further developed and situated within broader theoretical debates, allowing the analysis to move from patterned meanings toward explanatory insights aligned with the study's conceptual concerns.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central throughout this study, guiding how research participants were approached, engaged, and represented. However, the application of universal or Western-oriented research ethics was not always appropriate, as ethical principles are often grounded in specific cultural values and belief systems (Msoroka & Amundsen, 2018). Therefore, this study sought to decolonize research ethics by adopting a more appreciative and respectful approach toward indigenous ways of knowing and being (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). As the Baduy people were active participants in this research, it was essential to obtain their informed consent, ensure a shared understanding of the research aims and methods, involve them meaningfully throughout the research process, and share the findings in a transparent and culturally appropriate manner.

The initial step undertaken to address ethical considerations was obtaining formal ethical approval, which the Hokkaido University Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and Tourism Studies Research Ethics Review Committee granted. Nonetheless, the ethical conduct of research extends beyond institutional clearance procedures. Ethical decision-making is inherently situational and contextual, requiring responsiveness and sensitivity to the specific cultural and social dynamics of the research setting rather than strict adherence to predetermined codes or universal principles. In the context of conducting research in Baduy, ethical engagement was therefore grounded in deep respect for the community's cultural values, traditions, and *adat*-based governance structures.

Before commencing the fieldwork, I met with *Jaro Pamarentah*². During this meeting, I explained the purpose of my visit and briefly introduced my research. I then presented an

informed consent form to *Jaro Pamarentah* to seek collective consent, as he represents the Baduy community in dealings with outsiders. However, *Jaro Pamarentah* handed the document to his secretary, an ex-Baduy member, to read and interpret its contents to him. This situation made it evident that providing a written document was culturally inappropriate, considering the oral tradition that underpins Baduy social and communicative practices. From that point onward, I refrained from using written consent forms and instead sought verbal consent, which was more culturally acceptable and aligned with local customs. Such culturally sensitive approaches and alignment with indigenous traditions are essential to conducting ethically sound and de-colonially informed research.

Furthermore, in aligning with the local values and beliefs, I am committed to strictly following community codes of conduct, such as dress codes³, restrictions on technology use, particularly in Inner Baduy, gender-related approaches, and other behavioral guidelines, to ensure that my presence does not disrupt spiritual and social harmony. Participatory approaches, where knowledge is co-produced rather than extracted, are crucial to ensuring that the research benefits the community and aligns with their worldview. Transparency, reciprocity, and ongoing communication with the research participants help uphold ethical integrity while fostering trust and long-term engagement.

To ensure transparency and reciprocity, the emerging themes from the analysis were checked and discussed with several key participants to confirm that the interpretations aligned with their lived realities and local meanings. Rather than presenting formal written results, I engaged in informal conversations to share the insights that had emerged from the study. This process not only served as a form of member validation but also as a way to return knowledge to the community. Meanwhile, reciprocity was expressed through several forms of engagement, including: (1) respectfully following local norms and work routines during fieldwork; (2) collaborating with participants to explore the indigenous knowledge of the Baduy; and (3) producing relevant educational videos aimed at raising awareness among future visitors and the public about Baduy indigenous knowledge and worldview. These reciprocal practices strengthened trust, ensured ethical integrity, and affirmed the research as a shared and respectful process.

4.6. Limitations

Conducting research in the Baduy community involved navigating a complex system of *adat* norms and cultural expectations that shaped every stage of the research process. Careful

attention was required to ensure that interactions, lines of questioning, and observational practices did not violate *adat* rules governing appropriate conduct, spatial access, and permissible topics of discussion. This necessitated a cautious and reflexive approach, at times resulting in the deliberate avoidance of questions that might be perceived as intrusive or disrespectful. While this self-restraint limited the scope of certain inquiries, it was essential for maintaining ethical engagement and trust, and it fundamentally shaped the depth and direction of the data collected.

Access to Kanekes village and participation in ritual activities were also subject to strict restrictions. As is the case for all outsiders, I was not permitted to stay more than one night in Inner Baduy and more than three nights in Outer Baduy, and access to sacred rituals was highly regulated. Consequently, my understanding of ritual practices and their relationship to tourism relied primarily on participants' narratives rather than prolonged immersion or direct observation. While this constrained the extent of experiential engagement, it also foregrounded local interpretations and meanings, positioning community members' accounts as central sources of knowledge.

Further limitations arose from the prohibition of electronic devices in Inner Baduy, including audio recorders, cameras, and mobile phones. This restriction required reliance on handwritten notes during interviews and observations, which posed challenges in capturing the full nuance and detail of participants' narratives. The inability to record interviews limited opportunities for later verification and fine-grained analysis, and note-taking occasionally disrupted the natural flow of conversation. Nonetheless, this constraint reinforced the importance of attentive listening, immediate reflexive interpretation, and ethical sensitivity, shaping both the form and substance of the data generated.

Another challenge encountered during fieldwork was the limited verbal elaboration provided by some participants. Several interviews were characterized by brief or non-elaborative responses, including short statements, vague answers, or non-verbal affirmations, even when questions were framed in accessible and culturally sensitive ways. This pattern may reflect individual communicative preferences or broader norms of verbal restraint within the Baduy community. As a result, generating richly detailed accounts required careful interpretation and triangulation across interviews, observations, and secondary sources. To encourage more expansive dialogue, indirect conversational strategies were adopted, such as discussing everyday practices, historical experiences, or customary life before introducing

tourism-related topics. Despite these efforts, brevity remained a recurring constraint that shaped both the depth and form of the data.

Gender dynamics also influenced the research process. As a female researcher engaging with predominantly male domains of *adat* governance and tourism management, certain interactions were marked by social formality and moments of discomfort. One-on-one interviews with male participants were often conducted in open or public settings to maintain cultural propriety, which occasionally limited the intimacy and depth of discussion. To navigate these constraints, I adapted my approach by seeking assistance from intermediaries when appropriate, helping to facilitate introductions and create a more comfortable conversational setting that aligned with local norms.

Taken together, these limitations underscore the challenges of conducting qualitative research within a highly regulated *adat* context. While such constraints shaped the scope and depth of the data collected, they also reinforced the importance of methodological flexibility and ethical-cultural sensitivity. The findings of this study should therefore be understood as situated and partial, reflecting the perspectives accessed under *adat*-prescribed conditions rather than as comprehensive representations of the Baduy community as a whole.

4.7. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this constructivist qualitative study was approached as an ongoing, reflexive, and context-sensitive process grounded in ethical accountability to the Baduy community and attentiveness to participants' lived realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Rather than striving for objectivity or replicability, the study emphasized credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as interpretive criteria aligned with co-constructed knowledge. These criteria guided the analytic process by foregrounding contextual depth, multiplicity of perspectives, and reflexivity in knowledge production (Anney, 2014; Tracy, 2010).

Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement and immersion in both Inner and Outer Baduy areas, enabling sustained rapport building and a deeper understanding of *adat* values, social relations, and tourism practices. Triangulation across interviews, participant observation, fieldnotes, village regulations, and secondary sources supported interpretive robustness, while informal member checking with *adat* leaders, guides, and hosts helped ensure that emerging interpretations resonated with participants' experiences. Transferability was

strengthened through the provision of rich, thick descriptions of the research context, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other indigenous or *adat*-based tourism settings. Dependability and confirmability were supported through systematic documentation of the research process, including an audit trail and reflexive journaling to make visible the researcher's positionality and analytic decisions, alongside peer debriefing and expert consultation to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017).

This chapter has outlined the study's methodological foundation, including its constructivist qualitative approach, data collection strategies, and commitments to ethical integrity and trustworthiness. Through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and reflexive engagement, the research captures the complexity of *adat*, indigenous knowledge, traditional custodianship, and tourism in the Baduy context. Prolonged engagement, member checking, and triangulation support a contextually-grounded, community-accountable understanding of how indigenous governance and knowledge systems shape local responses to tourism. The empirical chapters that follow draw directly on these methodological commitments, presenting findings derived from multiple layers of data. Together, these sources illuminate how *adat* operates as a living knowledge system and a governing mechanism within tourism, tracing the evolution of tourism in Kanekes and analyzing how *adat*-based values guide community engagement, mediate interactions with visitors, and sustain traditional custodianship of land and culture. In this way, the methodological principles outlined in this chapter inform the interpretation of the empirical materials and underpin the overall analytical argument of the dissertation.

Chapter 5: Living *Adat*: The Indigenous Knowledge, Values, and Worldview of the Baduy People

In the context of tourism involving *masyarakat adat* in Indonesia, the Baduy community offers a compelling case study due to the uniqueness and resilience of their cultural system, which is deeply embedded in ancestral teachings. Rather than treating their practices, beliefs, and social structures as isolated phenomena, understanding the Baduy through the lens of *adat* reveals an integrated epistemic framework that guides knowledge, moral conduct, and ways of being. Their principles and way of life, transmitted through generations, continue to shape their interactions with the natural and spiritual world, providing insights into how indigenous knowledge systems govern daily life, communal ethics, and environmental custodianship.

Among Indonesian *masyarakat adat*, the Baduy stand out for the continuity and strength of their customary system, the distinctiveness of their sociocultural organization, and their capacity to maintain cultural and epistemic integrity in the face of external pressures, including tourism. Their socio-cultural organization, ritual practices, and ethical principles collectively operate as a living system of knowledge and moral order, illustrating how *adat* functions as both a practical and philosophical guide for life. This chapter examines the Baduy community not merely as a cultural group, but as an embodiment of an indigenous epistemology. By foregrounding *adat* as a framework for understanding the Baduy, this chapter emphasizes the ways in which knowledge, values, and worldview are inseparable from daily life, ritual, and custodial responsibility.

5.1. Ancestral Continuity and the Temporal Dimension of *Adat*

The origins of the Baduy people, though uncertain, are deeply embedded in both historical narratives and spiritual cosmologies, reflecting the temporal dimension of their *adat* as an epistemic framework. From an emic perspective, the Baduy trace their ancestry to primordial humans, believing that their current homeland is the site where the earth was first created (Adimihardja, 2000; Iskandar, 1998). Such oral histories are not mere stories but serve as a living cosmology, situating the community within a sacred temporal order that connects past, present, and future generations. This worldview emphasizes continuity with ancestors and the land, reflecting a broader indigenous epistemology in which the natural environment, spiritual forces, and human conduct are inseparable domains of knowledge and moral responsibility.

Meanwhile, external interpretations or etic perspectives offer additional insights that complement this indigenous framework. Historical and textual analyses suggest that the Baduy

may descend from an ascetic group residing in sacred forests during pre-Islamic times⁴ (van Zanten, 2021) or from communities fleeing the collapse of the Hindu Kingdom of Padjajaran under advancing Islamic powers (Wessing & Barendregt, 2005). Whether interpreted as ascetics or refugees, these perspectives highlight the community's long-standing engagement with sacred landscapes and their strategies for social cohesion and survival. Notably, such accounts intersect with the emic understanding of ancestral continuity, reinforcing the epistemic centrality of the land, ritual, and lineage in shaping identity and moral practice.

The mandala concept further illuminates the temporal and spatial dimensions of Baduy's cosmology. As a sacred, sanctified space defined from surrounding wilderness, the mandala functions as a buffer zone that protects both the physical and spiritual integrity of the community (Dellios, 2003; Manggala, 2013). Within this cosmological framework, adherence, agricultural, and ritual practice are intertwined, forming a continuous cycle that links ancestral authority to contemporary governance. In the pre-colonial era⁵, the relationship between the mandala community and regional rulers exemplified mutual dependence, where the Baduy provided spiritual legitimacy to kings, while the rulers offered protection and recognized their autonomy⁶ (Ekadjati, 1995; Wessing & Barendregt, 2005). These historical arrangements underscore how the temporal dimension of *adat* is inseparable from ethical, spiritual, and practical knowledge.

Additionally, the differentiation between Inner and Outer Baduy illustrates the interplay between ancestry, ritual adherence, and adaptive social structures. The Inner Baduy (*Tangtu*), occupying the sacred zones, embody strict adherence to ancestral mandates, sustaining ritual cycles, ethical discipline, and spiritual practices. The Outer Baduy (*Panamping* and *Dangka*), while allowing some interaction with outsiders, continue to align with the ethical and cosmological order established by their ancestors (Alfira & Uekita, 2023; Mulyani, 2023). This social division reflects not merely a spatial or administrative arrangement but an epistemic distinction, wherein each group enacts and transmits knowledge, values, and ethical principles that maintain the integrity of the Baduy's ancestral system.

The Baduy's identity, as expressed through naming practices and relationships to place, reinforces *adat* as an indigenous epistemological framework. Rather than relying on definitive etymological origins, this study examines how names such as Baduy⁷ and Urang Kanekes⁸ function as markers of belonging, territorial custodianship, and moral authority within Baduy society (Erwinantu, 2012; Iskandar, 1998; van Zanten, 2021). Recognition of these identities

exemplifies how the Baduy maintain continuity with their forebears, asserting both epistemic sovereignty and cultural integrity while navigating historical and contemporary pressures.

5.2. Spiritual Ecology and Cosmological Order

The spiritual life of the Baduy is deeply intertwined with their ecological environment, reflecting an integrated cosmology in which nature, morality, and human conduct are inseparable. Central to this system is the Sunda Wiwitan belief, an ancestral tradition regarded as the original form of Sundanese religiosity, centered on the prophet Adam Tunggal (Suryani, 2021; van Zanten, 2021). Unlike religions with codified scriptures or ritualized prayers, Sunda Wiwitan conveys knowledge and ethical guidance through the natural world itself. In this worldview, the Baduy are tasked with maintaining ecological balance, exemplifying a form of indigenous knowledge in which moral responsibility and environmental custodianship are mutually constitutive (Iskandar, 1998; Suryani, 2021).

This cosmological order is further expressed through a dual social categorization of people into hermits or ascetics (*nu napakeun*) and those managing worldly affairs (*nu ngaramekeun dunya*), with the Baduy fulfilling the former role (Suryani, 2021; van Zanten, 2021). Such distinctions reflect an epistemic orientation in which knowledge, practice, and ethics are inseparable, where the ascetic life is not only a form of spiritual discipline but also a deliberate enactment of environmental and social responsibility. This ethos is codified in the *Pikukuh* and *Buyut*, guiding prohibitions and ethical mandates that regulate relationships with land, water, forests, and other human and non-human beings.

The Baduy uphold phrases used for guiding principles, moral imperatives, and ethical codes (Suryani, 2021). These include *Buyut nu ditiitipakeun ka Puun* (the taboos which are entrusted to *Puun*)⁹; *Nagara satelung puluh telu* (thirty-three domains)¹⁰; *Bangawan sawidak lima* (sixty-five rivers)¹¹; and *Pancer salawe nagara* (the center of twenty-five domains)¹². They also emphasize environmental protection, such as *Gunung teu menang dilebur* (mountains may not be destroyed)¹³; and *Lebak teu meunang dirusak* (valleys may not be destroyed)¹⁴. Spatial and moral boundaries are further articulated through *Larangan teu meunang dirempak* (forbidden zones must not be violated)¹⁵ and *Buyut teu meunang dirobah* (taboos may not be changed)¹⁶. Other phrases articulate principles of restraint and balance, including *Lojor teu menang dipotong* (length may not be cut)¹⁷ and *Pondok teu meunang disambung* (Shortness may not be lengthened)¹⁸. Finally, social and moral order is reinforced

through *Nu lain kudu dilainkeun* (what does not belong must be kept separate)¹⁹; *Nu ulah kudu diulahkeun* (what is forbidden must remain forbidden)²⁰; and *Nu eunya kudu dieunyakkeun* (what is true must be upheld)²¹.

Taken together, these guiding phrases articulate a coherent moral and cosmological framework through which the Baduy understand how the world should be lived in and cared for. Rather than functioning as isolated rules, they collectively express principles of restraint, continuity, and separation, emphasizing the protection of sacred landscapes, the immutability of ancestral taboos, and the maintenance of proper boundaries. These principles are essential to the Baduy because they ground everyday conduct, ritual observance, and environmental custodianship in a shared ethical order entrusted to *adat* authority, particularly the *Puun*. In this sense, the phrases operate not merely as prohibitions but as an integrated ethical system that sustains social harmony, spiritual balance, and the long-term continuity of Baduy life.

Additionally, under the guidance of the *Puun*, the Baduy also perform specific ritual duties, including *Ngareksakeun sasaka Pusaka Buana*²²; *Ngareksakeun sasaka domas*²³; *Ngasuh ratu ngajayak menak*²⁴; *Ngabaratapakeun nusa telu puluh telu, bangawan sawidak lima, pancer selawe nagara*²⁵; *Kalanjakan kapundayan*²⁶; and *Ngukus ngawalu muja ngalaksa*²⁷ (Saputra, 2017). These ritual duties constitute a structured cycle of custodial practice through which the Baduy actively sustain the moral, spiritual, and ecological order of their world. Rather than functioning as isolated ceremonies, they reaffirm obligations to ancestral mandates, territorial balance, and collective responsibility, while reinforcing discipline, social cohesion, and continuity across generations. These rituals are essential to the Baduy because they enact *adat* in practice, translating cosmological principles into lived responsibilities that maintain harmony between humans, nature, and the ancestral realm.

5.3. Living *Adat*: Embodied Knowledge, Everyday Ethics, and Ways of Being

The Baduy's way of life represents more than a collection of customs or religious observances. It is an embodied form of *adat* that sustains ways of knowing, valuing, and being through everyday practice. Rooted in their origins as an ascetic and mandala community, the Baduy have continuously maintained a mode of existence that diverges sharply from the paths of mainstream society (Iskandar, 1998; Iskandar & Iskandar, 2017; van Zanten, 2021). This continuity is not the product of isolation alone, but of a deliberate adherence to a moral and cosmological order that defines what it means to live rightly within the world.

The principles of *Pikukuh* and *Buyut*, derived from Sunda Wiwitan, constitute the axiological, ontological, and epistemological foundations of this order. These principles, though unwritten, carry binding authority because they are enacted rather than codified, and are embodied through conduct, agricultural practice, rituals, and restraints (Halmahera et al., 2020; Oktaviani, 2016). The enforcement of *Pikukuh* by the *Puun* and the avoidance of *Buyut* are not only mechanisms of social regulation, but also acts of knowledge preservation. Through them, the Baduy reproduce and transmit ancestral teachings that link moral integrity with ecological balance. Thus, *adat* operates as a living axio-onto-epistemology, where knowledge, value, and being are intertwined: to know is to live properly, and to live properly is to sustain the continuity of the world.

This embodied knowledge is also reflected in the Baduy's agricultural system of *huma*, an *adat*-based swidden cultivation. Rather than a mere economic activity, *nga-huma* (the practice of cultivating the fields) constitutes an ethical and cosmological act that maintains continuity with the ancestors. The principle that rice and other crops be cultivated only on non-irrigated land, as illustrated in Figure 5.1 through a typical *huma* field, reflects an understanding of nature's rhythm and limitation (Iskandar, 1998; van Zanten, 2021). Each cycle of planting and harvesting embodies reciprocal relations with the unseen realm, such as the offering of new rice to the ancestors that ensures the continuity of life and reaffirms the moral bond between human, non-human, and environment (Iskandar, 1998; Nadroh, 2018).

Central to this ecological ethic is the veneration of *Pohaci Sanghyang Asri* or *Nyi Pohaci*, the rice goddess who personifies fertility and sustenance (Ichwandi & Shinohara, 2007). Additionally, the Baduy's agricultural rituals, regulated by their indigenous calendar, serve as more than mere seasonal markers. They are temporal enactments of moral order, aligning human activity with cosmic balance (Ichwandi & Shinohara, 2007; Iskandar, 1998; Mirajiani et al., 2019). Through these rituals, the Baduy reaffirm the interdependence between humans, land, and spiritual forces, illustrating a holistic worldview and the inseparability of economic, ecological, and spiritual life.

The Baduy's enduring seclusion and cultural continuity, therefore, should not be understood merely as resistance to modernity or change, but as a conscious act of world-making, a continuous performance of *adat* that preserves the integrity of both moral and ecological life (Iskandar, 1998; Sodikin, 2022; van Zanten, 2021). Their way of life embodies a deeply

situated form of indigenous knowledge in which epistemology is lived through discipline, restraint, and reverence for the natural and spiritual worlds.



Figure 5.1. A Non-Irrigated Rice Field Symbolizing the Practice of Traditional Agriculture in Baduy

Source: Photo courtesy of Anisa Eka Putri Kusmayani (a researcher encountered during fieldwork in Baduy), used with permission.

The Baduy's spiritual ecology extends beyond agricultural practice to encompass an ethic of water and landscape custodianship. Their identity as a mandala community, structured around sacred spatial and moral order, implies that maintaining purity is both a physical and spiritual responsibility (Adimihardja, 2000; Hakim, 2006; Wessing & Barendregt, 2005). Rivers and water sources are regarded not simply as natural resources but as living entities within a cosmological network that sustains life. Purity of water reflects purity of the self and community, and contamination is interpreted as a disruption of moral balance rather than merely environmental degradation. The avoidance of modern chemical products and the use of natural plant-based materials for cleansing (Erwinantu, 2012; Hakim, 2006) reveal an ecological consciousness embedded in ritual and ethical discipline. Through such practices, the Baduy enact a relational axio-onto-epistemology, knowing nature through care, restraint, and intimacy rather than domination. This reflects an ontological stance in which humans are custodians of the world's order, responsible for ensuring the continued vitality of natural and spiritual realms (Kenedy & Deffinika, 2022).

Similarly, the Baduy's simplicity in lifestyle embodies a moral system of self-discipline and resistance. Their ascetic mode of life, manifested in clothing, housing, and material restraint, operates as a social code that reaffirms humility, purity, and separation from the excesses of the outside world (Erwinantu, 2012; van Zanten, 2021; Widayati et al., 2019). Dress is not a matter of cultural style but of moral distinction. The white and black garments of the

Inner Baduy (as shown in Figure 5.3) symbolize purity, moderation, and devotion, while the slightly more colored and varied attire of the Outer Baduy, as illustrated in Figure 5.2, marks a negotiated boundary between adaptation and adherence (Jacobs, 2024; van Zanten, 2021). The absence of footwear is a physical manifestation of this ethical principle, a literal grounding of the self in the earth and a symbolic rejection of modern convenience (Enjang, 2022).

These practices of simplicity and restraint form part of what may be understood as embodied knowledge ethics, a system in which moral conduct, sensory experience, and cosmological order are intertwined. Through their regulated relations with the material world, the Baduy internalize *adat* as both epistemology and discipline, where to live simply is to know the world rightly, and to know rightly is to sustain life in balance. The aesthetic of modesty, then, is not a static tradition but a continuous ethical performance, reaffirming the Baduy worldview that knowledge, being, and morality are inseparable dimensions of the same cosmic order.



Figure 5.2. An Outer Baduy Woman in Traditional Clothing

Source: Photo by the author, taken during fieldwork in 2023



Figure 5.3. An Inner Baduy Man Wearing Traditional Clothing While Guiding Visitors to Cibeo

Source: Photo by the author, taken during fieldwork in 2024

Nonetheless, the architecture of Baduy settlements constitutes a living manifestation of *adat*, a material articulation of moral order, ecological consciousness, and ancestral continuity. The *Imah* (house) is not merely a physical dwelling but a cosmological construct that embodies the principles of balance, restraint, and relational harmony that underpin Baduy life (Barendregt & Wessing, 2008; Iskandar, 1998; Widayati et al., 2019). The Inner Baduy adhere to strict regulations concerning building materials, relying exclusively on bamboo, wood, and *kiray* leaves sourced from their immediate environment (Solikhah, 2020), as presented in the traditional housing shown in Figures 5.4 and 5.5. This deliberate dependence on local materials is not a matter of aesthetic choice but a moral and ecological commitment, an enactment of the principle that human life must not exceed or exploit the limits of the natural world. Thus, building a house becomes a ritualized practice of knowing and maintaining balance, a material reflection of *Pikukuh* and *Buyut* in everyday life.



Figure 5.4. Houses at Gajeboh Hamlet

Source: Photo by the author, taken during fieldwork in 2023



Figure 5.5. One of the Neighborhoods in Outer Baduy

Source: Photo by the author, taken during fieldwork in 2024

The spatial organization of the *Imah* reveals the Baduy's relational and moral worldview, where each section (*Golodog*, *Sosoro*, *Tepas*, and inner *Imah*) encodes gradations of intimacy, social interaction, and purity (Barendregt & Wessing, 2008; Solikhah, 2020). The *Golodog*, serving as a boundary between the outer world and domestic space, mediates initial social encounters and the negotiation of moral boundaries. The *Sosoro* functions as a shared zone for receiving guests and extended family, reflecting the ethic of kinship and hospitality central to Baduy life (Susilowati et al., 2020; Widayati et al., 2019). Positioned between the public *Sosoro* and the inner *Imah*, the *Tepas* operates as a semi-private space where family members gather to converse with neighbors or receive close relatives, while remaining inaccessible to ordinary visitors. Beyond its social function, the *Tepas* also serves as a kitchen, storage area, and occasional sleeping space, embodying the integration of practical, relational, and moral life in daily routines. The inner *Imah*, the innermost and most sacred section, represents the spiritual and domestic core where ancestral values are enacted and transmitted through acts such as eating, sleeping, and storytelling (Alfira, 2022). Collectively, the *Imah* operates as a microcosm of Baduy cosmology, where the gradations of space mirror the distinctions between sacred and profane, communal and individual, and moral responsibility in everyday practice.

Complementing the *Imah* is the *Leuit* (rice barn), as shown in Figure 5.6, another central structure in Baduy architecture and an embodiment of their cosmological economy. The *Leuit* safeguards not only rice as a primary food source but also the moral principle to protect the life force symbolized by rice, personified in the figure of *Pohaci Sanghyang Asri* (Hakiki, 2025; Iskandar, 1998). As a self-contained and elevated structure made from bamboo and wood, the *Leuit* symbolizes self-sufficiency, humility, and gratitude. It functions simultaneously as an instrument of food security and a site of moral practice, ensuring that every household maintains a respectful relationship with the cycles of nature. The presence of the *Leuit* owned by each household underscores the Baduy's epistemic emphasis on sustainability as both a spiritual and practical virtue.

Nevertheless, the bamboo bridges that connect Baduy settlements extend this architectural philosophy into the landscape itself. Constructed without nails or modern tools, as presented in Figure 5.7, these bridges exemplify a form of ecological intelligence grounded in ancestral knowledge and communal cooperation. Their impermanence, being subject to natural decay and periodic renewal, reflects the Baduy understanding of impermanence and regeneration, reinforcing a worldview in which all human creations must remain in balance with natural cycles. Rather than asserting human dominance over nature, these structures

express humility and harmony with the environment, transforming architecture into an ethical dialogue between humans and the landscape.



Figure 5.6. Leuit in Outer Baduy

Source: Photo by the author, taken during fieldwork in 2023



Figure 5.7. A Bamboo Bridge in Gajeboh Hamlet

Source: Photo by the author, taken during fieldwork in 2024

Through these architectural forms, the Baduy materialize *adat* as lived epistemology. The *Imah*, *Leuit*, and bamboo bridges are not static cultural relics but active pedagogies through which values of restraint, cooperation, and balance are taught and embodied. The built environment thus serves as a memory-triggering landscape, a continuous reminder that knowledge, ethics, and dwelling are inseparable dimensions of living *adat*.

Another binding rule among the Baduy people is the avoidance of all forms of modernity, including electricity, formal education, and transportation, which collectively shape a mode of life that resembles ascetic hermitage (Sukanto & Hakim, 2024; van Zanten, 2021). All electronic devices are considered taboo and must be avoided. Since no electricity is

supplied to Kanekes Village, the area remains dark at night, with households relying solely on traditional oil lighting made from coconut shells, oil, and wicks.

Modern schooling also constitutes a taboo within Baduy *adat*, reflecting their broader ascetic orientation. Formal education is regarded as incompatible with the Baduy worldview and potentially disruptive to their values and ways of life (Saleh et al., 2020; van Zanten, 2021). Instead, children are educated through the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, in both familial and communal contexts. Learning occurs through everyday participation, by observing, imitating, and engaging in communal work. This indigenous education includes farming and agricultural techniques, house construction, religious observance, cultural norms, taboos, and artisanal crafts such as weaving and garment making (Muslim, 2021; van Zanten, 2021). The Baduy people maintain a predominantly oral tradition, with knowledge transmitted through speech, storytelling, and ritual (Hakim, 2006; Sholih et al., 2020).

Similarly, the prohibition against the use of transportation reflects another important dimension of embodied *adat* practice. Within Kanekes village, all forms of transport are strictly forbidden. For the Inner Baduy, this taboo carries symbolic significance as part of their ascetic adherence, requiring them to travel entirely on foot and go barefoot in accordance with their traditional way of life (Kenedy & Deffinika, 2022). Among the Outer Baduy, however, the rules are more flexible. They may use vehicles outside the Kanekes village boundaries, but refrain from bringing them into the village itself (Sutoto, 2017). In accordance with their belief system, walking is not merely a practical choice but an act of devotion, an embodied expression of humility, endurance, and commitment to ancestral teachings (Fitriyani et al., 2023; van Zanten, 2021).

These practices, ranging from the construction of traditional houses to the rejection of electricity, formal schooling, and mechanized transport, are not merely markers of cultural distinctiveness but living expressions of *adat* as embodied knowledge and ethical orientation. Through these material and behavioral disciplines, the Baduy enact a way of life that continually reaffirms their ancestral commitment to the natural and spiritual order. The Baduy house, lighting practices, oral education, and walking rituals all manifest the same underlying principles of restraint, humility, and ecological harmony that structure the moral universe of *Sunda Wiwitan*. In this sense, *adat* is not merely a set of codified rules but a lived epistemology, one that is transmitted through bodily practice, sensory experience, and daily repetition. By adhering to these taboos and prescriptions, the Baduy sustain an ethical ecology in which

knowledge, spirituality, and environment are intertwined, ensuring that *adat* remains both a moral compass and a mode of being in the world.

5.4. Traditional Custodianship and Collective Governance

The *lembaga adat* (*adat* council), as part of the Baduy system of governance, known as *Tangtu Tilu Jaro Tujuh*, represents more than a sociopolitical hierarchy. It is an epistemic institution through which *adat* is enacted, transmitted, and safeguarded. Rather than separating political, religious, and social domains, this structure embodies an integrated mode of traditional custodianship that merges moral authority with ecological and cosmological responsibility (Idris, 2023; Iskandar, 1998; Suryani, 2021; van Zanten, 2021). At the center of this system stands the *Puun*, the spiritual and political leader who holds authority over each of the three principal villages, Cikeusik, Cikartawana, and Cibeo. The *Puun* does not govern through force, domination, or bureaucratic regulation, but through the moral weight of ancestral knowledge and the capacity to maintain equilibrium between humans, nature, and the unseen world. His authority thus reflects a form of moral ecology, where leadership is exercised through wisdom, restraint, and the ability to interpret and preserve the *Pikukuh*.



Figure 5.8. The Board of the Structure of the Baduy Adat Institution Hung in front of Jaro Pamarentah's House

Source: Photo by the author, taken during fieldwork in 2024

As presented in Figure 5.8, below the *Puun* operates a complex network of *adat* officials, including *Jaro Tangtu*²⁸; *Parawari* and *Baresan*²⁹; *Girang Seurat*³⁰; *Jaro Tanggungan Dua Belas*³¹; *Tangkesan*³²; *Jaro Dangka*³³; *Jaro Warega*³⁴; *Jaro Pamarentah*³⁵; *Carik*³⁶; *Panggiwa*

and *Kokolot Lembur*³⁷, who collectively form a distributed system of traditional custodianship. Each position functions not merely as an administrative role but as a moral and epistemological one, ensuring that the flow of ancestral knowledge remains intact. This network operates as a living repository of *adat*, where decision-making and conflict resolution draw upon inherited knowledge rather than formalized rules. Through this distributed custodianship, social harmony is maintained not by authoritarian control, but by relational ethics, mutual respect, consensus, and reciprocity.

The selection of *Tangtu Tilu Jaro Tujuh* follows an *adat* process grounded in ancestral guidance and ritual validation rather than formal voting. The *Puun* is chosen from among the descendants of previous *Puun* lineages in Cibeo, Cikeusik, or Cikartawana, but hereditary succession alone is not sufficient. The appointment must be confirmed through communal consideration among senior elders and sanctioned through ritual consultation with ancestral spirits to ensure the candidate's moral purity, spiritual readiness, and harmony with the unseen world. The *Jaro Tujuh* are similarly selected through consensus within the *sembaga adat*, based on their adherence to *Pikukuh* and their proven commitment to communal service. Their appointments are publicly affirmed in ritual ceremonies, marking both a political and spiritual agreement with the community. Furthermore, the dismissal of a member of the *sembaga adat* is based on moral and spiritual grounds consistent with *adat* principles. An *adat* leader may lose their position if they violate the *Pikukuh* or if they are deemed to have lost spiritual balance and moral integrity. Such violations may include acts considered impure or contrary to *adat* values, such as dishonesty, greed, or engaging in modern practices that disrupt communal harmony. In this sense, leadership in Kanekes emerges from collective recognition and ritual legitimacy, reflecting governance as a sacred duty rather than a pursuit of authority.

The *sembaga adat* thus performs two interrelated functions. It governs the community's social life while simultaneously ensuring the continuity of indigenous knowledge. Knowledge in this sense is not abstract or textual but embodied and performative. It is learned through participation, ritual practice, and daily conduct. Governance, therefore, is inseparable from pedagogy, where the *Jaro* and *Kokolot* (elders) are not simply administrators but teachers and exemplars of proper living within the moral universe of Sunda Wiwitan. Their role in resolving disputes, organizing rituals, and guiding agricultural and ecological practices reflects a holistic custodianship of both the social and natural worlds.

In this way, *Tangtu Tilu Jaro Tujuh* represents a system of collective governance grounded in indigenous epistemology, where authority derives not from ownership or domination, but from the capacity to uphold balance and relational harmony. This framework reveals how the Baduy community conceives of governance as an ethical practice rooted in lived knowledge, one that resists fragmentation between religion, law, and ecology. By preserving this structure, the Baduy not only maintain social cohesion but also safeguard the axiological, ontological, and epistemological foundations of their world.

5.5. Spatial Ethics and Boundary Maintenance

The Baduy landscape is not merely a territorial space but a living moral geography that embodies a system of epistemic order and ethical relations. Currently consisting of sixty-eight hamlets, the community's spatial organization reflects both functional differentiation and cosmological hierarchy. The three sacred hamlets (Cibeo, Cikartawana, and Cikeusik) form the mandala's core and represent the threefold balance of sociopolitical, ritual, and spiritual authority. Each hamlet's role (Cibeo in maintaining relations and hospitality, Cikartawana in ensuring safety and welfare, and Cikeusik in religious and judicial matters) demonstrates that spatial distribution is intertwined with the division of spiritual labor and moral responsibility (Alfira & Uekita, 2023). These spatial functions mirror a cosmological principle where order in the landscape sustains order in the moral world.

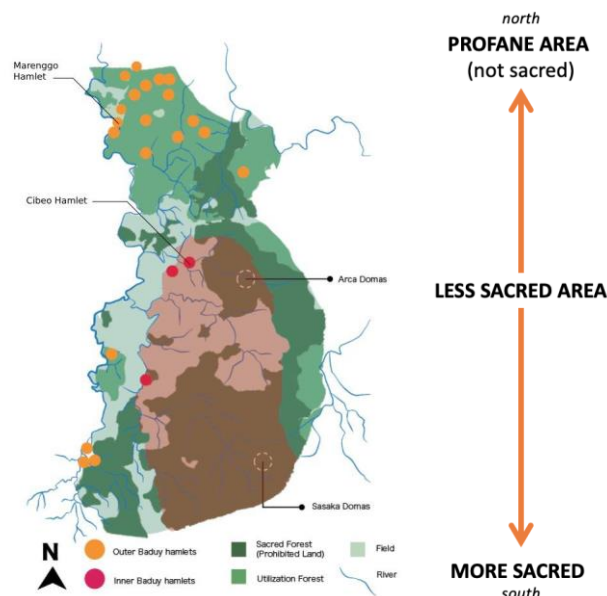


Figure 5.9. The Sacred and the Profane Areas of Kanekes Village

Source: (Alfira & Uekita, 2023)

The distinction between the Inner and Outer Baduy thus exceeds geographical classification. It is an ethical and epistemological boundary that maps the degrees of ritual purity, discipline, and proximity to the sacred. Both groups follow the same belief of Sunda Wiwitan and *adat* principles, yet their spatial separation expresses the gradation between sacred and profane life (see Figure 5.9). The southern area, where the Inner Baduy reside, is associated with purity, ascetic restraint, and ritual centrality, anchored by sacred sites such as *Sasaka Domas* and *Sasaka Parahiang*. Meanwhile, the northern and peripheral hamlets, where the Outer Baduy dwell, function as the moral frontier of Baduy cosmology, spaces where contact with the external world is possible but carefully regulated (Alfira & Uekita, 2023; Sumawijaya et al., 2020).

From an analytical standpoint, this spatial division can be understood as an embodied mapping of *adat*. The Inner Baduy's strict adherence to *Pikukuh* and *Buyut* maintains the ontological integrity of the sacred core, while the Outer Baduy's intermediary role operationalizes the principle of controlled permeability. Positioned between the Inner Baduy and the outside world, the Outer Baduy serves as a protective buffer that absorbs external influences without compromising the sanctity of the inner realm (Holilah et al., 2023; van Zanten, 2021). This arrangement exemplifies a spatial ethic grounded in relational custodianship, where boundaries are not barriers but moral interfaces that sustain the balance between isolation and interaction.

Social sanctions and ritual punishments further reinforce this geography of morality. Violations of *Pikukuh* and *Buyut* by Inner Baduy members, such as using transportation or breaking sexual taboos, trigger spatial displacement through seclusion in designated Outer Baduy hamlets. The forty-day period of seclusion functions not only as discipline but as a process of moral purification and realignment with the cosmological order (Alfira & Uekita, 2023). After completing a period of seclusion, the individual may either be reintegrated into the Inner Baduy community upon demonstrating regret and adherence to *adat* norms or choose to move as a member of the Outer Baduy. The option to permanently transition into the Outer Baduy community for those who do not conform to the strict norms of the Inner Baduy underscores a key feature of Baduy epistemology, where boundaries are maintained through voluntary recognition of moral distance, not coercive exclusion.

In this sense, spatial boundaries among the Baduy are epistemic as much as geographic. They portray ways of knowing, modes of being, and degrees of moral responsibility. The Inner-

Outer structure expresses a living principle of balance through differentiation, where sacredness is maintained not by exclusion but by the careful arrangement of spatial interactions, restraint, and relational accountability.

5.6. Negotiating Recognition and Axio-Onto-Epistemic Sovereignty

The Baduy community's enduring capacity to preserve its worldview and lifeways within the Indonesian state framework is closely tied to its recognition under the legal concepts of *hak ulayat* (communal rights, including land rights), *desa adat* (*adat* village), and the broader principle of legal pluralism. These frameworks provide not only a legal foundation but also an epistemic space in which the Baduy continue to exercise their own systems of knowledge, governance, and ethics without being fully absorbed into the logic of the modern nation-state.

The recognition of *hak ulayat* is central to the Baduy's ability to sustain their indigenous knowledge system. *Hak ulayat* refers to a community's collective authority over land, water, vegetation, and natural resources within its territory (Arrahman, 2019; Laturette, 2017). For the Baduy, land is not merely a material resource, but a living entity embedded in spiritual, moral, and ecological relationships. The legal recognition of *hak ulayat*, strengthened by the 2024 Regulation of the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (Permen ATR/BPN No. 14/2024) on the administration and registration of customary communal land rights, ensures that these relationships remain under the custodianship of the *adat* council rather than state bureaucracy. This recognition enables the Baduy to practice their indigenous knowledge, including forest conservation, farming systems, and ritual responsibilities, within the parameters of their *Pikukuh* and *Buyut*. In this way, *hak ulayat* functions as both a legal and epistemological safeguard, ensuring that knowledge about land use, ecology, and moral order remains governed by the community's *adat* law.

Nonetheless, the institutional framework of *desa adat* further reinforces the Baduy's epistemic sovereignty by granting them authority to govern according to *adat* principles. Kanekes was once administratively transformed into a *desa dinas*, a state-regulated village, under Indonesia's uniform administrative system, which risked eroding the traditional governance structures of *Tangtu Tilu Jaro Tujuh*³⁸. However, through sustained consideration and strong assertion of their *adat* identity, the Baduy have reaffirmed their commitment to functioning as a *desa adat*. This shift is more than administrative. It marks the reassertion of an indigenous mode of governance rooted in collective decision-making, ritual hierarchy, and moral restraint. Within the *desa adat* system, the *Puun* and the *adat* council hold ultimate

authority over social, environmental, and spiritual affairs, while the *Jaro Pamarentah* mediates interactions with external authorities. This system allows the Baduy to engage with the state on their own terms, participating in formal structures while maintaining the autonomy of *adat* governance.

The reinstatement of the *desa adat* further exemplifies Indonesia's legal pluralism order, in which state law, Islamic law, and *adat* law function in parallel and in negotiation with one another (Flambonita, 2021; Roth & Moniaga, 2021). For the Baduy, this plural system legitimizes the continued application of *adat* law in regulating both moral conduct and social organization. *Adat* law, characterized by its oral transmission, moral sanctions, and communal orientation, remains the primary framework for decision-making and justice within Kanekes. Legal pluralism thus provides the formal recognition that Baduy *adat* law can coexist alongside national legislation. This is evident, for example, in the policy allowing Baduy children to be exempt from formal schooling requirements, on the basis that knowledge transmission in Kanekes follows a traditional pedagogical system centered on experiential learning, oral history, and moral discipline rather than formal education (Saleh et al., 2020; van Zanten, 2021). Through this plural legal arrangement, the Baduy sustain an educational epistemology that privileges relational ethics, ecological literacy, and social harmony over bureaucratic instruction.

Together, these three frameworks of *hak ulayat*, *desa adat*, and legal pluralism illustrate how the Baduy negotiate recognition not as passive recipients of state favor but as active custodians of their epistemic sovereignty. By engaging with the state while maintaining the authority of *adat*, they transform the legal landscape itself into a site of indigenous resilience, where autonomy is exercised through continuity of knowledge, not through separation from the modern world. The Baduy community demonstrates that *adat* functions not merely as a set of customs, but as a comprehensive framework that shapes knowledge, ethics, social organization, and engagement with the external world. Through the integration of ancestral teachings, *Pikukuh*, and *Buyut* into daily life, the Baduy enact an epistemology that governs their interaction with nature, material culture, and community members. This epistemology fosters resilience by maintaining harmony between human activity and the environment, ensuring continuity of social order, and safeguarding spiritual and moral integrity.

At the institutional level, *adat* guides collective governance through the *lembaga adat* and the *Puun*, reinforcing moral authority, social cohesion, and intergenerational transmission

of knowledge. Spatial ethics, as reflected in the Inner and Outer Baduy division, further exemplify how *adat* preserves both cultural and ecological boundaries, mediating interactions with outsiders while protecting sacred spaces and practices. Even in encounters with the state, through mechanisms such as *desa adat*, *hak ulayat*, and legal pluralism, the Baduy exercise epistemic sovereignty, engaging selectively with external authorities while retaining control over their ways of knowing, being, and governing. Ultimately, the Baduy illustrate that *adat* is both adaptive and enduring. It supports cultural resilience by providing a structured, internally coherent system for sustaining traditional knowledge, practices, and values, while simultaneously enabling careful negotiation with modernity.

Building upon this understanding, the following chapter turns to examine how the Baduy community's adherence to *adat* interacts with the evolving realities of tourism. While *adat* provides the moral and epistemic foundation for autonomy and continuity, the growing influx of visitors has introduced new forms of engagement, negotiation, and adaptation. To grasp how the Baduy sustain their principles amid these transformations, it is crucial to trace the trajectory of tourism development across different phases. This chronological exploration reveals how tourism has been variously perceived, accommodated, and governed within the Baduy world, reflecting a continual balancing between openness and restraint, between preserving *adat* and responding to external influences.

Chapter 6: Assessing Tourism Development in Baduy

Tourism in the Baduy territory has not emerged as a sudden or isolated phenomenon but as a gradual and layered process shaped by ongoing interactions between *adat* principles, spatial accessibility, and external interests. What began as sporadic visits by researchers, government officials, and spiritual seekers has, over time, developed into more regular patterns of visitation driven by cultural curiosity and institutional attention. Throughout this progression, tourism has been mediated by the community's own system of governance, in which *adat* functions as both a regulatory framework and a moral reference that defines permissible forms of engagement. This chapter traces the development of tourism in Baduy across several interrelated phases, drawing on interviews, oral histories, field observations, and relevant secondary sources to reconstruct how changing patterns of visitation and community response have shaped its current form. The chapter documents processes of selective participation, adaptation, and boundary-making through which the Baduy have managed encounters with the outside world, situating these developments within broader sociocultural and political transformations and providing an empirical foundation for subsequent analytical discussion.

6.1. Early Encounters and the Pre-Tourism Phase

The engagement of Baduy with external actors cannot be separated from the community's cultural identity and its position within the broader Indonesian context. As a prominent *adat* community, the Baduy have long attracted attention for their strict adherence to ancestral teachings, spiritual cosmology, and ecological way of life. These distinctive practices not only define the community's internal coherence but also set the stage for external interest, positioning the Baduy as a subject of ethnographic research and, later, as a site of cultural interest.

Accounts of the Baduy's earliest external exposure are derived primarily from reading and reviewing historical and academic works that trace encounters dating back to the nineteenth century. These early records, produced by researchers, explorers, and colonial administrators such as Raffles in 1817, Blume in 1822, Spanoghe in 1838, and Van Hoëvell in 1845 (van Zanten, 2021), offer glimpses into how the Baduy community was first represented through colonial ethnographic interests, documenting their social organization, ritual life, and ecological practices. These early accounts reflect scholarly and administrative interest, highlighting the Baduy as a subject of observation rather than as a destination for leisure. Even

in the early post-independence period, visitors were few and their engagements remained largely academic, administrative, or spiritual, such as those seeking audiences with the *Puun*³⁹.

Fieldwork interviews revealed that the number of outsiders entering the Baduy territory during the pre-tourism phase was extremely limited, largely due to widespread perceptions of the Baduy community's supernatural power. Several participants explained that entering the Baduy was often considered spiritually risky, with a common fear that those who ventured inside might never be able to return home. This perception contributed to the scarcity of visitors. Combined with the remote location and strict adherence to *adat*, early contact with the Baduy was largely restricted to individuals with urgent or purposeful intentions, such as seeking spiritual audience and guidance or conducting research. These narratives underscore the importance of local cosmologies in shaping pre-tourism engagement and demonstrate how cultural and spiritual frameworks mediated the Baduy's visibility to outsiders. It is particularly notable that the same spiritual and cosmological practices simultaneously attracted certain visitors (those with legitimate purposes) and discouraged others.

Meanwhile, the Baduy's engagement with government authorities was more for administrative purposes, a form of contact that dates back to the colonial period and continued into the post-independence era. Such interactions often involved the designation of *ulayat* lands, verification of community boundaries, or other administrative tasks requiring formal recognition of the Baduy territory. These encounters were typically limited and highly regulated, with government officials interacting only with specific community representatives who were authorized to speak on behalf of the group, such as the *Jaro Pamarentah* or other *adat* leaders. While these engagements brought the Baduy into contact with broader governance structures, they were managed in ways that maintained control over decision-making within their territories.

6.2. Emergence of Tourism Interest: An Initial Exposure (1990s-2000s)

The late 1990s marked the beginning of a new phase in Baduy history, characterized by increasing interest from outsiders, although the overall number of visitors remained limited. This period saw growing attention from researchers, students, and members of the public seeking to observe or learn about the community's distinctive cultural and ecological practices. While the Baduy's *adat*-based lifeways, spiritual practices, and ecological knowledge continued to attract attention, early tourism exposure during this phase remained highly regulated and selective.

Existing academic studies indicate that during this period, the Lebak District Government began to recognize the Baduy territory as a potential tourism destination, particularly for its cultural and ecological significance (Pradana et al., 2024). These sources document emerging policy-level interest in promoting the area while retaining administrative oversight of visitor access. Fieldwork interviews further indicate that, in practice, individuals wishing to visit the Baduy were required to obtain an official permit from the Department of Social and Political Affairs at the Lebak Regency. Several participants explained that this procedure functioned both to regulate visitor numbers and to ensure that visits complied with administrative requirements and *adat*-based cultural protocols.

Interview data also suggest that educational institutions, particularly schools and universities, constituted some of the earliest organized visitor groups during this phase. Student groups and academic teams were commonly granted formal permission to enter the Baduy area as part of field trips, educational programs, or research activities. According to several participants, these visits increased the visibility of the Baduy while remaining embedded within a framework of regulation and respect. Such interactions established early patterns of structured engagement, in which access was primarily extended to visitors with clearly defined educational or research purposes. This selective openness illustrates how both community authorities and local government actors sought to balance external interest with the preservation of cultural integrity and social order.

Alongside these developments, fieldwork accounts indicate that certain local actors began to recognize potential benefits associated with tourism under tightly regulated conditions. Notably, the *carik* (village secretary) was described as viewing visitor engagement as a means of introducing Baduy culture to a wider audience while supporting aspects of community welfare (Suryani, 2021). Following consultation with the *adat* council and consideration of prevailing cultural norms, limited tourism activities were permitted under strict conditions. Participants noted that visitors were expected to adhere to *adat* rules, maintain spiritual and social harmony, and avoid behaviors perceived as disruptive to the community's way of life. This initial exposure phase, therefore, established early regulatory mechanisms and forms of community involvement that would shape subsequent tourism development.

Taken together, literature-based accounts and fieldwork narratives suggest that the emergence of tourism interest during this period marked a transitional moment in how the Baduy were positioned within broader state and societal frameworks. While the community

continued to operate under *adat* governance, its increasing visibility through education- and research-oriented visits began to situate the Baduy not only as a community of cultural preservation but also as a potential focus of state-led tourism initiatives. At the same time, internal discussions indicate early efforts to consider how tourism might be aligned with *adat* principles and community welfare. These parallel processes of external framing and internal articulation formed an important backdrop for later negotiations over authority, participation, and control in tourism development.

6.3. Expansion of Tourism and Community Involvement (2000s-2010s)

The 2000s marked a shift in the development of tourism in the Baduy territory, characterized by a more visible government presence and increasing community involvement. In response to growing public interest in the Baduy's way of life, the Lebak District Government began to promote the area more actively as a cultural and ecological tourism destination. Fieldwork accounts indicate that supporting infrastructure, including roads, clean water facilities, and electricity, was developed during this period but deliberately located outside Baduy *adat* lands to respect internal rules governing the territory. Participants also noted the installation of symbolic markers of tourism, such as entrance gates, road signs, and welcome boards, by both government and private actors, signaling the formal recognition of the Baduy as a site of tourism. These developments contributed to the spatial framing of the Baduy territory within the regional tourism landscape while maintaining a formally acknowledged separation from core *adat* spaces.

Fieldwork narratives further suggest that the increase in visitor numbers in the early 2000s brought tourism management into negotiation between government authorities and the Baduy community. Several participants recalled that, in the initial phase, visitor fees were collected by government agencies, a practice widely described as unfair and ethically troubling, with some likening it to being treated as an object of display for outsiders. Over time, this system was revised, and responsibility for managing visitor access and levies was transferred to the *Jaro Pamarentah*, enabling the community to exercise greater control over tourism-related activities and revenues. Participants described this change as an important moment in asserting local authority over tourism management, while also reflecting *adat*-based principles governing economic participation. At the same time, government actors continued to incorporate the Baduy into broader cultural tourism initiatives, including the reframing of the annual *Seba Baduy*⁴⁰, a ritual of symbolic submission to the state, as a public cultural event promoted within regional tourism programs.

The expansion of tourism during this period was also accompanied by new forms of livelihood diversification, particularly among Outer Baduy communities. Interview data indicate that residents began to engage in tourism-related activities such as guiding, selling crafts near their houses, preparing food, and providing accommodation for visitors. Participants emphasized that these practices were understood not as departures from tradition but as extensions of everyday labor informed by *adat* values. Tourism thus functioned as a supplementary livelihood integrated into existing cultural and economic rhythms, allowing households to benefit from visitor presence while maintaining subsistence practices. This adaptive participation remained spatially differentiated, with Outer Baduy hamlets, including Kaduketug and Gajeboh, emerging as key sites of engagement due to their proximity to established visitor routes.

However, the growing flow of visitors also raised internal concerns regarding the potential disruption of *adat* norms, environmental degradation, and spiritual imbalance. In response, the Baduy community established a series of mechanisms to retain control over tourism practices. The introduction of *Saba Budaya* Baduy in 2007 formalized *adat*-based governance in tourism. An official regulation was drafted, outlining detailed provisions concerning applicable terms within the Baduy context, administrative areas and boundaries, natural markers, the *adat* calendar, periods of prohibition, and visitor regulations. These regulations covered the purpose, form, routes, entry points, restricted areas, visitor limits, intervals of departure, required equipment, management structures, and levies.

The term *Saba Budaya* Baduy emerged from the initiative of *adat* elders and several Baduy individuals with direct experience in tourism-related activities who were concerned about the potential consequences of increasing visitor exposure. One individual I met during fieldwork explained that he, together with several other community members, drafted the initial *Saba Budaya* policy in collaboration with officials from the Lebak District Government. This collaboration aimed to formalize guidelines for visitor conduct and management within Baduy territory, ensuring that tourism activities aligned with *adat* principles and minimized disruption to cultural and spiritual life. The *Saba Budaya* Baduy framework thus provided a recognized mechanism through which the community could regulate visits, protect sacred spaces, and assert authority over how tourism unfolded within their *adat* lands.

Initially, these procedures required all visitors to register and obtain permission directly from the *Jaro Pamarentah*. As visitor numbers increased, however, it became increasingly

impractical for the *Jaro Pamarentah* to personally meet and authorize each entry. In response, a security post was constructed near the main entry point to facilitate a more systematic process of registration and monitoring. At this post, one or two voluntary Baduy members were assigned to receive visitors and issue entry permissions on behalf of the *Jaro Pamarentah*, ensuring that *adat*-based procedures remained intact while improving administrative efficiency.

Reflections from fieldwork indicate that this phase of tourism expansion demonstrates how the Baduy strategically adapted to growing external interest while asserting *adat* sovereignty. By formalizing registration procedures, institutionalizing *Saba Budaya*, delegating visitor management to voluntary community members, and retaining control over tourism-related revenues, the Baduy exercised self-determination in shaping the conditions of engagement with outsiders. These practices illustrate an adaptive governance approach in which economic opportunities, social relations, and spiritual concerns are carefully balanced within *adat* principles. Rather than passively accepting state-led tourism initiatives, the community actively negotiated the boundaries of permissible interaction, embedding tourism within systems that reinforce cultural integrity, sustain internal authority, and preserve long-standing custodial governance over their territory.

6.4. Adaptation, Resistance, and Reorientation Phase (2010-present)

By the early 2010s, tourism in Baduy had entered a period of formalized management and growing visibility. The local government recognized the area's cultural and ecological significance, providing peripheral infrastructure and promoting Baduy as a distinctive tourism destination. This phase saw the establishment of a community-based organization for managing tourism activities, such as *Pokdarwis* (abbreviation of *Kelompok Sadar Wisata*)⁴¹. In the Baduy context, the *Pokdarwis* was established in response to the increasing number of visitors and emerging tourism activities, initiated by a small group of community members who have experience in tourism-related activities and are concerned with managing these interactions. Beyond local coordination, the Baduy *Pokdarwis* also maintains networks with other *Pokdarwis*, particularly in Banten province, providing a platform for sharing experiences, discussing challenges, and exchanging ideas regarding tourism management. Further, this (non-formal) organization thus functions both as a community-based mechanism for regulating tourism in accordance with *adat* values and as a channel for inter-community learning and collaboration.

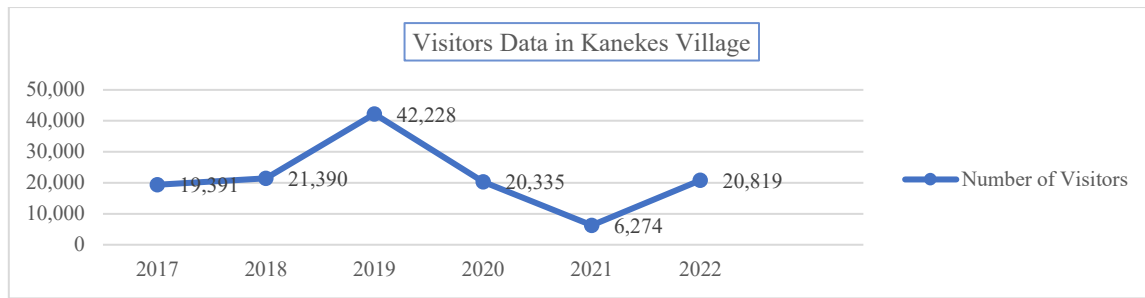


Figure 6.1. Visitors Data in Kanekes Village

Source: (BPS Lebak, 2024)

Based on data shared by the Lebak District Government, as shown in Figure 6.1, tourism reached unprecedented levels in 2019, when visitor numbers peaked. This rapid influx highlighted both the opportunities and the challenges associated with tourism engagement. While tourism generated supplementary livelihoods through guiding, hosting, and craft sales, it also posed increasing risks to the community's cultural, spiritual, and environmental integrity. In 2020, under the leadership of the *Jaro Pamarentah*, the Baduy formally requested that their territory be removed from Indonesia's official tourism listings, signaling a strong assertion of self-determination. At the same time, the *Saba Budaya* Baduy framework was reaffirmed as the guiding principle for all visits, emphasizing that interactions with outsiders should not be treated as conventional tourism experiences but must instead respect *adat* values, adhere to cultural norms, and preserve social and spiritual order. This response attracted extensive attention in online mass media, which I also followed prior to commencing the research, underscoring both the seriousness of the community's concerns and the public visibility of their efforts to regulate tourism according to their own priorities.

The digital era and contemporary tourism practices have introduced additional complexities. Aggressive promotions by travel agencies and tourism businesses now offer both open and private trips to the Baduy region. An online search conducted during fieldwork identified more than 20 tour operators advertising visits to Baduy villages, many emphasizing the community's distinctive way of life. This form of exposure increased demand while simultaneously reducing the community's control over visitor flows. Field observations during peak periods, such as weekends, long weekends, and national holidays, revealed the arrival of large tour groups at the same time, often resulting in overcrowding and exceeding the hosting capacity of local residents. These developments highlight the persistent challenges the Baduy face in balancing tourism demand with the preservation of cultural integrity, environmental conditions, and community well-being.

Based on interviews with community members, supported by insights from academic literature, internal dynamics within the Baduy community reveal plural perspectives toward tourism (Supranta, 2021). Broadly, two tendencies can be identified. One group views tourism as an opportunity to diversify livelihoods while remaining within the boundaries of *adat*, whereas another expresses caution, prioritizing the protection of sacred sites, spiritual balance, and environmental sustainability. This plurality does not manifest as factions but rather as ongoing processes of consideration, discussion, and negotiation within the community. Such pluralism highlights the Baduy's active exercise of agency, demonstrating that tourism is not passively received but continuously interpreted, contested, and adapted in relation to *adat* principles. It further illustrates how internal diversity shapes collective decision-making, mediates engagement with external pressures, and ensures that tourism development aligns with cultural and spiritual priorities.

The direction of tourism since 2010 illustrates a broader pattern of adaptation, resistance, and reorientation. The Baduy community has negotiated a mode of engagement that maintains *adat* sovereignty, reinforces self-determination, and sustains cultural integrity while responding to external interest and limited economic opportunities. This phase demonstrates the dynamic character of indigenous tourism governance. Rather than a static or one-directional process, it involves continuous evaluation and adjustment shaped by internal plurality, spiritual obligations, social norms, and adaptive strategies rooted in *adat*.

The historical trajectory of tourism in the Baduy region reveals a nuanced interplay between continuity and transformation. Across all phases, certain enduring principles remain central. Most notably, a sustained commitment to *adat*-based governance continues to shape how visitors are received, how tourism activities are regulated, and how cultural and spiritual integrity is protected. Despite fluctuations in visitor numbers, the expansion of digital promotion, and increasing exposure to diverse audiences, the Baduy retain a strong degree of control over the conditions under which tourism occurs, reflecting continuity in traditional custodianship and self-determined governance.

Overall, the development of tourism in Baduy illustrates how indigenous communities may preserve core cultural values while selectively adapting to changing external conditions. The patterns identified in this chapter highlight the importance of understanding tourism not as a monolithic or linear process, but as a culturally mediated continuum in which continuity and transformation coexist under the guidance of *adat* sovereignty, collective decision-making, and

community agency. Building on this historical account of tourism development and governance, the following chapter examines how these dynamics are enacted in everyday practice, focusing on the lived experiences through which *adat*, indigenous knowledge, and local cosmologies are practiced, negotiated, and reworked within the context of tourism in the Baduy community.

Chapter 7: *Adat* and Traditional Custodianship in Practice: Empirical Findings from the Baduy Tourism Context

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study, examining how the Baduy community navigates the expanding presence of tourism through the interrelated frameworks of *adat*, indigenous knowledge, and traditional custodianship. Drawing primarily on participant observations and in-depth interviews, it focuses on how *adat* and custodial responsibilities are enacted in everyday tourism practices, and how these responsibilities are interpreted, negotiated, and sustained in situ. The findings are organized into two main sections. The first examines how tourism functions both as a resource for *adat* continuity and collective resilience, and as a source of disruption to the balance of *adat* and indigenous lifeways. The second explores how the Baduy exercise adaptive agency through *adat*-based principles, manifested in pathways of adaptation, restriction, controlled engagement, and the gradual loosening of boundaries. Together, these sections illustrate how *adat* operates not merely as a set of rules, but as a living system of governance and knowledge that enables the Baduy to mediate change, sustain cultural integrity, and uphold their custodial responsibilities amid the pressures of tourism.

7.1. Tourism and Its Multidimensional Impacts on the Baduy Community

Tourism in Kanekes has become a dynamic field where the Baduy community continuously negotiates between preservation and adaptation. Rather than viewing tourism simply as a source of benefit or disruption, the Baduy interpret it through their *adat*-based worldview, as part of the broader web of human, spiritual, and ecological relations that must remain in balance. The following sections discuss two major dimensions through which tourism has affected and been interpreted by the community: first, as a resource that supports *adat* continuity and collective resilience; and second, as a source of disturbance that tests the limits of harmony and spiritual order.

7.1.1. Tourism as a Resource for Adat Continuity and Collective Resilience

Tourism in Kanekes has opened new livelihood opportunities for individual Baduy members. During fieldwork, I often observed Baduy men guiding tourists along hamlets and forest trails; women selling woven fabrics, handmade bracelets, and other forest and agricultural products; or young Baduy girls selling wooden trekking poles to visitors. These activities provide supplementary income that complements traditional subsistence work, such as farming and gathering forest products. For many, economic gain is considered *rezeki*⁴², a

form of fortune that does not contradict *adat*, as long as the activities remain within its moral boundaries. One of the participants explained:

“The Baduy people’s economy has improved. Personally, around 60%-70% of my economic growth comes from tourism. I have also made many friends through tourism. More friends, more ‘*rezeki*’. ”, (LG1, 2023).

The Baduy interpret the additional income from tourism not as a path toward material abundance but as a means to maintain balance and *cukup*⁴³ (sufficient). Despite living modestly being central to their worldview, tourism-related earnings are appreciated for the flexibility they offer. Such earnings enable individuals to support their families, save for future needs, meet daily and rites expenses that may not be covered through traditional means, and allow them to navigate economic uncertainties without compromising their adherence to *adat*. During an informal afternoon interview with a souvenir seller, as I sat in front of her house, which also serves as her small stall, she shared a glimpse into her daily life and family responsibilities.

“We held a *hajatan*⁴⁴ for my son’s *cukuran* (first hair-cutting ceremony). His hair was cut just a little, but there were many rituals to perform, and many things needed for it. The *selamatan*⁴⁵ and naming ceremonies lasted for seven days. Of course, it required a lot of money, and the income from selling these souvenirs is what I could rely on.”, (LS1, 2023).

Tourism-derived income strengthens financial security while aligning with *adat* values, showing that economic engagement can coexist with the Baduy’s moral and spiritual principles. In this sense, what appears from the outside as economic progress is locally understood as economic adaptability, an expression of resilience consistent with *adat*-based values of moderation and harmony.

Tourism has also made the process of selling local products more efficient. In earlier times, community members would walk for hours or even days to reach nearby towns such as Rangkasbitung to sell honey, palm sugar, fruits and vegetables, as well as woven handicrafts, which required significant effort. The steady arrival of visitors into the Baduy territory has reversed this flow, where now buyers come to the village. As one male participant remarked during an informal conversation:

“We no longer need to go far from the village, because now people come to buy durian, honey, and cloth themselves.”, (LO2, 2023).

The change is perceived positively, not only because it saves time and energy but also because it allows them to sustain their agricultural routines and traditional patterns of life while engaging in small-scale trade. The act of selling within their own territory, without crossing the physical and symbolic boundaries that *adat* prescribes, embodies the principle of keeping tourism under their terms.

Subsequently, engagement in tourism has provided financial capacity that enables some individuals to purchase land outside the village boundaries of Kanekes. During an informal conversation with a Baduy craftsman, while I was sitting in front of his house observing him weave *koja*⁴⁶, he explained how people manage their earnings from tourism-related activities.

“If there’s extra money, it’s used to buy farmland or converted into gold. It’s more convenient than saving money in cash. When there’s a need, you can simply sell it and immediately get money. Also, when buying farmland or land, the value is calculated in grams of gold. It is priced in terms of gold.”, (LC1, 2023).

This strategy is increasingly necessary due to the limited availability of land within the village as population and new settlements grow. Acquiring land beyond the village allows community members to maintain and practice their *adat* obligations in agricultural practices while securing their economic stability. In this way, participation in tourism supports both personal livelihood and the continued enactment of traditional agricultural practices, illustrating how external economic engagement can be harmonized with the principles of *adat* and long-term custodianship.

Beyond material benefits, tourism has expanded the horizons of knowledge, experience, and relationships for many Baduy individuals. Interaction with visitors, whether through guiding, hosting, or casual conversation, introduces new ideas and practical insights about the outside world. For some, learning from outsiders strengthens their sense of *pangaweruh* (knowledge or awareness), which is not seen as a threat to *adat* but as an enrichment of indigenous understanding. The Baduy worldview recognizes knowledge as something dynamic, gained through observation and lived experience, not merely inherited. One of the participants also mentioned that sometimes knowledge gained from outside can also be useful for *adat* (LG1, 2023). Thus, encountering tourists offers a space to compare and reflect. However, any new knowledge is carefully considered and adapted to ensure it aligns with *adat* values and the community’s way of life, as stated by another participant:

“We need to have a strong defense with that knowledge. It acts like a safeguard. If we understand it, we can anticipate it. If their goals are harmful, we are better prepared to respond.”, (LG5, 2023).

Apart from gaining knowledge, these exchanges often lead to *nambah dulur* or *nambah saudara*, which literally means having more brothers, sisters, or relatives, as stated by one participant:

“The more visitors come, the more it strengthens bonds of brotherhood. More visitors mean more brothers and sisters.”, (LC1, 2023).

This expression captures how relationships with outsiders are framed in relational terms, emphasizing social connection over transactional exchange. Such relationships occasionally have practical value. One participant shared how a long-standing connection with a government visitor later helped facilitate administrative matters, such as arranging for the issuance of *KTP* (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk* or official national identity card) closer to the village, sparing residents from lengthy journeys on foot (LG1, 2023). This story illustrates how expanded networks can serve both symbolic and functional purposes, linking *adat*-bound lives to external institutions while preserving autonomy in how engagement occurs.

Beyond individual benefits, tourism has generated collective advantages for the Baduy community, though these are experienced as ambivalent rather than uniformly positive. One of the most visible outcomes has been increased recognition from external actors, including government officials, the media, and the wider Indonesian public. The visit of the Indonesian Minister of Tourism and the Regent of Lebak to Kanekes on October 15, 2022, inaugurating Baduy as one of Indonesia’s top 50 tourism villages, was therefore not merely ceremonial. As frequently noted in informal conversations, some community members recalled this moment with a sense of pride, interpreting it as external acknowledgment of the Baduy’s capacity to govern tourism on their own terms and in accordance with *adat*. This recognition is particularly notable given the community’s earlier request in 2020 to be removed from official tourism destination listings, as discussed in Chapter 6, a decision motivated by concerns over excessive visitation and misalignment with *adat* values. At the same time, other participants expressed quiet unease, emphasizing that such recognition does not imply unconditional acceptance of tourism but reflects a cautious and selective mode of engagement shaped by custodial responsibilities. In this sense, state recognition operates less as a reversal of earlier resistance

than as a negotiated outcome, reinforcing confidence in *adat*-based governance while leaving internal debates and moral boundaries intact.

Tourism has also indirectly supported the practice and sustainability of *adat* rituals. As outlined previously in Chapter 5, the Baduy community has gradually shifted toward a fully *desa adat* governance system, moving away from the earlier dual arrangement that combined *desa adat* and *desa dinas*⁴⁷. As the current *Jaro Pamarentah* mentioned during the interview, this change was driven by a growing incompatibility between government requirements and *adat* values. The use of village funds (*dana desa*) provided by the government necessitates formal administrative reporting and the implementation of state-defined development programs, conditions that do not align with the Baduy's traditional practices. As a result, the community, through the decision of the *lembaga adat*, has chosen to operate and govern independently without financial support from the government. In this context, revenue from tourism provides a significant complementary resource, enabling the community to sustain ritual activities and other collective *adat* agendas that require financial means. Tourism, therefore, functions not as a driver of ritual change, but as a locally compatible source of funding that reinforces *adat*-guided custodianship and helps sustain the continuity of indigenous knowledge.

A tangible mechanism through which tourism contributes collectively is the *kasum* (abbreviation from *kas umum*), a communal fund that is also supported by those engaged in tourism-related livelihoods. Contributions are measured according to each member's capacity, with those engaged in tourism-related activities providing larger shares, while those with limited means are exempted from additional obligations.

“So, if we have extra earnings, we should also help. For example, for the *kasum*. We must all contribute from the income in tourism, so that others who do not engage in tourism can also enjoy the benefits, at least by not having to contribute when there are communal needs or rituals.”, (LG1, 2023).

The fund is allocated to support rituals, communal ceremonies, and other collective needs determined at the hamlet level. Beyond its financial role, the *kasum* embodies a principle central to Baduy *adat*, namely the *gotong royong*⁴⁸ and shared responsibility. It operationalizes indigenous knowledge of social cohesion, ensuring that economic disparities do not hinder the performance of culturally essential practices. In this way, tourism not only provides material

resources but also reinforces communal norms, mutual support, and the moral economy embedded in *adat*.

Accordingly, the community's collective image has benefited from tourism. Historical stereotypes portraying the Baduy as backward or primitive have gradually diminished as visitors engage respectfully with the community, share their experiences, and highlight the Baduy's harmonious relationship with nature and adherence to traditional knowledge systems. One male participant stated:

“They will not hold bad assumptions. They will understand the purpose of life in Baduy. It benefits the Baduy community so that the general public does not see us as primitive. There is, in fact, a specific intention behind it, allowing openness and exchange of ideas. This creates a balance between *masyarakat adat* and the wider society.”, (LO1, 2023).

This evolving perception enhances the Baduy's social legitimacy and affirms their cultural resilience, demonstrating that their way of life can coexist with, and even guide, broader conversations about sustainability and cultural preservation in Indonesia. Through these collective benefits, tourism operates not merely as an external force but as a medium through which the Baduy reaffirm and strengthen their *adat*, exercise custodianship over cultural and spiritual life, and cultivate solidarity that underpins both social and ritual continuity.

7.1.2. Tourism as a Source of Disruption to Adat Balance and Indigenous Lifeways

While tourism has opened opportunities for social interaction and economic participation, it has also introduced complex challenges that test the community's ability to sustain its traditional lifeways and spiritual balance. The increasing number of visitors to Baduy village has gradually transformed what was once a secluded and tranquil environment into a livelier and more crowded space, as illustrated in Figure 7.1. I often observed that tourist visits, particularly during open trips, bring large crowds into the Baduy villages. For example, in Cibeo, it is not uncommon to see more than a hundred visitors staying simultaneously, creating a noticeably lively and noisy atmosphere. This activity also spills into areas that are normally used by the local community for daily life, such as the river, where Baduy women wash clothes and bathe their children. Almost every weekend, these spaces become crowded, altering the usual tranquility and rhythm of village life, making it quite hard for individuals to find moments of solitude and peace, conditions that reflect their cosmic, spiritual, and social order. This shift has created subtle challenges for individuals to adapt to a social atmosphere marked by the

presence of strangers, noise, and movement, demanding their capacity to maintain the contemplative way of living that lies at the heart of the *Pikukuh*.

The growing integration of tourism into the local economy has further shaped livelihood patterns and dependencies. Despite community members' engagement in tourism-related activities becoming supplementary sources of income and allowing them to meet household needs and strengthen social ties with visitors, it has also created a degree of economic reliance that makes it difficult to completely suspend tourism activities. The possibility of closing tourism access to Baduy territory is therefore met with hesitation, as it would disrupt not only income streams but also the social relationships and forms of exchange that have emerged from tourism. This dependence subtly challenges the indigenous ideal of self-sufficiency and restraint, which are central to Baduy moral and ecological values.



Figure 7.1. The number of visitors takes a rest in Gajeboh

Source: Photographed by author on July 29, 2023.

The spiritual dimension of these challenges is captured in recurring expressions of concern about *katulah*, an ancestral warning believed to arise when the balance between humans, nature, and ancestral law is disturbed. Community members, including those I occasionally encountered when I visited hamlets that are not on the tourist route, often associate the growing influx of tourists and their unpredictable behavior with potential transgressions that may invite *katulah*. Such disturbances are said to manifest through crop failures, pest infestations, droughts, or storms, events seen as signs of ancestral disapproval. The fear of *katulah* reflects both individual anxiety and collective awareness of how external forces can unsettle the sacred equilibrium that sustains the Baduy world.

Environmental degradation further compounds these spiritual and moral concerns. Waste left by visitors, particularly non-biodegradable materials such as plastic, has increasingly polluted the river and the land, while noise from human crowds disturbs the quiet that once characterized the landscape. At a deeper level, the continuous arrival of outsiders risks eroding the spiritual sanctity of the Inner Baduy territory, the heart of the community's sacred geography. What was once a site of ritual significance and ancestral guardianship is increasingly perceived by some visitors as a space for leisure and recreation. As the land becomes '*tempat ulin*' (a place of playing or wandering), its sacred essence is at risk of dilution, potentially weakening the cosmological boundaries that protect both people and place. These conditions disrupt not only ecological health but also the moral and ritual cleanliness that underpin the community's relationship with the land.

Many outsiders remain unaware of the boundaries applied during the visit. Visitors often arrive without sufficient understanding of *adat* principles or the expectations of respectful conduct within Kanekes. Such a lack of awareness leads to repeated instances of inappropriate behavior, from violating restrictions to disregarding sacred zones. For the Baduy, these acts are not merely breaches of etiquette but disruptions to the moral and cosmological balance that sustains the community's harmony. One *adat* leader noted that when outsiders fail to follow Baduy ways, it creates a sense of *hese*⁴⁹ (LL3, 2023). During the fieldwork, I was also informed by one participant:

“Once a rule exists, one's curiosity should not lead to breaking it, because the consequences affect everyone. We must also deal with it, managing rituals or corrective actions. Even well-intentioned visitors can inadvertently become a burden on the community.”, (LO1, 2023).

This indicates that tourism, when detached from cultural sensitivity, can challenge the community's efforts to preserve the sanctity of space and everyday order governed by *adat*.

Moreover, the community's visibility within tourism has produced a dynamic where the Baduy people themselves are sometimes treated as objects of spectacle. Tourists' curiosity about their distinctive way of life often reduces encounters to surface-level observation rather than genuine cultural exchange. As illustrated in Figure 7.2, visitors are frequently seen taking photographs and observing the community from a distance, reinforcing forms of engagement centred on visual consumption. This gaze transforms the Baduy from active custodians of knowledge into passive subjects of external fascination, reducing the depth of their lived

practices and values. Such dynamics reveal the tension between the community's role as cultural hosts and the external construction of their image as exotic others.



Figure 7.2. Visitors are Taking Photos of Baduy People

Source: Photographed by the Author on July 29, 2023

Commercial tour promotions have also intensified external pressures. The growing popularity of Baduy tourism has prompted travel agencies and online platforms to market both open and private trips to Kanekes. Such promotions increased visitation, often emphasizing the unique lifestyle of the Baduy without providing sufficient guidance on cultural sensitivity. Fieldwork observations revealed that during peak periods such as weekends, long holidays, or other national holidays, multiple large groups arrive simultaneously, creating overcrowding and overwhelming the hosting capacity of residents. Such a tendency undermines the community's informal rhythm of regulating entry based on environmental and spiritual considerations. The commodification of access to Baduy exemplifies how external actors profit from indigenous lifeways while contributing little to the maintenance of *adat*-based order.

A further form of disruption occurs through the appropriation of local guiding roles by non-Baduy individuals in Ciboleger, as shown in Figure 7.3, the main entry point to Kanekes. These individuals frequently offer to escort visitors and present themselves as knowledgeable about Baduy culture. A story I heard from a participant about the presence of those non-Baduy guides mentioned:

“They act as if they have authority. There were five non-Baduy guides, and there was only one visitor. It made him (the visitor) afraid. The one visitor thought those five people were from here, and we, as the locals, felt embarrassed because the visitor assumed they were Baduy people, but actually they were not.”, (LS1, 2023).

In doing so, they appropriate and repackage indigenous knowledge that rightfully belongs to the Baduy community. Such practices lead to inaccurate or incomplete information received by the visitors about the Baduy, while the Baduy's authority over their own knowledge and representation is undermined. This misrepresentation threatens the Baduy's custodial control over how their culture is interpreted and narrated. The act of guiding, which for the Baduy embodies moral responsibility and trust, becomes reduced to a commercial transaction detached from its *adat* grounding.



Figure 7.3. The Ciboleger terminal, where non-Baduy guides commonly meet visitors and offer their guiding services.

Source: Photographed by the author on November 24, 2023

These external pressures illustrate how tourism, when mediated by actors and logics beyond the reach of *adat*, risks unsettling the equilibrium that the Baduy have long sustained between openness and restraint. Violations of local norms, commercial exploitation, and the appropriation of cultural knowledge collectively erode the community's custodial authority over its territory and traditions. From an *adat*-based perspective, these disruptions are more on moral disturbances that threaten the order of relations among humans, nature, and the unseen. Tourism pressures threaten the Baduy's epistemic and spiritual sovereignty, revealing the vulnerability of *adat*-based authority amid increasing external engagement.

7.2. *Adat*-Governed Responses: Negotiating Continuity, Protection, and Flexibility

Tourism in the Baduy context is not simply an external phenomenon to be managed. It interacts continuously with a living system of governance rooted in *adat*, indigenous knowledge, and traditional custodianship. The community's responses to tourism reflect careful consideration of continuity, protection, and selective openness, demonstrating that *adat* is a dynamic framework for negotiating social, spiritual, and ecological life. In this section, I

explore four interrelated modes of response. First, the Baduy employ adaptive pathways that allow selective accommodation while maintaining the core principles of *adat*. Second, they assert custodianship by restricting access and behaviors that could threaten sacred or communal order. Third, they engage in a balancing act, negotiating controlled spaces for interaction that both enable and limit tourism participation. Finally, the community exhibits instances of boundary loosening, reflecting the flexible application of *adat* in practice but also highlighting the potential risks to its epistemic and spiritual integrity. These responses illuminate how the Baduy navigate tourism not merely as a practical challenge, but as a relational and moral landscape shaped by centuries of indigenous knowledge and custodial responsibility.

7.2.1. Adaptive Pathways within Adat: Sustaining Continuity through Change

The Baduy community demonstrates remarkable adaptability in navigating tourism while sustaining the continuity of their *adat*. This adaptability is rooted in a combination of voluntary participation, skill development, and strategic integration of tourism-related roles into daily life, all guided by indigenous knowledge and a deep sense of custodial responsibility. A central aspect of this adaptive pathway is the voluntary engagement of individuals in tourism activities. Many Baduy participants described beginning their involvement at a young age, as also seen in Figure 7.4, accompanying fathers or uncles in guiding and hosting visitors, or joining mothers in selling souvenirs.

“At first, I tried following my uncle. I really learned independently, wanting to have tourist friends. I truly learned on my own.” (LG2, 2023).

“It’s been a long time. I’ve been receiving guests since I was around seven years old. I used to learn from my older siblings, and my father was also a guide and porter, so I joined in as well. Back then, most of the guests were from Bandung, usually in groups. That was around 2007.”, (LG3, 2023).

Through these experiences, younger members acquire practical knowledge about hospitality, social interaction with outsiders, and visitor engagement, often learning by observing and self-teaching. This early exposure allows them to develop communication skills essential for effectively conveying the lifeways, indigenous knowledge, and worldview of the Baduy, as well as explaining restrictions and cultural practices while trekking to sacred areas such as Cibeo. In these interactions, they employ Bahasa Indonesia with correct structure and clarity to ensure visitors understand both practical instructions and cultural significance.

Similarly, when selling products, they must communicate with outsiders in a polite and culturally appropriate manner, balancing commerce with the respectful representation of their community.



Figure 7.4. Younger Inner Baduy members accompanying visitors to Cibeo

Source: Photographed by the author on July 29, 2023

Beyond its practical function, communication has also become a medium for knowledge mediation between the Baduy and the outside world. Through guiding, hosting, and selling activities, the Baduy do not merely exchange information but convey their worldview, moral values, and cosmological understanding rooted in *adat*. Explaining the meaning of restrictions, the rhythm of daily life, or the reasons behind certain prohibitions enables visitors to encounter Baduy life as an ethical and spiritual system rather than a spectacle. In this sense, communication itself becomes an enactment of indigenous knowledge, a way of maintaining traditional custodianship over cultural interpretation, ensuring that the representation of Baduy life remains guided by those who live it.

Developing new competencies has also extended to management skills. For instance, hosting visitors requires the ability to provide meals, overnight stay arrangements, and share the *Sosoro* (a part of the Baduy house explained in Chapter 5) space with visitors. During the open trips I joined, around ten visitors, including myself, stayed overnight in a single Baduy house together with the host family of five members. All visitors slept side by side in the *Sosoro* (particularly) and *Tepas* (if necessary) area on bamboo floors covered with woven mats, while the host family rested in the *Imah* and *Tepas* sections of the house. This arrangement reflected not only the limited housing capacity but also the community's adaptive pathways in

accommodating numbers of visitors within the boundaries of *adat*. Rather than establishing separate guest facilities, the Baduy integrate visitors into their domestic environment, fostering direct interaction and mutual adjustment between hosts and guests.

In the Outer Baduy areas, these skills increasingly include written communication in Bahasa Indonesia, reflected in signage, guidelines, and regulations (as presented in Figures 7.5 and 7.6), a marked departure from the traditionally oral nature of information transmission in Baduy society. This incorporation of writing and formal documentation illustrates how indigenous knowledge evolves in response to emerging social and practical needs, without abandoning the core principles of *adat* that underpin daily life.



Figure 7.5. One of the Pikukuh principles is displayed on a signboard.

Source: Photographed by the author on May 31, 2023



Figure 7.6. A Reminder to Respect *Adat* Located in Gajeboh Hamlet.

Source: Instagram post by jalurtravel.id (used with permission from the account administrator)

Time and human resource management have become another essential dimension of adaptation. The Baduy carefully balance tourism-related activities and responsibilities with the observance of farming duties, rituals, ceremonies, and communal activities such as *gotong royong*. Some participants express that participation in tourism activities is considered an additional activity alongside farming. While weaving *koja*, one participant also mentioned:

“We have a proverb, *tungkul kajukut tengah kasadapan*, which means that we must cultivate the field. *Sadapan* refers to making sugar. So, besides farming, we also make sugar. In a broader sense, it means that our life must be productive, and no time should be wasted.”, (LC1, 2023).

Meanwhile, time management was also explained by another participant who is involved in guiding and hosting:

“We must be able to manage our time between attending to guests and fulfilling our duties in the village. Since *perlu kasambut, sunat kalampah*, a proverb that emphasizes the importance of mutual cooperation, means that communal obligations can be carried out while guests are also well-served. That is even better.”, (LG5, 2023).

Those principles of using and managing time and resources effectively to ensure that all activities are meaningful derive directly from *adat* teachings. It provides a framework for the Baduy to integrate new practices, such as tourism-related activities, into their daily lives, allowing them to remain productive while upholding indigenous knowledge and exercising traditional custodianship.

During my fieldwork, I took the opportunity to experience a private visit (not joining the open trip by the tour operator) by contacting a research participant in Inner Baduy who organizes a trip to Baduy. We arranged to meet in Cijahe, the entrance to the Inner Baduy area. From Cijahe, we walked together while engaging in conversations about daily life in Baduy. Occasionally, he also asked me questions about my research and life in Japan. I stayed overnight at his house, where I was served a traditional Baduy dinner and breakfast.

Initially, we planned to return through the Kaduketug hamlet. However, that morning, he informed me that he would not be able to accompany me back. Instead, his younger brother, who is also involved in tourism activities, would take me. This change in plans was due to the *Ngored Serang* ritual, which is mandatory for married individuals but optional for those who are unmarried. This experience deepened my understanding of how rituals and *adat* activities

remain a priority, with responsibilities being delegated to others when necessary. Consequently, for those engaged in tourism activities, the ability to manage time and human resources has become increasingly important to maintain a balance between traditional customs and tourism-related engagements. Such practices reflect a sophisticated form of coordination that allows tourism engagement to coexist with the uninterrupted practice of *adat*, demonstrating resilience and resourcefulness in integrating modern interactions while preserving cultural continuity.

A further illustration of adaptive pathways is the evolution of collective spiritual practices, such as the *Ruruba* ritual, or even some members referred to it as *Nyapuan* (smaller in scale compared to *Ruruba*), a ceremonial practice aimed at seeking forgiveness from the ancestors for any misconduct that may have occurred within the sacred area. This ritual serves as a form of spiritual purification for both the land and the people, ensuring that any disturbances committed by anyone inside the sacred area are acknowledged and resolved. Originally, *Ruruba* and *Nyapuan* were internal practices conducted exclusively by the Baduy community to maintain the sanctity of their ancestral land, which has been performed for many years, since the time of their ancestors. However, with the increasing number of tourists visiting Baduy, particularly Inner Baduy, over the past thirty years, the ritual has evolved to include a specific component dedicated to seeking forgiveness for any transgressions committed by outsiders.

While having dinner and chatting with the host family in Inner Baduy during a private visit, I was told:

“We live close to nature and value it deeply. Sometimes, local people cut down trees indiscriminately, and such actions are addressed spiritually through the *Ruruba* ritual. Every year, *Ruruba* is performed to restore both the natural environment and spiritual cleanliness. This also applies to the visits of outsiders. We open the visit (to Inner Baduy) for nine months and close for three months, during which the *Ruruba* ritual takes place. This is a spiritual cleansing, acknowledging that during the nine months when visitors come to Inner Baduy, some may unknowingly or unintentionally violate prohibitions. We may not know the details, but through this ritual, the environment and spiritual balance are cleansed from what is considered impure or disrupted.”, (LG1, 2024).

This adaptation ensures that tourism does not compromise the spiritual and moral order of the community, exemplifying how *adat*-guided knowledge and custodianship continue to inform responses to external pressures.

Through voluntary participation, skill acquisition, strategic management of time and resources, and the adaptive evolution of ritual practices, the Baduy demonstrate that continuity and change are not mutually exclusive. Rather, these adaptive pathways reveal a dynamic, living system of governance in which indigenous knowledge, *adat*, and traditional custodianship operate in concert to sustain the community's cultural and spiritual integrity amid the pressures of tourism. Balancing traditional livelihoods and tourism engagement has also become a matter of growing concern. Time once dedicated entirely to agricultural work, including planting, harvesting, and maintaining swidden fields, is now shared with guiding, selling, and hosting visitors. For those involved in tourism, time management becomes a negotiation between fulfilling *adat* obligations and responding to tourist demands. Although some community members strategically align tourism activities with agricultural cycles, this dual engagement risks shifting livelihood priorities in the long run, as the local economy becomes increasingly intertwined with visitor-oriented activities.

7.2.2. *Guarding the Sacred Order: Reasserting Custodianship through Prohibition and Distance*

While adaptation reflects the flexibility in practicing *adat*, the Baduy community also demonstrates a commitment to safeguarding the sacred order of their ancestral landscape. This commitment manifests through deliberate acts of restriction, prohibition, and self-restraint, asserting their role as custodians of a spiritual and ecological domain. These practices embody traditional custodianship, the responsibility to protect the moral and cosmological balance of the Baduy universe, and reinforce that tourism engagement must remain subordinate to the spiritual rhythm of *adat* life.

One of the most explicit expressions of custodianship is the prohibition of entry into the Inner Baduy territory during *Kawalu*⁵⁰, a three-month sacred period dedicated to fasting, retreat, and renewal. During this time, access is completely closed to visitors with tourism-related purposes. As shown in Figure 7.7, this temporary closure is formally communicated through an official notice, informing visitors of the three-month restriction during the *Kawalu* period. However, tourism activities are limited to the Outer Baduy area, ensuring that the sacred cycle of ritual observance in Inner Baduy proceeds undisturbed. This practice reaffirms the

sovereignty of *adat* over external economic or social pressures, asserting that the spiritual order of the community takes precedence over the rhythms of tourism.

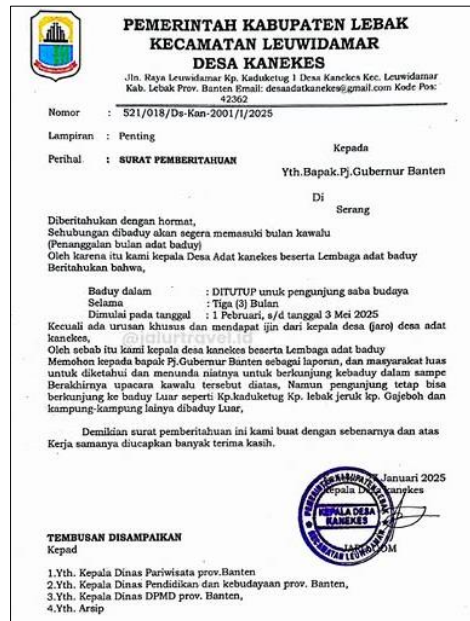


Figure 7.7. Official Notice of Kawalu Month and Prohibition of Entering the Inner Baduy Area

Source: Instagram Post by jalurtravel.id (used with permission from the account administrator)

Similarly, the recent permanent closure of the *Jembatan Akar* (root bridge), an iconic natural and cultural site, represents another form of custodial intervention. The *Jembatan Akar* once became a distinctive point of attraction for visitors due to its unique construction and symbolic value. It is unique because it is a naturally formed bridge created by the intertwining aerial roots of living trees, which grow and fuse over time to span a river. Unlike man-made bridges, it is entirely organic, requiring no artificial materials, and is the product of decades of natural growth guided by human care and ecological knowledge. This combination of natural artistry, traditional custodianship, and practical function gives the bridge both cultural and ecological significance, making it a rare example of living infrastructure.

During my first visit to Baduy in 2023, I was able to access the *Jembatan Akar* as part of an open trip itinerary, indicating that the site was still open to tourists at that time. However, by my subsequent visit for fieldwork in 2024, the situation had changed. When I inquired about the site with one of the research participants, I was informed that it was no longer accessible to tourists. This closure was the result of the surrounding Baduy community's refusal to accommodate visits, as they felt disturbed and inconvenienced by the influx of outsiders. Such

an action illustrates a form of place-based resistance, where traditional custodians assert control over access to culturally and environmentally significant sites in order to safeguard their living space from the pressures of tourism. It also communicates that certain places within the Baduy landscape are not commodities but living entities requiring care and rest, reinforcing the ethical dimension of traditional custodianship.



Figure 7.8. A Written Warning Sign at the border of the Inner Baduy area

Sourced: Photographed by the author on November 23, 2024

Along the trekking routes to Inner Baduy, my attention was also drawn to the written warning signs in Bahasa Indonesia, which have been placed in some spots to remind visitors of behavioral and spatial boundaries, such as the prohibition of photography upon entering restricted zones, as shown in Figure 7.8, and the proper disposal of waste. While the use of written language represents a non-Baduy-based tool, its purpose remains consistent with *adat*'s protective function to maintain order and prevent profanation of sacred spaces. In this way, the act of writing becomes an instrument of custodianship, translating oral authority into a visible and accessible form for outsiders. Rather than signaling a departure from oral tradition, it extends the reach of *adat* in a multilingual and multicultural tourism setting. The use of written signs is not perceived as violating the core principles of *adat* knowledge. Rather, it is considered necessary to uphold and safeguard the sanctity of the territory.

In reasserting the custodianship, codes of conduct and prohibitions are not directed solely toward visitors but also guide community members themselves. The Baduy emphasize

that participation in tourism must not devolve into commercialization⁵¹ that uproots the essence of their ascetic lifeways. Selling handicrafts, guiding, and hosting visitors is accepted only insofar as it does not conflict with moral restraint and humility. The avoidance of excessive profit-seeking and the maintenance of simple exchanges reflect an adherence to the ascetic discipline, a key principle of Baduy life that preserves spiritual balance amid material temptations introduced by tourism. Through these self-imposed limits, *adat* functions as an internal regulator that prevents tourism from eroding the ethical foundations of custodianship.

At the individual level, acts of self-restraint also manifest in decisions to temporarily withdraw from tourism activities. Some community members choose to stay in their *saung*⁵² (field huts) during busy periods, or delegate hosting responsibilities to others when ritual or agricultural duties require their attention and observance, or whenever they desire a tranquil moment or setting. Such pauses are not signs of disengagement but expressions of relational ethics, an understanding that the care for land, ritual obligations, or other ascetic hermitages must always take precedence. Through these practices, the Baduy maintain a balance between openness and preservation, allowing tourism to occur without undermining the sacred rhythm of their world.

Altogether, these prohibitions, codes, and pauses represent more than defensive reactions. Rather, they are enactments of *adat*-based custodianship. By asserting distance and control, the Baduy ensure that their territory remains a sacred landscape governed by indigenous knowledge rather than external demands. Through this guarded openness, they reaffirm that participation in tourism is possible only under the enduring authority of *adat*, a living system of governance that protects the moral, ecological, and spiritual order of Baduy life.

7.2.3. *Walking the Middle Path: Negotiating Space for Controlled Engagement*

Tourism in the Baduy area is neither permitted nor rejected. It is continuously negotiated through *adat*-based governance that seeks to maintain a delicate balance between openness and restraint. The *Saba Budaya* Baduy orientation exemplifies this principle. Developed under the guidance of *Lembaga Adat*, it outlines a set of codes of conduct, spatial routes, and restrictions governing the movement of visitors within the Baduy territory. These include clear prohibitions on certain behaviors, such as taking photographs in sacred areas, crossing sacred boundaries, or bathing with chemical products inside the Inner Baduy, as well as a prescribed trekking flow that directs visitors along specific paths between hamlets.

Through this orientation, the Baduy not only regulate access but also frame the meaning of visitation within their own epistemological and moral order, ensuring that every act of engagement is filtered through *adat* protocols.

Rooted in an ethic of respect, this orientation, formulated in 2007, reaffirmed in 2020, and formalized as the current visitation framework, embodies the Baduy's *adat*-based approach to regulating encounters with outsiders. Visitors are not treated as consumers of culture but as *tamu* (guests) who enter into a relationship grounded in mutual care and restraint. Before entering the Baduy territory, visitors are required to contact a local Baduy resident who will serve as their host, seeking his availability and consent. The host then personally meets to welcome the visitors, usually at Cibileger, the entrance point to Baduy, and accompanies them along the journey to the home, guiding both the physical passage and the moral conduct expected along the route. During the stay, the host provides meals, coffee, and tea, extending hospitality within the modest limits prescribed by *adat*. Visitors, in turn, often bring small offerings such as snacks from their hometown or basic food supplies, such as sugar and cooking oil, as a symbol of gratitude. This reciprocal practice reaffirms the relational ethics at the core of *Saba Budaya* Baduy, where hospitality operates not as a service but as an *adat*-based exchange of respect, humility, and care, anchoring tourism encounters within the moral landscape of custodianship rather than commercialization.

During my fieldwork, I observed and experienced distinct forms of hospitality between participating in an open trip and arranging a private visit directly with a Baduy host without the mediation of a tour operator. In the private visit, where only I and one companion⁵³ were the guests, the interaction felt more intimate, and the sense of being received as a *tamu* was far more personal. Our host served dinner and breakfast with a greater variety of dishes than typically offered in group visits of the open trip. During the private visit, dinner was served before sunset, in line with the Baduy tradition of dining before dark, whereas during the open trip, it was served after dark, likely to allow the larger group time to finish personal tasks before dining together. After dinner, the male host played a simple traditional *kecap*i (zither) under the dim glow of an oil lamp placed in a coconut shell, creating an atmosphere that was serene and deeply rooted in the Baduy rhythm of life. Playing the *kecap*i was not intended to entertain us as *tamu*. Rather, he did so simply during his own free time. Occasionally, the host's wife also guided us to the nearby river, showing where to fetch water and relieve ourselves, and provided *honje*⁵⁴ as a natural substitute for soap.

This experience revealed that hospitality in the Baduy world is not uniform, but shaped by proximity and relationships, while still firmly grounded in the principles of custodianship embedded in *adat*. When the encounter is mediated by a tour operator, the relational ethics of *Saba Budaya* Baduy remain present, but the tour leader often facilitates guidance, rather than the host directly, which can make the interaction slightly less intimate. Nonetheless, a direct host-guest relationship allows indigenous values, such as humility, mutual respect, and care for the environment, to be expressed through everyday actions, making *adat* tangible in practice. What might appear as a simple act of hosting is, in essence, a continuation of Baduy's traditional custodianship, which is guiding outsiders to temporarily inhabit their moral and ecological order while preserving the sanctity of everyday life.

Within the *Saba Budaya* framework, hosting, connecting, and sharing constitute genuine visitor engagement, not commodified cultural display. Hosting reflects the *adat*-based hospitality that emphasizes humility and sincerity, where visitors are welcomed not as consumers but as *tamu* entering a sacred living space. This act is guided by *adat* prescriptions, while maintaining behavioral boundaries that preserve the sanctity of the household and village. Connecting represents the relational bridge between Baduy and visitors, grounded in mutual understanding rather than commodification. Through dialogue, storytelling, and shared experiences, the Baduy mediate their worldview and knowledge in ways that foster awareness of the moral and ecological order underpinning their life. Meanwhile, sharing extends beyond the material exchange of food or souvenirs. It signifies a spiritual and cultural offering. What is shared is not for spectacle or entertainment but for reflection, where visitors are invited to witness and learn from Baduy values of simplicity, restraint, and balance. Together, these three dimensions form a continuum of engagement that embodies indigenous principles of respect, reciprocity, and custodianship, requiring cultural sensitivity from both visitors and hosts and ensuring that learning occurs through lived experience, dialogue, and mutual recognition rather than through commodification or entertainment.

The participation of *Pokdarwis* in managing certain aspects of tourism in Baduy also reflects this negotiated space between tourism-related structures and *adat*-based custodianship. One morning in Kaduketug, I had a conversation with one of the participants, who is involved in managing tourism-related activities in Baduy, before he spent the day in *huma*. He mentioned:

“When it comes to talking about *Pokdarwis*, that’s outside the *adat* framework. However, there should be a group to handle things that defines what we can and cannot do. So, we think carefully about which conduct is acceptable and which ones should be avoided. We will not stand out too much from the *adat* perspective. Tourism, for example, does not really fit within the *Lembaga Adat* because it lies outside the *adat*’s corridor. In *adat*, there’s no such thing as tourism. But for the sake of *adat*, we must find a way to manage it. So, we created our own group. As long as what we do does not go against *adat*, I think it is fine. We gather young people and teach them how to properly receive guests, how to share stories about our *adat*, and how to behave politely and hospitably. These are things we must understand.”, (LO2, 2023).

While *Pokdarwis*’ initiatives are commonly associated with governmental community-based tourism programs, within the Baduy context, their operation remains subject to *adat* supervision. Its presence is not recognized by *adat*, despite playing a significant role in maintaining the order and norms of *adat* within tourism activities. The *Pokdarwis* does not assume full authority. Ultimate governance and custodianship remain firmly with the *Lembaga Adat*, ensuring that all tourism-related practices and matters continue to operate under the guidance, oversight, and approval of the *Lembaga Adat*. Their presence illustrates a form of selective accommodation, allowing for organizational flexibility and external cooperation without displacing traditional authority.

Through these negotiated arrangements, the Baduy community practices what may be understood as walking the middle path, a pragmatic and moral stance that neither isolates them from the changing world nor allows external forces to overtake the integrity of their sacred order. The governance of tourism, therefore, becomes a manifestation of traditional custodianship in action: a living system that integrates adaptation and restraint, openness and protection. Within this framework, tourism is not merely an economic or cultural exchange, but a site where indigenous knowledge actively mediates modern encounters while sustaining the moral and spatial boundaries of the Baduy world.

7.2.4. *Loosening Boundaries: The Risks of Adat Flexibility*

While *adat* governance continues to guide and regulate tourism in Baduy, recent developments reveal subtle but significant forms of flexibility that challenge the boundaries of traditional custodianship. These changes, though often driven by practicality and visitor

convenience, illustrate how Baduy communities negotiate modern demands within their sacred and cultural landscapes. Flexibility, in this context, operates as both an adaptive strategy and a potential source of tension, as the boundaries that once clearly separated *adat* from the profane spheres of tourism and modern convenience become increasingly permeable.

One of the most visible examples of this shifting boundary is the growing use of digital payment systems, particularly QRIS⁵⁵, among Baduy vendors. While this innovation offers convenience to visitors and facilitates the sale of souvenirs and other forest or agricultural products, it also signifies a departure from the traditionally cash-based exchanges rooted in community simplicity. QR codes are now commonly displayed alongside local products, as shown in Figure 7.9, making transactions more efficient but simultaneously embedding a non-*adat*-based economic logic within the Baduy environment. This practice reflects both adaptability and vulnerability, an effort to accommodate external systems while risking the erosion of indigenous values. Within the framework of indigenous knowledge, it illustrates how technological mediation can unsettle the relational ethics that have long governed economic interactions, revealing the subtle tension between practicality and the preservation of cultural integrity.

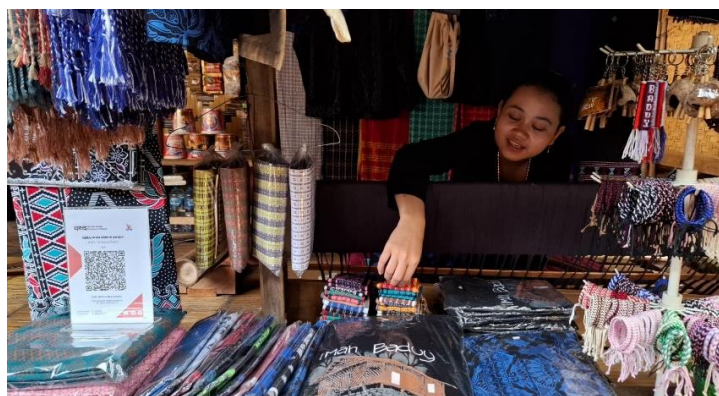


Figure 7.9. Outer Baduy Woman Sells Souvenirs in Front of Her Home

Source: Photographed by the Author on November 01, 2024

Similarly, the use of modern tools and digital platforms has become increasingly evident, particularly in tourism promotion. Some Baduy individuals have begun to share photos and videos, both of themselves, visitors, and of the Baduy landscape, sometimes accompanied by captions inviting outsiders to visit. During my fieldwork and subsequent engagement with social media, I followed Instagram accounts owned by several Baduy members, both Inner and Outer Baduy, who are involved in tourism. Photo and video sharing on such digital platforms

has become increasingly common among them. Many of those Baduy members post images or short videos during hosting and guiding visitors, or repost content uploaded by visitors who tagged them after being hosted or guided during their visit to Baduy. Such practices can be understood as part of the community's expanding engagement with the outside world, where digital visibility functions as a new mode of interaction and recognition. This phenomenon also illustrates the growing permeability of *adat* boundaries, as visual and digital forms of representation become tolerated and selectively integrated within everyday life. It also signals a shift toward more flexible interpretations of what constitutes appropriate conduct under *adat*.

Another concern arises from the loosening of the Outer Baduy's traditional role as a cultural and spatial filter. The expansion of tourism activities has led some Inner Baduy members to take on direct roles in hosting and guiding visitors. While this practice is not explicitly prohibited by *adat*, it raises questions about the dilution of the sacred-profane distinction. The Inner Baduy's engagement in tourism is supposed by Outer Baduy members to remain confined to receiving guests within their territory, while activities such as guiding and external mediation could be entrusted to the Outer Baduy. This division of roles is deemed essential by the Outer Baduy members to maintain the spiritual integrity of the Inner Baduy and uphold the principle of custodial distance that underpins their social and spiritual life.

Regarding such spatial roles in receiving visitors, a perspective from one of the Outer Baduy participants I spoke with during fieldwork emerged:

“*Adat* teaches that before any outsiders enter the Inner Baduy area, they should first be filtered outside. So, the Outer Baduy community plays an important role in screening visitors. We never really know. Some might come with bad intentions, even if they say it is goodwill. We also do not know their purpose and background. The Inner Baduy people do not know and would not ask such questions directly. Ideally, anyone who enters the Inner Baduy area has already been screened by the Outer Baduy.”, (LO1, 2023).

This gradual loosening of boundaries, while reflecting adaptive capacity, also carries potential risks and tensions between Inner and Outer Baduy members, as the distinction in their level of engagement with tourism, which traditionally signifies differing degrees of *adat* observance and custodial responsibility, becomes increasingly blurred.

A further manifestation of boundary flexibility can be seen in the development and opening of new access routes, such as the Binong Raya, located closer to the Inner Baduy

territory, particularly Cikartawana. It functions as a terminal and the last stop for vehicles, similar to Ciboleger. The site also includes food stalls, meeting spaces for interactions with government, private agencies, healthcare providers, and other groups of visitors. More recently, a simple inn has also been constructed near Binong Raya, providing lodging for visitors close to the terminal. Although this route technically lies outside the *adat* domain, it significantly shortens the trekking distance for visitors, offering a more convenient alternative compared to the official Kaduketug entrance. However, according to the *Saba Budaya* Baduy document formalized in 2007, the only official entrance to the Baduy territory is through Kaduketug. Any other access points are considered unauthorized or illegal under *adat* provisions.

This accessibility also raises concerns among community members about the erosion of territorial sanctity, as the spatial separation that once served to protect the sacred core of Baduy life becomes increasingly blurred. The ease of entry not only alters visitor movement patterns but also threatens to normalize access to spaces that have long been regarded as spiritually protected. During the fieldwork, I had the opportunity to meet one of the elders of Cikartawana and engage in an informal conversation in the middle of the day while resting in a *saung*. He expressed his concern and disagreement regarding the opening of the Binong Raya entrance, located close to Cikartawana. His apprehension was particularly linked to the potential emergence of *katulah*. He recounted that on a previous occasion, accessing a nearby water source had become difficult, which he attributed to the effects of *katulah*, and suggested that tourism encroachment near sacred zones could exacerbate such risks. Nonetheless, what is seen as an adaptive and accommodating approach to tourism-related activities may also generate disagreement among other community members, creating potential sources of tension.

Collectively, these instances illustrate that *adat* flexibility, while beneficial in accommodating change, also entails risks and tensions. The gradual loosening of economic, technological, social, and spatial boundaries poses challenges to the long-term sustainability of indigenous custodianship. As *adat* continues to mediate these transformations, the question remains whether such flexibility strengthens the community's capacity for self-determination or unconsciously undermines the sacred order it seeks to protect.

The findings presented in this chapter illustrate the complex interplay between tourism and the Baduy community, revealing both the opportunities it provides for sustaining *adat* continuity and the pressures it exerts on spiritual, social, and ecological life. From the multidimensional impacts of tourism to the community's *adat*-governed responses, ranging

from adaptive engagement to protective restrictions and selective boundary flexibility, these empirical findings underscore the dynamic nature of Baduy governance and knowledge systems in practice. Moving into the discussion, the focus shifts toward interpreting these patterns through the lens of *adat*, indigenous knowledge, and traditional custodianship, examining how tourism becomes not only a site of cultural negotiation but also a medium through which epistemological difference, ethical reasoning, and localized practices are articulated. The next chapter explores these dynamics, where the discussion seeks to move from descriptive accounts of tourism's impacts and community responses to a conceptual understanding of how *adat*-based tourism operates as a living expression of indigenous governance, ethical reasoning, and custodial responsibility.

Chapter 8: Reframing Tourism through *Adat*: Traditional Custodianship and Axio-onto-epistemic Authority

This chapter examines how traditional custodianship among the Baduy is reconfigured and reaffirmed in response to increasing tourism engagement. Moving beyond impact-based or managerial interpretations of tourism, the chapter approaches tourism as a site of axiological judgment, governance, and epistemological negotiation shaped by *adat*. Section 8.1 explores how custodial practices are challenged and reshaped under tourism pressure, revealing not erosion but selective adaptation grounded in moral responsibility. Section 8.2 then examines how *adat* operates as a governing framework through which tourism is adapted, negotiated, and, where necessary, resisted in practice. Section 8.3 deepens the analysis by foregrounding the axiological foundations of traditional custodianship, demonstrating why *adat* values, such as spiritual accountability, intergenerational responsibility, and ethical restraint, take precedence over economic or developmental rationales. Building on this, Section 8.4 conceptualizes *adat*-based tourism as an indigenous axio-onto-epistemic model of engagement, showing how tourism encounters are governed through axio-onto-epistemological control rather than cultural display or market logic. Taken together, these sections position tourism not as a transformative force acting upon the Baduy but as an external condition that is evaluated and governed within an enduring custodial order.

In doing so, this chapter also revisits the Research Questions articulated in Chapter 1 by bringing them into direct dialogue with the literature gaps identified in Chapter 2, the traditional custodianship-indigenous knowledge-*adat* framework developed in Chapter 3, the methodological orientation outlined in Chapter 4, and the empirical findings presented in Chapters 5 to 7. Rather than treating discussion as a summary of results, this chapter synthesizes these components through a mirroring logic. The chapter, therefore, makes explicit how the theoretical propositions advanced earlier are substantiated, refined, and, in certain respects, extended by the empirical material. The methodological emphasis on relational engagement and situated interpretation further underpins this synthesis, ensuring that the analysis remains anchored in lived practice.

8.1. Reconfiguring Traditional Custodianship under Tourism Pressure

Traditional custodianship among the Baduy is increasingly shaped through sustained encounters with tourism. Its practice is not perceived as a process of dilution or loss, but as one of reinterpretation and reassertion. It is understood here not as a fixed role focused solely on material protection, but as an axio-onto-epistemic and relational system. Tourism enters this

system as a disruptive yet generative force, introducing new pressures that provoke contestation, negotiation, and the active reconfiguration of custodial authority. Through everyday interactions with visitors, external actors, and tourism-related expectations, traditional custodianship becomes a site where boundaries are clarified, obligations are reaffirmed, and *adat*-based priorities are asserted. Taken together, the three subsections demonstrate how tourism pressure catalyzes internal deliberation while revealing traditional custodianship as a form of indigenous agency through which the Baduy regulate engagement and sustain relational responsibilities to land, ancestors, and community. In doing so, this section directly addresses Research Question 1 by examining how increased tourism activities influence and challenge traditional custodial practices.

8.1.1. Traditional Custodianship as an Axio-Onto-Epistemic System and Relational Safeguarding

Through the empirical findings, traditional custodianship among the Baduy community can be understood in ways consistent with the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3, where it was conceptualized as a moral and spiritual responsibility of care (Jopela, 2010, 2011), rather than control. Crucially, this custodianship operates through indigenous knowledge, theorized as a place-based, relational mode of knowing inseparable from ethics and cosmology (Carrin, 2024). In practice, Baduy's traditional custodianship functions as an axio-onto-epistemic system, in which custodial ethics, cosmological reality, and knowledge practices are mutually constitutive. It is a culturally embedded obligation rooted in *adat* and ancestral continuity. The responsibility to care for land, regulate conduct, and uphold spiritual balance is grounded in shared moral values, which fundamentally shape how tourism is interpreted and governed. From this perspective, tourism is neither inherently positive nor inherently negative. It is a conditional encounter evaluated through indigenous knowledge-informed moral hierarchies and relational obligations. In this sense, tourism does not simply impose pressure on custodianship. Rather, it renders visible the axio-onto-epistemic principles that underpin it.

Such practices challenge existing scholarship on traditional custodianship, which has often approached custodial roles as functional and institutionalized responsibilities oriented toward the protection and management of culturally and environmentally significant assets. For instance, Jopela (2010, 2011) as well as Smith and Turk (2013) conceptualize traditional custodianship primarily in terms of safeguarding sacred sites, forests, and ritual landscapes through clearly defined roles and governance arrangements. Similarly, within heritage and conservation studies, custodianship is commonly framed as a form of stewardship enacted

through intergenerational knowledge transmission and community-based decision-making (Bell et al., 2025; Smith & Turk, 2013). While these perspectives have been important in moving beyond purely state-led models of heritage governance, they tend to privilege the operational dimensions of traditional custodianship over its moral and ontological foundations. As theorized in Chapter 3, territory within indigenous knowledge systems is not a bounded object but a relational landscape and a living domain in which ancestral authority, ecological processes, and social conduct are inseparable (Aikman, 2025; Carrin, 2024). By overlooking this inseparability of place or site and cosmological authority, such frameworks risk reducing custodianship to technical management (Mumma, 2005; see Chapter 2, Section 2.2), rather than recognizing it as a holistic, context-bound, and dialogic system of governance grounded in indigenous axio-onto-epistemology.

Accordingly, from the Baduy perspective, traditional custodianship cannot be reduced to the protection of physical or material entities alone, as is commonly assumed within mainstream modern heritage management scholarship and frameworks (Berkes et al., 2000; see Chapter 2, section 2.2). Privileging material protection as the primary locus of custodianship risks reducing indigenous governance to a form of resource management, in which responsibility is defined by control over space and objects rather than by ethical orientation or cosmological accountability. At the same time, such practice delegitimizes indigenous agency and blurs pluralism (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). Consequently, custodial practices concerned with maintaining ritual discipline, regulating social conduct, or honoring intergenerational and more-than-human relationships remain analytically marginalized. Attending to these non-material dimensions thus requires a shift away from traditional custodianship as site-based protection toward an understanding that it is an axio-onto-epistemic system that governs knowledge, conduct, and relational boundaries, as presented in Figure 8.1.

Empirical findings from the Baduy demonstrate that traditional custodianship extends well beyond material conservation to encompass the safeguarding of intangible and relational values, including moral discipline, spiritual balance, and epistemic boundaries. *Adat*-based custodianship regulates how people, both community members and visitors, should move, speak, behave, and relate within Baduy territory. Practices such as *Ruruba* and *Nyapuan* as cleansing rituals, controlled access to certain spaces, and prohibition of the use of modern technologies are not primarily oriented toward preserving sites as objects of heritage, but toward sustaining harmony across cosmological, social, and ecological domains. This is in line with Verschuuren et al.'s (2010) as well as Abungu & Githitho's (2012) conceptualization,

stating that indigenous communities have developed culturally grounded strategies to reassert custodial authority and protect the sanctity of sacred sites, involving the enactment of customary laws and ethical frameworks to regulate access and behavior within sacred spaces. Within the Baduy axio-onto-epistemic system, these practices constitute core acts of governance rather than supplementary cultural expressions.

By foregrounding traditional custodianship as a moral-spiritual system of relational governance rather than a managerial function, as defined in Chapter 3, this research moves beyond instrumental interpretations of indigenous authority. It demonstrates how indigenous communities actively sustain moral order, ancestral continuity, and territorial integrity in encounters with tourism systems structured by fundamentally different values. In doing so, this framework directly responds to the gap identified in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3), where traditional custodians have often been positioned as passive stakeholders, symbolic capital, or aestheticized cultural assets rather than as sovereign axio-onto-epistemological authorities.

This study expands prevailing conceptualizations of custodianship beyond environmental stewardship by foregrounding intangible and relational dimensions, in line with what is proposed by Ngoro (2006) and Verschuuren et al. (2010) in Chapter 2, toward an axio-onto-epistemic system of governance. What may appear, from external viewpoints, as excessive restriction or cultural conservatism is instead revealed as a coherent effort to preserve relational integrity across human, non-human, and ancestral realms. In doing so, this section addresses a critical gap in the literature and demonstrates that traditional custodianship in tourism contexts must be understood not only through what is materially protected, but through how moral order, epistemic boundaries, and relational balance are actively sustained.

8.1.2. Tourism as a Catalyst for Contestation and Reconfiguration of Traditional Custodianship

The emergence of tourism in Baduy reveals that traditional custodianship is neither uniformly enacted nor uncontested. Instead, it is continuously reconfigured through everyday decisions about participation, restriction, and responsibility. While *adat* leaders and elders retain moral and symbolic authority, individual community members navigate tourism in differentiated ways, shaped by age, role, and exposure to external networks. This becomes apparent in choices to promote tourism through digital platforms or, alternatively, to enact forms of self-restraint. These internal variations do not signal the disruption and erosion of the indigenous knowledge system and custodial responsibilities, as might be assumed within

mainstream governance frameworks proposed by Alamineh et al. (2023) and Tuyen (2023), discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3. Rather, they demonstrate the adaptive capacity of *adat*-based custodianship to accommodate diversity while maintaining moral coherence. Tourism becomes a site where custodial principles are interpreted, tested, and reaffirmed, whether through selective participation, negotiated boundaries, or ritual responses. This directly addresses the gap in the literature, where limited attention has been given to how custodians negotiate the consequences of tourism.

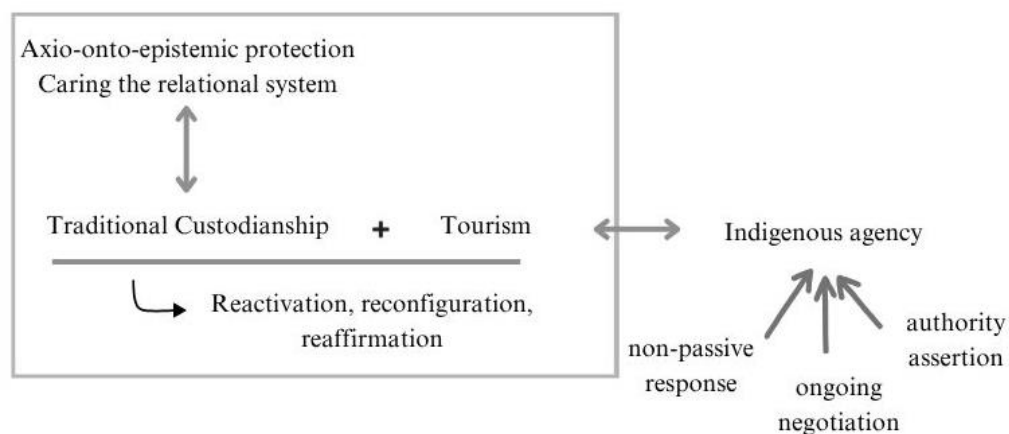


Figure 8. 1. The Traditional Custodianship in Encounter with Tourism in Baduy

Source: Author's analysis

Within the Baduy context, varied degrees of engagement in tourism reflect ongoing processes through which *adat* is interpreted, reaffirmed, or strategically reinforced in response to external pressures. This internal plurality remains underexamined in broader tourism frameworks, where communities are frequently portrayed as unified actors and symbolically homogenized (Reddy & Sailesh, 2024; White et al., 2024), as mentioned in Chapter 2. As Wijesuriya (2014) cautioned that traditional custodianship is not a static inheritance, but a negotiated practice sustained through everyday moral labor, which necessarily accommodates differences, debates, and adjustments. However, when evaluated through tourism governance models that tend to privilege standardized participation and visible consensus (Selcuk Can et al., 2014), such internal negotiations are easily misconstrued as inconsistencies. This misrecognition is compounded by development-oriented frameworks that equate legitimacy with formal organization and uniform voice, overlooking how authority in indigenous systems often operates through moral standing, relational responsibility, and accountability (Verschuuren et al., 2021).

By foregrounding these internal dynamics, this study responds directly to critiques in the literature, including those articulated by Wijesuriya (2014) in Chapter 2, that assume homogeneity and cohesiveness within indigenous governance systems or overlook internal contestation, particularly under tourism pressure. Practices within the Baduy community, including adopting capabilities, imposing restrictions, loosening boundaries, and implementing *Saba Budaya* Baduy (as elaborated in Chapters 6 and 7), reflect internal dynamics shaped through ongoing contestation and reconfiguration. This confirms that continuity is not achieved through uniform compliance but through ongoing negotiation under changing conditions. This reframing advances a more process-oriented understanding of traditional custodianship, one that recognizes indigenous authority not as a static consensus, but as an actively sustained practice shaped through engagement with external pressures such as tourism. Additionally, this framework addresses the gap in scholarship on traditional custodianship and tourism, particularly the limited understanding of how traditional custodianship is actively negotiated and adapted amid competing pressures from the tourism market and state policies (see Chapter 2, section 2.3).

8.1.3. Traditional Custodianship in Tourism as a Form of Indigenous Agency

Frequent tourism scholarship has long documented how indigenous communities, as traditional custodians, are positioned within asymmetrical power relations. Within this framework, Johnston (2006), Kieyah (2007), and Tuyen (2023) cautioned in Chapter 2 that tourism development often results in cultural extraction, commodification, and the erosion of local authority, excluding the communities from meaningful decision-making processes. Accordingly, tourism pressure is frequently interpreted as evidence of indigenous vulnerability, signaling exposure to external market forces, state intervention, and representational control.

As illustrated in Figure 8.1, the Baduy case demonstrates that framing traditional custodianship under tourism pressure primarily in terms of vulnerability obscures how indigenous agency is exercised through fundamentally different axio-onto-epistemological commitments. The findings reveal that Baduy custodianship operates not as a passive response to external pressure, but as an active site of decision-making in which community members continuously assess what forms of tourism engagement are permissible, negotiable, or fundamentally non-negotiable. Decision-making exercised by the Baduy becomes inseparable from axio-onto-epistemological considerations, where choices must ensure the well-being of land, ancestors, and the communities (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). Mechanisms instituted by the Baduy as manifestations of custodial responsibility and ancestral authority, including

selective access, boundary-setting, and behavioral and technological restrictions, mentioned in Chapter 7, are shaped and implemented to safeguard cosmological balance and moral integrity. Such mechanisms function as a deliberate governance strategy rather than a residual or symbolic tradition.

Crucially, evaluating the form of agency in Baduy through an axio-onto-epistemic framework is significant because it situates custodial practices within their value systems, ontological commitments, and epistemological foundations, thereby resisting their reduction to marginalized responses or subordinate adaptations within asymmetrical power relations. When Baduy custodians evaluate tourism engagement through spiritual accountability, ecological and social balance, they are operating within a different rational order grounded in *adat*. Within this axio-onto-epistemic framework, refusal, limitation, and selective engagement function as deliberate governance choices that assert custodial authority and ethical coherence, contesting asymmetrical power relations that position indigenous communities as passive rather than self-determining agents.

By reframing traditional custodianship under tourism pressure as an active and strategic practice, this section addresses a critical gap in tourism literature, identified in Chapter 2, section 2.3, that continues to portray traditional custodians as either vulnerable or symbolic guardians devoid of decision-making capacity. Additionally, Baduy resist the reduction of traditional custodianship to participatory inclusion within state-led systems, as proposed by Jopela (2011), and instead assert it as an authoritative indigenous mode of governing tourism grounded on axio-onto-epistemic principles. This empirical insight responds directly to critiques concerning the epistemic exclusion of traditional custodianship in tourism and heritage studies (Jaramillo & Hooper, 2019; Jopela, 2010, 2011), and contributes to a decolonial rethinking of tourism governance, one that recognizes custodianship not as supplementary to state frameworks, but as a parallel and legitimate system of authority grounded in indigenous realities, values, and cosmologies.

In conclusion, this study places indigenous knowledge, priorities, and governance at the centre of analysis to cultivate respectful and reciprocal tourism relationships, an area that has remained underexplored in existing scholarship, as identified in Chapter 2, section 2.3. In addressing this gap, the empirical findings further reveal a convergence between traditional custodianship and indigenous knowledge systems, in which custodial practices depend upon indigenous knowledge to interpret environmental change and sustain cosmological balance, as

stated in Chapter 3, section 3.4. Accordingly, Section 8.1 addresses Research Question 1 by demonstrating that traditional custodianship in Baduy is both influenced and challenged by tourism pressures, which are made visible through a renewed emphasis on relational frameworks grounded in an axio-onto-epistemic system of traditional custodianship, beyond technocratic, institutionalized, and material frameworks. Furthermore, Research Question 1 is answered by showing that traditional custodianship constitutes an ongoing process of reconfiguration marked by contestation in response to tourism pressures, involving internal dynamics as part of its responsibility of care. Finally, this section responds to Research Question 1 by arguing that traditional custodianship becomes a reflection of indigenous agency as an axio-onto-epistemological commitment, rather than merely a form of resistance to marginalization or subordination.

8.2. *Adat*-based governance: Adaptation, Negotiation, and Resistance in Practice

This section directly addresses Research Question 2: In what ways does the Baduy community adapt to, negotiate, or resist tourism while sustaining their *adat*-based governance and cultural practices? It examines how *adat*-based governance enables communities to engage with tourism without being subsumed by dominant market or state logics. Drawing on the Baduy case, it reframes adaptation, negotiation, resistance, and regulation as expressions of an internally coherent axio-onto-epistemic order. Rather than assimilating tourism into standardized development pathways, *adat* operates as a flexible yet bounded framework that allows selective engagement while preserving custodial authority.

The discussion first conceptualizes adaptation as a process of continuity without assimilation, showing how *adat* accommodates change without reorienting community values. It then examines negotiation as a contextual and relational practice that governs both social and epistemic encounters, extending beyond formal interaction with external actors. The section further reconceptualizes resistance as ethical refusal. Finally, it analyzes codes of conduct and selective engagement as active mechanisms of *adat* governance through which moral authority, boundary-setting, and control over tourism encounters are exercised. This section also particularly addresses the literature gap identified in Chapter 2, where discussion around particularities of *adat* as a framework or how *adat* functions in the tourism sector remains limited within tourism scholarship.

8.2.1. *Adaptation Without Assimilation: Adat as a Flexible Governance Framework*

In mainstream tourism discourse, including that discussed by Chen et al. (2024) and Scott et al. (2009), adaptation is frequently framed through market-oriented rationalities that equate successful adjustment with service provision and growth. Building on this perspective, studies of *adat* and tourism engagement frequently operationalize adaptation through indicators of integration, including participation in formal governance arrangements (Budiarta et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2024) and the performative expressions and consumable images (Osawa, 2022; Picard, 2008), as shown in Chapter 2, section 2.5. By treating alignment with managerial systems and material or tangible standards as the primary measure of success, this framework implicitly narrows the conceptual space for understanding forms of indigenous adjustment that prioritize ethical restraint, relational governance, or custodial continuity over market integration.

The Baduy case challenges such an assumption by revealing a fundamentally different understanding of adaptation, one grounded not in integration into tourism markets, but in the values, realities, and epistemology-driven regulation of tourism encounters through *adat*. Rather than treating tourism as an opportunity to be optimized, the Baduy assesses tourism-related change through its implications for spiritual balance, moral order, and custodial responsibility. Adaptation, in this context, does not mean expanding tourism participation into dominant practices or formalizing tourism institutions, but adjusting boundaries of access, conduct, and engagement in ways that preserve axio-onto-epistemological continuity. It is obvious in the empirical findings, particularly shown in Chapter 7, that practices such as cleansing rituals like *Ruruba* and *Nyapuan*, acts of hosting and sharing without excessive disclosure of knowledge, as well as the written signages, constitute forms of adaptation undertaken to safeguard sacred territory, cosmological balance, and relational integrity. What may appear, from a mainstream tourism perspective, as limited participation or lack of initiative, is instead a deliberate refusal to subordinate *adat* to market logic.

Importantly, since Baduy adaptation is guided by relational assessment rather than standardized development planning, tourism-related decisions are shaped by context-specific and axio-onto-epistemic considerations, rather than by predetermined policies oriented toward growth. This contrasts with mainstream tourism governance models that frequently marginalize axio-onto-epistemological dimensions, including within *adat* contexts, where they remain inadequately engaged (see Chapter 2, section 2.5). Nevertheless, flexibility in the Baduy context still reflects axio-onto-epistemological attentiveness rather than openness to unlimited

change. This aligns with the conceptualization of *adat* in Chapter 3, where it is understood as a living and dynamic system of governance grounded in moral-ecological order and normative structures that regulate relationships among people, nature, and the spiritual realm.

By reframing adaptation as boundary maintenance rather than assimilation, this study reveals that the Baduy community is not automatically or uncritically participative in tourism. The Baduy case demonstrates that indigenous engagement in tourism, and the adaptations it entails, function as a form of governance that preserves authority precisely by refusing to adopt dominant tourism values. This is not indicative of resistance or underdevelopment. Rather, it reflects the Baduy community's commitment to a dominant framework and principles in which restraint, continuity, and situational axio-onto-epistemological judgement are prioritized, as discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, *adat* operates not as a rigid system but as a flexible yet bounded framework that enables contextual responses to tourism pressures, ensuring that engagement remains subordinate to custodial ethics rather than allowing tourism to become the dominant organizing principle of social life.

8.2.2. *Negotiating Tourism Encounters: Contextual, Relational, and Epistemic Processes*

Beyond adaptation, Research Question 2 of this study also encompasses the issue of negotiation. The Baduy case reveals a fundamental understanding of negotiation, one that is grounded in *adat*-based governance and relational axio-onto-epistemologies. Negotiation here is neither oriented towards satisfying visitor demands or optimizing tourism experiences nor designed to produce fixed agreements or universally applicable protocols, but toward assessing moral intention, relational conduct, and epistemic risk in each encounter. Decisions concerning how long visitors may stay and what forms of interaction are permissible are made situationally, based on observed behavior and contextual sensitivity. The empirical findings in Chapters 6 and 7, particularly the decision to reaffirm *Saba Budaya* Baduy and to establish *Pokdarwis* among a few Baduy members involved in tourism, illustrate negotiated pathways that are carefully evaluated with the community's moral order, relational ontology, and epistemic processes in the context of tourism encounters. Practices that were initially considered outside established boundaries become legitimized through careful and collective deliberation, insofar as they are understood to serve the protection of sacred territory, cosmological balance, and the ethical integrity of tourism encounters.

Such practices may seem consistent with dominant treatments of negotiation in tourism scholarship, where negotiation is frequently framed as a managerial instrument for regulating

host-guest relations and maintaining functional tourism operations, especially in situations where conflict and misalignment arise within community settings, as Cole (2008), Hoskins (2002), and Mahardika et al. (2021) raised in Chapter 2. Within this framing, community actors are expected to negotiate primarily by absorbing or mitigating negative impacts so that tourism flows remain uninterrupted. Negotiation is therefore cast as reactive and instrumental, valued for its capacity to smooth friction rather than to assert authority or redefine terms of engagement. However, in the Baduy context, negotiation is grounded less in managerial rationality, but more in alignment with ancestral authority, moral order, and relational accountability. As such, negotiation in the Baduy context functions not merely as a mechanism for managing impacts but as an enactment of custodial governance that redefines the ethical terms under which tourism engagement is permitted and sustained.

Significantly, negotiation in the Baduy context extends beyond the regulation of visitor behavior to encompass the governance of epistemic encounters themselves. What dominant tourism frameworks assume to be accessible spaces and shareable knowledge is, within Baduy governance, treated as conditional and subject to negotiation, including the determination of when and under what circumstances particular forms of knowing are impermissible. Such negotiation materializes through deliberate epistemic boundary-making. By framing rituals as ethical and spiritual obligations rather than as cultural performances, the Baduy redirects attention away from interpretive consumption toward appropriate conduct and restraint. In doing so, they unsettle tourism frameworks that regard knowledge as extractable information and instead reaffirm an alternative epistemic order in which knowing is relational, conditional, and governed by moral responsibility.

Nonetheless, negotiation in the Baduy context is not only outward-facing but also internally oriented, a dimension that remains largely unrecognized in mainstream tourism narratives. While much tourism scholarship assumes that negotiation primarily takes place between indigenous communities and external actors, the empirical findings indicate that sustained negotiation occurs within the community itself. Traditional custodians continually deliberate over how *adat* should be interpreted and enacted in response to shifting tourism pressures, generational expectations, and everyday practical concerns. These internal negotiations, often expressed through the reaffirmation of *Pikukuh* by *adat* elders, practices of self-restraint, and the prioritization of ritual and social obligations amid hosting guests, occur not only through explicit decisions but also through embedded everyday practices. In this sense,

negotiations operate as a constitutive dimension of social life that takes place from within, at both collective and individual levels.

In this way, tourism practices are carefully assessed and evaluated through the lenses of traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge, and *adat*, ensuring that they do not endanger ancestral order or disrupt relational and ethical fields. Such practices undergo continuous negotiation, where they are reinterpreted and re-enacted in response to changing circumstances. This demonstrates that *adat*, as an institutional and normative structure that integrates responsibility and knowledge within a broader governance order, as theorized in Chapter 3, is not fixed or static. Rather, it is sustained through ongoing deliberation over the inseparability of cosmological authority, knowledge, and moral order. The discussion of the axio-onto-epistemic system in the Baduy context directly addresses a significant gap in the literature stated in Chapter 2, section 2.5, where few studies engage with the deeper and less tangible dimensions of *adat*, including customary values, institutional practices, and spiritual cosmologies. Additionally, by foregrounding these dimensions, this study repositions *adat* not as performative expressions and consumable images, but as a living axio-onto-epistemic infrastructure that actively shapes governance in the tourism context.

8.2.3. *Resistance as Ethical Refusal*

Within the scope of Research Question 2, resistance is also identified as an explicit theme in the empirical findings discussed in Section 7.2.2. While tourism scholarship often frames resistance through a political lens that emphasizes confrontation, protest, or explicit rejection, the Baduy case challenges such assumptions by revealing a form of resistance that is neither confrontational nor oriented toward external recognition. Rather than opposing tourism as an activity, Baduy resistance is enacted through ethical refusal grounded in *adat*-based custodial obligations. Empirically, this refusal is manifested through behavioral regulation and restriction, the maintenance of spatial boundaries, practices of self-restraint, and forms of spatial and temporal closure, and limitation of sacred knowledge explanations, all of which are elaborated in Chapter 7. Restrictions on documentation, limits on access to sacred spaces, and the refusal to commodify rituals are enacted without justification or negotiation in external terms. These practices are not framed internally as acts of resistance but as necessary expressions of traditional custodianship.

Importantly, Baduy resistance also functions as epistemic protection. While previously framed as negotiation, these epistemic boundaries simultaneously function as refusal,

especially against the presumption that *adat* knowledge must be transparently disclosed and fully interpretable for visitors. This becomes visible in the selective and measured responses given to visitors' inquiries, as well as in the deliberate absence of extensive explanatory narration during tours, as explained in Chapter 7. By declining to explain certain practices or by limiting interpretive engagement, the Baduy assert control over how their worldview is encountered. This refusal is not an act of secrecy, but a means of maintaining epistemic integrity and spiritual accountability. What is resisted, therefore, are forms of engagement that demand the translation of *adat* into externally intelligible categories, detaching it from moral depth and relational meaning.

From such a perspective, Baduy practices operate through deliberate non-performance, boundary-setting, and limited engagement in tourism. It thus constitutes an alternative mode of governance, in which authority is exercised through relational restraint rather than confrontation or rejection toward incorporation into tourism development agendas. Instead of being oppositional in intent, resistance in the Baduy context is protective, seeking to safeguard cosmological order, sacred rhythms, and relational ethics. By selectively allowing some forms of tourism while refusing others, the Baduy articulate a conditional and values-governed mode of engagement. Resistance thus becomes a mechanism for maintaining custodial authority rather than a reaction to marginalization, exclusion, or subordination. In addressing the gap in the tourism literature, this analysis foregrounds the complex, often less visible dimensions of *adat* authority, which remain insufficiently examined in existing scholarship.

Accordingly, resistance as expressed through custodial and *adat* authority also reflects a shift from indigeneity as lived relational existence to indigeneity as articulated political positioning (as reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4), particularly within the context of tourism encounters. In this sense, the lived relationship between people and ancestral place, embodied through everyday practices and modes of being, transitions into a more explicit discursive response when those embodied relations come under threat, in this case through tourism interventions and expansion. The Baduy community's refusal in 2020 to be included on the official tourist destination list, alongside the reaffirmation of *Saba Budaya*, as elaborated in Chapter 6, constitutes such a response emerging from intensified engagement with external actors. At this stage, the Baduy actively reassert territorial authority and custodial sovereignty, aimed at safeguarding the balance and harmony among human, non-human, and spiritual realms.

This suggests that indigeneity within the Baduy community may be grounded less in overt political mobilization and more in axio-onto-epistemological commitments embedded in *adat*-based custodianship. Rather than emerging solely from contestations over land, rights dispossession, assimilationist policies, or other forms of marginalization and subordination, concerns that dominate much mainstream scholarship on *adat*, raised in Chapter 2, section 2.4, indigeneity in the Baduy context is articulated through the continuous enactment of moral responsibility, relational accountability, and cosmological balance. In this context, political articulation is not the starting point. Rather, it emerges from deeply rooted custodial ethics and moral obligations embedded in *adat*. In this sense, indigeneity is constituted not only as a claim-making identity within adversarial state-society relations, but as an axio-onto-epistemological orientation sustained through everyday governance practices that precede and exceed formal political confrontation.

8.2.4. *Codes of Conduct and Selective Engagement as Mechanisms of Adat Governance*

In further addressing Research Question 2, this subtheme is examined as a distinct section, despite its close interrelation with the preceding discussions on adaptation, negotiation, and resistance. It serves both to consolidate and to re-emphasize the study's response to Research Question 2. As illustrated in Figure 8.2, this section demonstrates that codes of conduct emerge as living instruments of *adat*-based governance in Baduy, functioning as concrete manifestations through which adaptation, negotiation, and resistance are articulated, operationalized, and sustained in everyday tourism encounters. These codes are grounded in indigenous axio-onto-epistemologies and are continuously enacted through host-guest and community-tourism interactions. They translate Baduy's *adat* values and norms expressed in Chapter 5, such as ancestral continuity, cosmological and ethical order, and relational balance, into practical guidance for tourism encounters, applicable to all actors engaged in tourism. Importantly, these codes are designed to preserve moral order and custodial responsibility. In this sense, they govern tourism by subordinating it to *adat* rather than accommodating *adat* to tourism.

Meanwhile, the codes directed at outsiders, as outlined in the 2007 *Saba Budaya* Baduy regulations and prominently displayed at the village entrance, function as pedagogical tools that structure how to perceive, learn, and behave. Empirically, explanations offered to visitors regarding appropriate dress, movement, photography, technology use, and interaction with the environment are not aimed at enhancing tourists' experience, but as ethical instruction embedded in narratives of balance, harmony, purity, and ancestral obligation. Through these

interactions, tourism becomes a site of ethical learning rather than a site of consumption. Visitors are positioned not as entitled consumers or clients, but as temporary participants expected to adjust their conduct and expectations to local moral frameworks. At the same time, these codes operate as moral boundary markers that discipline behavior without relying on formal enforcement. There are no written penalties, surveillance systems, or contractual obligations. Instead, authority is exercised through explanation, relational accountability, and the implicit legitimacy of *adat*. Compliance is expected not because of legal sanction, but because adherence reflects respect for the moral and spiritual order of the community.

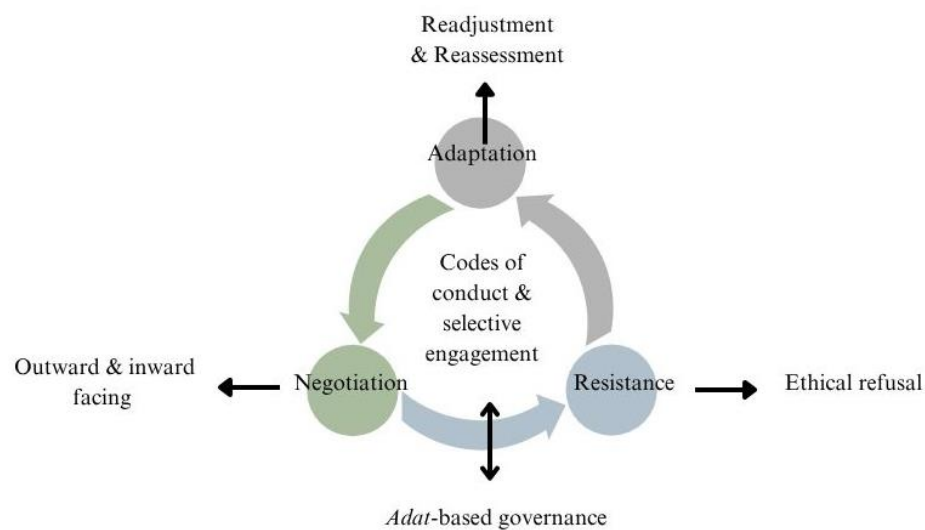


Figure 8. 2. Codes of Conduct and Selective Engagement as Manifestations of Adaptation, Negotiation, and Resistance in Tourism

Source: Author's analysis

By inviting outsiders to respect the Baduy norms and values articulated in the codes of conduct, external actors, including visitors, are positioned as ethically accountable participants in sustaining ancestral continuity, cosmological and ecological balance, and moral order. In this way, traditional custodianship extends, albeit in spatially, partially, and temporally bounded forms, to encompass external parties within its governance framework. This demonstrates that custodianship in the Baduy context is not a closed system. Rather, it is relationally expansive while remaining normatively bounded. External participation is neither unrestricted nor assimilative, but conditional upon adherence to *adat*-based principles. This conditional inclusion reconfigures tourism encounters from transactional exchanges into morally structured relationships, where *adat* authority remains anchored in custodial ethics even as engagement with outsiders occurs.

Accordingly, the codes of conduct function as a central mechanism through which *adat*-based governance is operationalized in tourism contexts. The translation of axio-onto-epistemological commitments into everyday regulatory practice is not intended for technocratic or market-oriented instruments. Rather than serving merely as guidelines for visitor management, these codes materialize custodial authority, embedding moral order, cosmological balance, and relational accountability into the terms of engagement. In doing so, they demonstrate how governance in the Baduy context is enacted not primarily through formal policy, but through ethically structured relationships that continuously subordinate tourism to *adat*. *Adat* subsequently functions as a normative framework, a structural order, a cosmological guide, and a regulatory mechanism, as theorized in Chapter 3, particularly in responding to tourism. By engaging traditional custodianship as a form of ethical responsibility and indigenous knowledge as an interpretive and experiential grounding, tourism is practiced through continued evaluation and negotiation.

Figure 8.2 also denotes that selective engagement operates as a key mechanism of *adat* governance in addition to codes of conduct, enabling Baduy custodians to assert control over tourism interactions by strategically opening, limiting, or refusing engagement with state and market actors. The Baduy engages selectively with tourism institutions while maintaining the primacy of *adat* as the ultimate authority governing land, culture, and conduct. It is also apparent that unwritten boundaries regulate the engagement of Baduy members in tourism activities, including the prohibition against expanding tourism into large-scale commercial ventures and the sustained precedence accorded to moral, cosmological, and social principles, as stated in Chapter 7, which is based on axio-onto-epistemic principles declared in Chapter 5. Interaction with state agencies or tourism initiatives is, therefore, conditional and tightly bound, typically limited to symbolic recognition or minimal forms of support that do not compromise *adat*-based governance, as exemplified by the visit of the Minister of Tourism in 2022, discussed in Chapter 7. In other words, inclusion in tourism agendas or official visits may be accepted while maintaining firm control over access, activities, and decision-making within the territory. Market actors, including tour operators and intermediaries, are engaged under circumscribed conditions, rendering Baduy engagement selective, strategically distanced, and partially cooperative.

The Baduy case exposes the limitations of assumptions within tourism and indigenous governance literature that position external actors as the primary subjects to whom rules, codes, and restrictions must be applied, particularly in instances of misalignment with local values

(Adams, 1997; Hitchcock, 2000; Situmorang et al., 2019). Such perspectives tend to overlook the fact that potential misalignments may also occur at the intra-community level. Through practices of selective engagement, the Baduy case demonstrates that local actors themselves are likewise subject to guidelines of engagement grounded in *adat*, custodial responsibility, and relational axio-onto-epistemological commitments. This reveals that governance is not unidirectional, aimed solely at regulating outsiders, but reflexive and internally oriented. Authority is exercised not only in boundary-making vis-à-vis external actors, but also in the continual calibration of conduct within the community. In this sense, selective engagement operates as a mechanism for sustaining ethical coherence and relational balance, ensuring that both external and internal participation in tourism remains accountable to custodial principles rather than market imperatives.

In conclusion, by foregrounding code of conduct and selective engagement as a principled practice and mechanism, this section addresses a key gap in tourism governance scholarship that frames indigenous participation in binary terms, either included or excluded, empowered or marginalized, as framed in Chapter 2, section 2.5. The Baduy experience demonstrates that agency can also be exercised through controlled interaction, refusal of full integration, and the preservation of axio-onto-epistemic autonomy. *Adat*-based governance thus emerges not as a barrier to collaboration, but as a framework that fundamentally reshapes how collaboration is defined, limited, and made ethically permissible.

8.3. Axiological Foundations of Traditional Custodianship: Why *Adat* Takes Precedence over Tourism

To address Research Question 3, concerning the continued prioritization of traditional custodianship amid tourism pressures and opportunities, this section analyzes the axiological foundations that underpin the subordination of tourism to *adat* within Baduy governance, as opposed to its elevation as a central development agenda. It argues that traditional custodianship is embedded in an axio-onto-epistemic order that structures responsibility across generations, situating authority in ethical accountability to land, ancestors, and future life. From this perspective, decisions concerning tourism are evaluated through a hierarchy of values in which custodial ethics take precedence over economic rationality. It also conceptualizes tourism not as a taken-for-granted pathway to progress, but as an object of axio-onto-epistemic evaluation. The section therefore reframes rationality itself, demonstrating how what appears as limitation or refusal, within mainstream tourism logics, constitutes reasoned and coherent judgment within an *adat*-based values system. By centering axiology, this section challenges

development-oriented tourism frameworks that universalize economic value and instead foregrounds indigenous moral authority as the basis for governing tourism encounters.

8.3.1. *Intergenerational Traditional Custodianship and the Axio-Onto-Epistemic Evaluation of Tourism*

In Section 8.1, traditional custodianship has been comprehensively presented as the fundamental grounding of governance, one rooted in moral obligation and cosmological accountability rather than material and managerial logic. Traditional custodianship is understood as an ancestral mandate, informed by indigenous knowledge, and sustained through adherence to *adat*, which governs the proper relations between humans, non-human entities, and the spiritual realm. Custodial authority, therefore, does not stem from formal governance structures, but from collective commitment to ancestral responsibilities and spiritual continuity. Accordingly, within tourism contexts, traditional custodianship prioritizes accountability to ancestors and future generations over the short-term benefits associated with tourism activities. Decisions concerning access, permissible activities, and acceptable conduct are assessed based on their alignment with ancestral mandates and anticipated spiritual consequences. Within this cosmological framework, custodianship entails a moral obligation to ensure that present actions do not disrupt the continuity of ethical order, ecological balance, and spiritual harmony across time.

Empirical findings indicate that the Baduy's commitment to upholding *adat*-based norms and values, as discussed in Chapter 5, alongside the imperative to avoid *katulah*, a condition of ancestral displeasure, spiritual, and ecological imbalance discussed in Chapter 7, constitutes a decisive factor in determining how tourism is governed and, when necessary, intentionally limited. Accordingly, when tourism activities are perceived to transgress ethical or cosmological boundaries, rituals such as *Ruruba* and *Nyapuan* are enacted to restore balance. These practices should not be understood as symbolic or reactive gestures, but as axio-onto-epistemic interventions through which the community actively addresses disruption, reaffirms custodial responsibility, and re-establishes proper relations among humans, non-humans, and ancestral forces. Within this worldview, moral transgression and environmental disturbance are not merely social or ecological issues but are understood to disrupt cosmic balance. Improper behavior, whether by community members or visitors, is believed to have consequences that extend beyond immediate impacts, affecting spiritual harmony and intergenerational well-being. This worldview serves as the normative grounding of traditional custodianship,

manifesting in a continuous responsibility to protect both the physical landscape and the moral order that underpins it.

In addition, the Baduy case demonstrates that, while traditional elders occupy an important position in decision-making within systems of traditional custodianship, custodial responsibility is not exclusively vested in customary authorities but is instead collectively and intergenerationally constituted. Particularly under conditions of tourism engagement, individuals involved in tourism encounters play a critical role in articulating, interpreting, and safeguarding *adat* principles in practice. Custodial authority thus operates beyond formal leadership structures and is continuously enacted through the everyday ethical conduct, ritual observance, and disciplined behavior of Baduy community members in their relations with land, ancestors, and outsiders. In this respect, the Baduy case challenges prevailing approaches in the traditional custodianship literature raised in Chapter 2 that privilege the role of elders or customary leaders, as stated by Borona (2014) and Osei & Asantewa (2025), and instead foregrounds custodianship as a distributed moral-cosmological responsibility sustained across generations.

Tourism within the Baduy worldview is, therefore, not approached as a development imperative but as an external activity that must be ethically evaluated through *adat* before it is permitted, tolerated, or restricted, as theorized in Chapter 3, where traditional custodianship, indigenous knowledge system, and *adat* are interlinked in response to tourism. Tourism does not occupy a privileged position within community priorities. Instead, it is assessed in relation to moral order, spiritual balance, and custodial responsibility. The legitimacy of tourism is therefore not derived from its economic potential, as it is often foregrounded in mainstream tourism scholarship (Ady et al., 2022; Steiner & and Reisinger, 2004; Vij et al., 2023), but from its compatibility with the ethical and cosmological foundations that govern relations between humans, nature, and ancestral forces. Tourism, thus, becomes permissible only insofar as it remains subordinate to custodial obligations. In this sense, tourism is not an opportunity to be maximized but a potential moral risk to be carefully contained.

This evaluative stance fundamentally reframes tourism from a development objective into a moral test. In this configuration, tourism functions less as an economic mechanism and more as an encounter between divergent axio-onto-epistemic systems. By placing axio-onto-epistemological evaluation prior to development outcomes, the Baduy case introduces a conceptual shift within tourism scholarship, moving beyond models that highlight economic

viability (Ady et al., 2022; Steiner & Reisinger, 2004; Vij et al., 2023) and managerial solutions (Jopela, 2011). Instead, it foregrounds indigenous moral authority as the foundation upon which decisions about tourism engagement, limitation, or refusal are made, thereby repositioning ethics not as an adjunct to tourism development but as its governing principle.

8.3.2. Reframing Rationality: Hierarchies of Values and the Primacy of Custodial Ethics

Empirical findings show that tourism in Baduy is practiced through restrictions on visitor conduct and access to sacred or ecologically sensitive areas, and the refusal of tourism forms that disrupt ritual cycles, moral discipline, or environmental balance. These decisions should be read as deliberate acts of valuation in which restraint, refusal, and restriction are meaningful expressions of traditional custodianship within a distinctive axio-onto-epistemic system, not as opposition to change or development. Tourism engagement is calibrated to preserve the primacy of *adat* as the governing framework of custodial ethics.

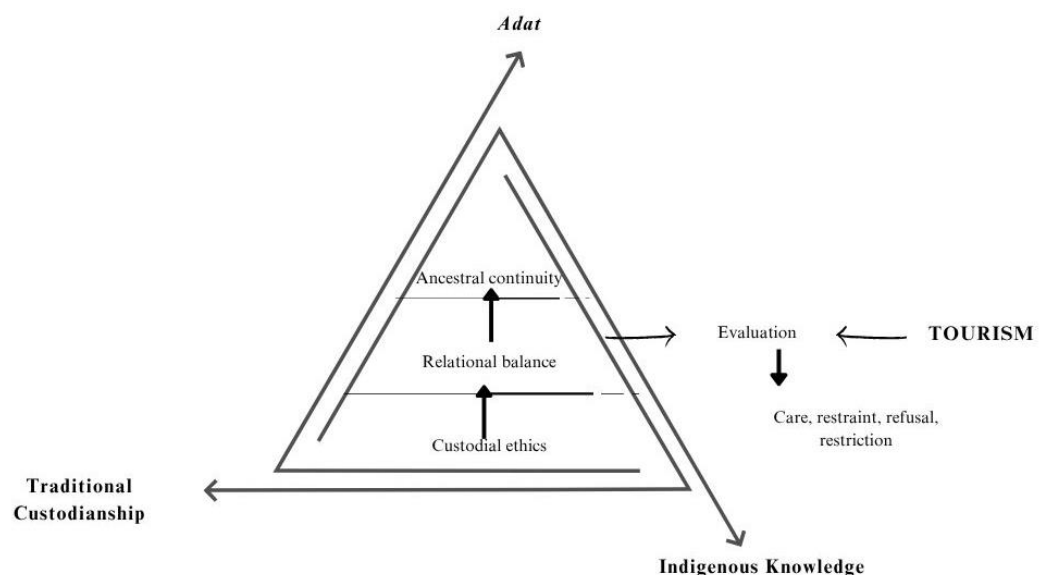


Figure 8. 3. Interlinkages of *Adat*, Indigenous Knowledge, and Traditional Custodianship Include a Hierarchy of Values as an Evaluative Framework

Source: Author's analysis

The Baduy case, therefore, reveals a clearly articulated hierarchy of values in which economic and other developmental considerations are systematically subordinated to moral, spiritual, and cosmological obligations embedded in *adat*. Tourism-related income and practices are not dismissed but are assessed in relation to their compatibility with ancestral continuity, spiritual balance, and ethical conduct, as shown in Figure 8.3. This becomes apparent in the deliberate limitation on expanding tourism into large-scale commercial ventures

and in the sustained absence of supporting infrastructure and tourism-related facilities within the village, as described in Chapters 6 and 7. Moreover, the limited presence of *adat*-based performances showcasing art and cultural expressions further reflects this ongoing valuative and evaluative stance toward tourism engagement. Economic opportunities and market-oriented performances are thus filtered through custodial values that determine whether engagement is permissible, rather than pursued as objectives. This hierarchy establishes the moral conditions under which tourism may occur, positioning economic benefit and visibility as contingent rather than foundational.

Meanwhile, from a market-oriented or state development perspective, practices and choices in Baduy may appear irrational, particularly when they involve foregone revenue and reduced visibility. Yet within the Baduy axiological framework, these decisions are internally coherent and ethically necessary. Action is guided by the ethical commitment to maintain equilibrium among human, non-human, and spiritual realms, rather than by profit maximization and development. What external actors may interpret as a lost opportunity is understood locally as moral deliberation, an intentional refusal to trade short-term gains for long-term cosmological risk.

In this context, Baduy custodianship articulates a form of rationality that departs fundamentally from the economic, visibility, and development logics embedded in dominant tourism discourse. Rather than equating rational action with accumulation or growth, custodial rationality is enacted through care, restraint, and sustained attention to relational and moral balance and harmony. This contrasts sharply with the model of rational decision-making that underpins much tourism planning, where rationality is defined through economic and return maximization, as reflected in Chapter 2, frameworks discussed by Ady et al. (2022) and Vij et al. (2023). Within such a framework, practices of limitation or refusal are readily interpreted as inefficiency, resistance, or developmental failure.

The Baduy case exposes the narrowness of this conception by demonstrating that limitation can itself be a rational and deliberate strategy when decision-making is grounded in ethical responsibility, spiritual accountability, and relational continuity. In doing so, it opens analytical space for recognizing alternative rational orders that are not reducible to economic and visibility performance, but are nonetheless coherent, purposive, and governing in their own terms. This reframing resonates with scholarship on plural rationalities and decolonial critiques of Western rationalism, including those proposed by Gaerrang (2017) and Lauter (2023), which

emphasize that dominant economic models often universalize a narrow and culturally specific conception of reason. Indigenous epistemologies, including those embedded in *adat*, function as governing logics, structuring decision-making, regulating conduct, and defining the limits of acceptable change. In this sense, Baduy custodianship does not represent an alternative strategy within the same rational framework, but a distinct way of reasoning about human-environment relations, authority, and the purpose of social life.

8.4. *Adat*-Based Tourism as an Indigenous Axio-Onto-Epistemic Model of Engagement

This final section addresses Research Question 4, inquiring how the Baduy community's indigenous knowledge and *adat* principles actively shape their engagement with tourism and the regulation of visitor interactions. It advances *adat*-based tourism as an indigenous axio-onto-epistemic model of engagement that fundamentally reconfigures how tourism encounters are understood, governed, and valued. Rather than treating tourism as a sector to be developed or a cultural interface to be managed, the Baduy case reveals tourism as an encounter between distinct epistemologies and value systems, where knowledge, access, and meaning are ethically regulated through *adat*. In this framing, *adat* operates not only as a normative code, as conceived by Imamulhadi et al. (2025), but as a form of axio-onto-epistemological governance that actively shapes worldmaking processes, determining what can be known, how relations unfold, and under what conditions engagement is permissible. By foregrounding custodial authority over visibility and participation, this section challenges dominant tourism theories that prioritize representation, experience consumption, and market integration. It therefore clarifies why *adat*-based tourism cannot be subsumed under existing categories such as indigenous tourism, ethnic tourism, or cultural tourism, and instead warrants recognition as a distinct analytical model grounded in indigenous axio-onto-epistemological sovereignty.

8.4.1. *Tourism as Axio-Onto-Epistemological Encounter and Custodial Worldmaking through Adat*

As discussed in Section 8.3.2, the Baduy articulates a system of valuation in tourism encounters that diverges from mainstream tourism discourse, where economic growth and visibility are commonly privileged. Tourism encounters in the Baduy context can neither be reduced to moments of cultural display or experiential consumption, where visiting a destination is equated with the accumulation of authentic experiences, nor can they be readily integrated into state-led agendas that prioritize economic growth and formalized institutional participation. Rather, such encounters are governed by relational accountability, ethical

positioning, and epistemic boundaries, a logic that the Baduy case explicitly foregrounds and thereby unsettles dominant tourism frameworks.

In practice, the axio-onto-epistemological divergence appears between Western-modern rationalities and indigenous relational worldviews, a framework theorized in Chapter 3. Modern tourism actors often approach territory through assumptions of accessibility, visibility, and consumability, treating landscapes as resources or scenery and knowledge as transferable and open (Urry & Larsen, 2011). By contrast, for the Baduy, knowledge is relational, embodied, and spiritually grounded, emerging through ongoing relationships between humans, land, ancestors, and unseen force (Romm, 2017, 2024). Places are not neutral spaces but morally charged domains, and access is governed not by policy convenience but by spiritual responsibility. Knowledge is therefore not publicly available for extraction but carried, enacted, and safeguarded through ritual practice, restriction, and custodial obligation.

Meanwhile, *adat*-based governance in Baduy fundamentally reorders these assumptions by framing tourism encounters as axio-onto-epistemology conditional rather than open-ended. *Adat* does not simply manage visitor behavior. Rather, it establishes the terms under which tangible and intangible dimensions may be encountered, withheld, or deferred. Restrictions are not operational inconveniences and constraints or signs of secrecy, but expressions of a relational axio-onto-epistemology in which knowing, being, and doing are inseparable from moral conduct, spiritual accountability, and social positioning. This reframing of the axio-onto-epistemological divergence helps to explain why tensions between the *adat*-based system and external actors frequently emerge, as identified in Chapter 2, raised by Cole (2008) and Mahardika et al. (2021).

Accordingly, the Baduy case shows that tourism is absorbed into an already coherent moral, spiritual, and epistemic universe governed by *adat*, rather than allowing tourism to reorganize social life or redefine what is meaningful. Drawing on indigenous worldmaking and ontological scholarship (Campion et al., 2024; Swancutt, 2024), this section argues that tourism encounters do not generate new realities for the Baduy. Instead, they are selectively incorporated into an existing cosmological and moral order. What is real, valuable, and permissible is not negotiated through tourism demand, but pre-defined by *adat*. Traditional custodianship is central to maintaining this axio-onto-epistemological stability. Spiritual rhythms, ritual calendars, and everyday practices, all expressed as empirical findings in Chapter 7, are not adjusted to accommodate tourism schedules or visitor convenience. Seasonal rituals,

restrictions on access, and expectations of restraint remain intact regardless of tourist presence. Tourism is thus required to adapt to Baduy temporalities rather than the reverse.

However, engaging literature on indigenous relational ontologies and critiques of cultural commodification, this analysis demonstrates that *adat*-based tourism operates as a form of axio-onto-epistemological governance. Rather than adapting culture to tourism, the Baduy govern tourism through their worldview, determining what forms of interaction may occur and what must remain untouched. This advances existing debates by showing that indigenous tourism need not be framed exclusively in terms of adaptation or resistance. Instead, *adat*-based tourism constitutes an active assertion of axio-onto-epistemological authority, through which indigenous worlds are sustained through custodial engagement, rather than reconfigured.

8.4.2. *Distinguishing Adat-based Tourism from Indigenous, Ethnic, and Cultural Tourism Models.*

Adat-based tourism resists classification within established tourism typologies such as ethnic tourism, cultural tourism, or dominant models of indigenous tourism. Although these frameworks have been important in acknowledging non-Western participation and indigenous presence in tourism (Ambros & Buzinde, 2021), they remain largely grounded in assumptions that tourism is organized around representation, experience consumption, and varying degrees of market integration (Cao Shuran et al., 2024). Such premises obscure contexts like Baduy, where tourism is not structured around cultural display, interpretive performance, or visitor satisfaction, but is instead filtered through pre-existing moral and epistemic obligations. Rather than producing tourism products or experiences, Baduy custodianship governs whether, how, and to what extent tourism may occur at all. Advancing *adat*-based tourism as a distinct analytical category thus shifts attention away from typologies based on form or market orientation and toward tourism as a site of indigenous governance, ethical judgment, and epistemological authority.

Discussions on ethnic tourism are commonly structured around the consumption of difference, where cultural distinctiveness is made visible, legible, and consumable through practices of spectacle, performance, or exoticization (Chistyakova, 2020; Salazar & Graburn, 2014). Meanwhile, *adat*-based tourism fundamentally unsettles this logic. In the Baduy context, difference is not curated for recognition or appeal, but deliberately governed through restrictions on visibility, photography, movement, and documentation. These restrictions

function as central mechanisms of custodial authority rather than peripheral visitor regulations. By limiting what can be seen or accessed, Baduy custodians prevent difference from being converted into a tourism resource and instead sustain it as a moral and spiritual condition that must remain protected from extractive curiosity. What is withheld, therefore, is not an absence of engagement but an active assertion of ethical boundary-making.

Adat-based tourism also diverges sharply from dominant models of cultural tourism, which typically presume that culture becomes meaningful in tourism through processes of curation, interpretation, and staged representation (Richards, 2021). In Baduy, cultural practices are neither reorganized nor translated to enhance visitor comprehension or experience. They continue as part of everyday custodial obligations that are enacted regardless of tourist presence. Visitors encounter culture only indirectly, by situating themselves within ongoing life-worlds rather than through explanatory narratives or interpretive frameworks designed for consumption. In doing so, the Baduy case challenges the widespread assumption in tourism studies that meaningful encounters require cultural translation or interpretive mediation (Jernsand et al., 2023), and instead foregrounds restraint and non-disclosure as legitimate modes of engagement.

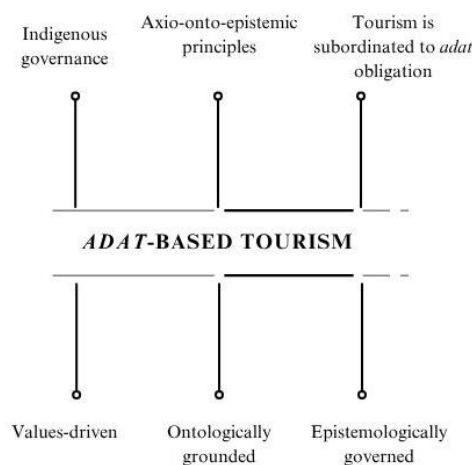


Figure 8. 4. *Adat*-based Tourism Framework

Source: Author's analysis

Many indigenous tourism frameworks equate empowerment with entrepreneurship, enterprise formation, and market participation, positioning community-based tourism as a vehicle for income generation and self-determination (Carr et al., 2016). The Baduy case unsettles this equation by demonstrating that engagement with tourism does not necessarily derive its legitimacy from economic rationality. Rather than being organized around expansion, diversification, or entrepreneurial opportunity, tourism engagement is selective, conditional,

and explicitly subordinated to *adat* obligations. Decisions to allow, limit, or refuse tourism activities are evaluated through their implications for moral order, spiritual balance, and custodial responsibility, not through anticipated financial returns. Economic benefits, when they arise, remain secondary and contingent, functioning as tolerated by-products rather than guiding objectives. This reorientation challenges development-oriented assumptions that position income generation as the primary measure of indigenous empowerment and instead foregrounds ethical governance as the core locus of agency in *adat*-based tourism.

What ultimately distinguishes *adat*-based tourism is its governance-first orientation. Tourism is not approached as a sector to be developed but as a social relation to be regulated. As illustrated in Figure 8.4, it is values-driven rather than experience-driven, ontologically grounded rather than market-oriented, and epistemically governed rather than interpretively open. *Adat* determines not only what tourists may do, but what may be known, encountered, or withheld within tourism encounters. By introducing *adat*-based tourism as a conceptual model, this research extends tourism theory beyond typologies based on cultural content, representation, or market participation. It reframes tourism as an indigenous axio-onto-epistemic mode of engagement in which governance, ethics, and knowledge are constitutive rather than supplementary. In doing so, *adat*-based tourism is positioned not as a variant of existing tourism forms, but as a fundamentally different way of organizing tourism relations on indigenous terms.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This study began with a concern about how the Baduy community navigates the growing presence of tourism without abandoning its moral and territorial order. Throughout the preceding chapters, tourism has been portrayed as a site of encounter, where different values, realities, and knowledge systems intersect. This study then examined it through the lens of traditional custodianship and *adat* governance, in which the central aim was to understand how custodial authority and indigenous knowledge shape and are simultaneously tested by increasing tourism engagement.

This concluding chapter returns to the research questions and objectives outlined in Chapter 1 in order to demonstrate how they have been thoroughly addressed. By revisiting the four guiding questions, assessing the fulfilment of the study's objectives, and clarifying the contributions of the research, this chapter consolidates the insights developed throughout the thesis. It then closes with a reflexive consideration of what this inquiry has revealed not only about tourism and custodianship in Kanekes but also about the assumptions that often structure discussions around development.

9.1. Revisiting Research Questions

This study was guided by four research questions concerning the relationship between traditional custodianship, *adat*, and tourism in Kanekes. This section revisits each question directly and synthesizes how the findings respond to them. Addressing Research Question 1: How are the traditional custodianship practices of the Baduy community influenced and challenged by the increase in tourism activities? The findings suggest that tourism does not undermine traditional custodianship in any straightforward way. Instead, it places traditional custodianship under forms of pressure. As discussed in Section 8.1, traditional custodianship in Kanekes operates as an integrated moral and relational system. Tourism enters into this system and makes custodial boundaries more visible and actively maintained.

In practical terms, increased visitor presence generates new situations that require clarification on which areas may be accessed, what kinds of interaction are acceptable, and how far tourism activities can expand without disturbing moral balance. These are not abstract questions but recurring concerns that require continuous interpretation. In this sense, tourism functions as a catalyst for the contestation and reconfiguration of traditional custodianship, as it compels its principles to be applied more explicitly and more cautiously. At the same time, the study shows that traditional custodianship in tourism becomes an expression of indigenous

agency. Decisions about limits, refusals, and permissible forms of engagement are not externally imposed. They are grounded in *adat*-based authority and enacted in daily practice. Tourism, therefore, influences traditional custodianship by intensifying its operational demands, yet it also reveals its resilience.

Furthermore, in relation to Research Question 2, inquiring about ways of the Baduy community adapt to, negotiate, or resist tourism while sustaining their *adat*-based governance and cultural practices, the study reveals that the Baduy response to tourism cannot be reduced to either acceptance or rejection. What emerges instead is a pattern of careful adaptation. As shown in Section 8.2, *adat* operates as a flexible governance framework that allows certain adjustments without altering its normative core. Tourism-related activities are accommodated where they can be aligned with custodial obligations and constrained where they pose potential risk exceeding moral or spiritual limits. Meanwhile, negotiation is embedded in everyday interactions, with all tourism-related actors and within the community itself. These negotiations are contextual and relational, as they involve considering potential benefits against possible disturbances to ritual life, territorial use, or socio-ecological harmony. Resistance, importantly, does not take the form of confrontation. It is often expressed through ethical refusal, like declining to scale up tourism, refusing large-scale commercialization, or maintaining codes of conduct that restrict visitor behavior and selective engagement. Such refusals are deliberate strategies to ensure that tourism remains subordinate to *adat*-based governance.

Research Question 3, which inquires into the logic of the prioritization of traditional custodianship practice over tourism, becomes clearer when considering the hierarchy of values. As discussed in Section 8.3, traditional custodianship is grounded in a relational worldview and intergenerational accountability. Present decisions are understood as having consequences not only for current livelihoods but also for ancestral relations and future continuity. Tourism opportunities are therefore evaluated through this axio-onto-epistemic lens. They do not automatically override principle considerations. Instead, questions of balance, harmony, spiritual obligation, and territorial integrity take precedence. This does not mean that tourism is seen as inherently harmful. Rather, it means that its legitimacy depends on its compatibility with custodial ethics. *Adat* takes precedence because it provides the framework within which all other activities, including tourism, must be assessed.

Finally, addressing Research Question 4, about how the Baduy community's indigenous knowledge and *adat* principles shape their engagement with tourism and the regulation of

visitor interactions, the research demonstrates that indigenous knowledge and *adat* are not symbolic backdrops to tourism but active regulatory forces. Visitor movement, access to certain spaces, behavioral expectations, and limits to economic exchange are all shaped by established norms and territorial ethics. As explored in Section 8.4, tourism among the Baduy can be understood as an encounter between different value systems. Yet this encounter is filtered through *adat*. In this way, tourism engagement is structured through an indigenous governance model rather than simply adapting to external tourism frameworks. Significantly, distinguishing *adat*-based tourism from broader categories of tourism clarifies that what is at stake is not merely representation or cultural display. It is the maintenance of a moral, territorial, cosmological order in which tourism is only one activity among many.

Taken together, the four research questions converge on a central argument developed in Chapter 8, in which tourism in Kanekes must be understood through *adat*-based custodianship. Rather than approaching tourism as an external force, this study reframes it as an encounter structured by *adat* authority. Traditional custodianship in the Baduy context operates as a moral, ontological, and epistemic framework through which activities, including tourism, are evaluated and governed. Decisions about access, scale, acceptable conduct, and refusal are grounded in custodial ethics and intergenerational accountability. In this sense, the relationship between traditional custodianship, *adat*, and tourism is not a simple impact or adaptation. It is a process of ongoing negotiation in which axio-onto-epistemic authority remains with the Baduy community. The study therefore demonstrates that tourism in Kanekes is not merely tourism taking place in an *adat* setting, but tourism reframed and constrained through *adat*-based custodianship.

9.2. Revisiting Research Objectives

In addition to responding to the four research questions, this study was guided by five interrelated objectives. Revisiting them here allows for a more deliberate assessment of how the research has fulfilled its initial commitments. The first objective was to examine how traditional custodianship and *adat* governance shape and are simultaneously challenged by tourism in Kanekes. The analysis has shown that traditional custodianship does not stand outside tourism as an easily displaced practice. Rather, it functions as the primary evaluative and regulatory framework through which tourism is interpreted and managed. At the same time, tourism introduces pressures, particularly in relation to economic expansion, recognition, and visibility. These pressures do not dissolve custodial authority but require its continual articulation and reaffirmation.

The second objective concerned analyzing how tourism interacts with *adat*-based systems of authority, moral order, and territorial regulation. By examining visitor management, codes of conduct, selective engagement, and spatial boundaries, the study demonstrates that tourism becomes embedded within existing governance structures. *Adat* operates not merely as cultural symbolism but as a practical mode of authority that structures decision-making and regulates interaction. Yet, the third research aimed to explore how indigenous knowledge and worldview are mobilized to sustain continuity amidst tourism pressures. The findings confirm that ecological custodianship, spiritual obligation, and sociocultural norms are not abstract values but lived principles that guide everyday choices and movements. Tourism is assessed through these moral and cosmological considerations, while continuity is maintained through disciplined evaluation and calibrated engagement.

The fourth objective was to trace the historical development of tourism in Kanekes and assess its implications for *adat* institutions and everyday custodial practices. By situating contemporary engagements within longer trajectories of encounter and negotiation, the research clarifies that current attempts and strategies are not sudden reactions. They are part of an evolving process through which *adat* governance has responded to changing conditions while retaining its foundational commitments. Finally, the study sought to contribute conceptually to the understanding of *adat*-based tourism and to distinguish it from broader categories such as indigenous, ethnic, or cultural tourism. By foregrounding traditional custodianship as an organizing principle, rather than focusing primarily on representation, commodification, or identity display, this research offers a more grounded conceptualization of how tourism operates within an *adat*-governed community. This study emphasizes that the Baduy case illustrates that *adat*-based tourism is not simply tourism involving *adat* people, but tourism structured through *adat* authority.

Taken together, these objectives have been addressed through close empirical engagement and sustained analytical reflection grounded in the lived realities of Kanekes. The study does not claim that the Baduy experience represents a universal model of indigenous tourism governance. Rather, by attending carefully to everyday practices, historical trajectories, and internal value hierarchies, it demonstrates how *adat*-based custodianship operates as a living and adaptive system.

9.3. Reengaging Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to ongoing discussions on tourism, indigenous governance, traditional custodianship, and *adat* in several interconnected ways. Rather than positioning the Baduy case as an exceptional or a universal model, the contribution of this research lies in clarifying how traditional custodianship and *adat* operate as a governing framework in a tourism context. First, at a theoretical level, this study refines prevailing understandings of traditional custodianship. Much of the existing literature approaches custodianship primarily as a managerial or institutional function, often emphasizing the protection of material or physical resources. This research extends that perspective by conceptualizing traditional custodianship in Kanekes as an axio-onto-epistemic authority, one that integrates *adat* and indigenous knowledge systems as foundational to governance. Traditional custodianship, in this sense, is not limited to administrative control but encompasses moral evaluation, cosmological orientation, and relational accountability.

Importantly, this authority does not operate within a homogeneous or uncontested community structure. Rather, it is enacted through ongoing negotiation and reconfiguration across generations, particularly in the context of tourism encounters. Whereas mainstream traditional custodianship scholarship frequently positions customary leaders as the primary holders of custodial authority, the Baduy case demonstrates a broader distribution of responsibility. In tourism settings, custodial roles are upheld not only by *adat* leaders but also by those directly engaged with visitors, regardless of age, gender, or spatial position. Traditional custodianship thus emerges as a lived and collective practice, sustained through everyday interaction. The study highlights how moral values, territorial ethics, and knowledge systems are inseparable from governance. Tourism, in this framing, becomes a site where that authority is exercised and negotiated.

Second, the research contributes to understanding the axio-onto-epistemic divergence that emerges in tourism encounters in Baduy. Rather than treating tourism as a neutral arena of exchange, the study demonstrates that tourism in Kanekes is structured by fundamentally different value hierarchies, ontological assumptions, and epistemic orientations. Through the examination of codes of conduct, selective engagement, boundary-setting, and ethical refusal, the analysis shows that *adat*-based governance does not merely regulate tourism, but rather it reframes the terms of engagement. Economic growth and visibility do not automatically define rationality within this context. Instead, tourism is evaluated through custodial ethics, cosmological responsibility, and intergenerational accountability. By foregrounding this

framework, the study moves beyond simplified narratives of impact, commodification, or resistance and instead highlights tourism as a site of negotiated axio-onto-epistemic divergence.

Third, the study contributes conceptually to the understanding of *adat*-based tourism within the Indonesian context. By distinguishing *adat*-based tourism from broader categories such as indigenous, ethnic, or cultural tourism, this research emphasizes governance rather than representation as the defining feature. The Baduy case illustrates that tourism engagement can be structured through indigenous authority without being fully absorbed into dominant market logics. Finally, the study has practical implications for how tourism involving *adat* communities is understood by policymakers and practitioners. Rather than approaching such communities primarily through development-oriented frameworks, this research suggests the importance of recognizing existing governance systems and value hierarchies. Any engagement with tourism in contexts like Kanekes must take seriously the custodial principles that shape decision-making. While this study does not prescribe policy solutions, it seeks to provide a clearer analytical basis for dialogue that respects indigenous authority.

9.4. Future Directions of Research

This study has examined how traditional custodianship and *adat* governance shape tourism engagement in Kanekes. While it offers a detailed account of current dynamics, it also raises questions that extend beyond the scope of this thesis. First, the temporal dimension of tourism governance warrants longer-term investigation. The Baduy engagement with tourism is not static. As visitor flows fluctuate, as state policies evolve, and as younger generations assume greater responsibility in mediating external encounters, custodial practices may continue to shift. Longitudinal research would allow for closer observation of how intergenerational authority is negotiated over time, particularly as exposure to external economic and digital influences increases. Such work could further clarify whether current strategies of selective engagement remain stable or undergo transformation.

Second, comparative research across other *adat* communities in Indonesia would deepen understanding of how traditional custodianship operates in diverse contexts. While this thesis has focused on the specificity of the Baduy case, other indigenous and *adat*-governed communities may articulate different hierarchies of value, distinct territorial ethics, or alternative approaches to tourism governance. Comparative analysis would help determine which aspects of *adat*-based tourism are context-specific and which reflect broader patterns of indigenous governance.

Third, further inquiry into the axio-onto-epistemic dimensions of tourism encounters is needed. This study has highlighted tourism as an arena where different ways of knowing, valuing, and being in the world intersect. Future research could examine more closely how misunderstandings and reinterpretations occur between visitors and host communities. In particular, it would be valuable to explore how external actors, including policymakers, tour operators, and tourists, interpret or misinterpret *adat*-based governance and how such interpretations influence policy decisions.

Beyond these academic directions, this research also calls for continued reflexivity. Fieldwork in Kanekes has underscored that studying traditional custodianship requires attentiveness not only to governance structures but to relational accountability. Any future engagement must remain sensitive to the limits imposed by the community and avoid contributing to pressures this thesis has analyzed. The Baduy case does not provide a universal template. However, it does remind researchers that tourism is always embedded in broader worlds of meaning. Continuing to explore those worlds, carefully, comparatively, and collaboratively, remains an important task for future research.

9.5. Closing Reflexivity

When I began this research, my central concern was how a community such as the Baduy could engage with tourism without losing its integrity. Implicit in that question was an assumption that tourism inevitably generates erosion, that continuity must be defended against expansion. Over time, however, what became more striking was not simply the presence of tourism, but the Baduy commitment to balance and harmony.

In Kanekes, decisions about tourism are not framed solely in terms of economic opportunity or cultural exposure. They are situated within a broader relational order that includes humans, nature, non-human entities, and unseen forces. Restrictions, whether concerning access, scale, or conduct, are not arbitrary limitations. They are expressions of an ongoing effort to maintain equilibrium. This commitment to balance reshaped my own understanding of what governance can mean. It is not merely administrative coordination or regulatory enforcement. It is a moral practice grounded in responsibility across visible and invisible domains. Through sustained engagement in the field, I began to recognize how easily tourism discourse assumes expansion as neutral. Growth, visibility, and market-oriented integration are often taken for granted as indicators of progress. Yet in Kanekes, restraint is not a sign of stagnation. It is a deliberate ethical stance. Observing how boundaries are maintained

and negotiated not through rigidity but through disciplined evaluation has prompted me to reconsider how development and inclusion are commonly framed.

At the same time, this research also required me to reflect on my own positionality as a mainstream Javanese Indonesian researcher studying an *adat* community within the same national context. Although I share a broader national identity with the Baduy, I do not share the same cosmological worldview, historical experiences, or *adat*-based lifeworld through which tourism and social relations are understood. This realization made it clear that understanding could never mean fully stepping outside my own social and epistemological position. Rather than claiming complete access to Baduy realities, the research became an ongoing process of learning to listen more carefully, question my own assumptions, and recognize the limits of external interpretation. Prolonged engagement in the field gradually shifted my perspective from viewing difference through national or developmental categories toward appreciating the Baduy worldview on its own relational and moral terms. This reflexive awareness has also shaped how I hope to engage future learners and researchers working with indigenous and *adat* communities, not by encouraging them to speak for the other, but by cultivating humility, attentiveness, and sensitivity to plural ways of knowing, being, and valuing the world.

This research not only demonstrates that the Baduy case presents an alternative to dominant development paradigms, but also reveals that plural evaluative frameworks already exist, frameworks in which balance, relational harmony, and intergenerational accountability are prioritized over growth and scale. For me, this has been one of the most significant intellectual shifts of the study. Moving forward, I remain committed to continuing dialogue with the Baduy community and to approaching future research with the same attentiveness to custodial authority and relational balance. If this study contributes anything beyond academic debate, I hope it affirms the legitimacy of governance systems that are often misunderstood or simplified in external narratives. The responsibility now is not only to analyze such systems, but to engage them with humility and care.

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Notes

Chapter 4

¹ The household sphere in the tourism context refers to domestic spaces and activities carried out within or around the home, such as hosting guests, preparing food, producing handicrafts, or selling small goods to visitors. These activities are often informal and reflect gendered divisions of labor, with women contributing to tourism primarily through home-based roles.

² A member of the *adat* institution appointed by the *adat* elders to handle external relations and administrative affairs, who is also formally recognized as the village head of Kanekes under the state administrative system.

³ In line with Baduy values and customary norms, community members wear clothing in specific colors, primarily white (the natural color of handwoven cotton), black, dark blue, and deep brown. To show respect and cultural sensitivity during fieldwork, I also adjusted my attire by wearing dark-colored clothing, aligning with the community's customary dress practices and avoiding attire that might appear inappropriate or intrusive within the Baduy context.

Chapter 5

⁴ In the context of the Baduy, the term *pre-Islamic times* refers to the period before the spread of Islam into West Java in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. During this era, the Sundanese people, particularly those in the interior highlands of Banten, practiced an indigenous cosmology centered on ancestral veneration, spiritual balance, and harmony with nature, known today as *Sunda Wiwitan* ("the original Sunda").

⁵ The pre-colonial era in Indonesia refers broadly to the period before the arrival and establishment of European colonial powers, particularly the Dutch, in the archipelago. This era spans from ancient times up to the early 16th century, when local polities such as Srivijaya (7th–13th centuries), Majapahit (13th–15th centuries), and numerous regional kingdoms thrived across the islands.

⁶ In this context, autonomy refers to the right or ability of a community to govern itself according to its own laws, customs, and traditions, without direct interference from external authorities such as kings, states, or colonial powers.

⁷ The name 'Baduy' is thought to derive from a small tributary called Cihaduy, part of the Cihujung River, which once marked the community's original settlement (Iskandar, 1998).

⁸ The Baduy are also known as *Urang Kanekes* (the people of Kanekes), as they inhabit the village of Kanekes situated along the Cikanekes riverbank (Iskandar, 1998; van Zanten, 2021).

⁹ This phrase refers to the ancestral mandates entrusted to the *Puun*, the spiritual leaders of the Baduy. The mandates are considered sacred obligations passed down through generations, positioning the *Puun* as the guardians of the spiritual life. The *Puun* are responsible for guiding the community members in upholding *Pikukuh*, maintaining harmony with nature, as well as preserving the moral and ritual order.

¹⁰ This phrase, which literally means 'thirty-three domains', refers to a traditional cosmological concept in Baduy belief systems. It symbolizes a broader sacred geography encompassing a totality of ancestral, spiritual, and territorial realms.

¹¹ It symbolizes the holistic and sacred connection to water and nature, embedded in the *pikukuh*. It serves as a reminder of their *adat*-based responsibility to safeguard natural resources, rather than being a literal count of rivers.

¹² It is a cosmological expression of sacred geography, underscoring the centrality of Baduy *adat* territory in the moral and ecological balance of the surrounding regions. Together with '*Bangawan Sawadak Lima*', it reinforces the Baduy's identity as traditional custodians of sacred land and ancestral knowledge, deeply embedded in symbolic spatial concepts.

¹³ It reflects the Baduy community's deep respect for nature, particularly sacred landscapes. This principle underscores the prohibition against altering or exploiting mountainous areas, which are viewed as spiritually significant and ecologically vital. This phrase is embedded in *Pikukuh* to protect the integrity of natural ecosystems, as the community believes that disturbing the mountains would disrupt the balance between humans and the natural world.

¹⁴ This principle highlights the Baduy community's obligation to protect fertile lands, water sources, and valleys that are essential for agriculture and daily life. Damaging the *lebak* is seen not only as an environmental offense but also as a spiritual violation. It reflects the community's broader philosophy of living in harmony with nature and sustaining the land for future generations.

¹⁵ This principle refers to specific sacred or restricted areas within Baduy territory that are protected by *adat* law. These zones are considered spiritually essential to maintaining cosmic and ecological balance. Violating these areas is believed to bring harm not only to the individual but also to the entire community.

¹⁶ This principle emphasizes the importance of preserving inherited customs and traditions as they were passed down through generations. It reflects the Baduy community's commitment to upholding continuity and resisting external influences that may compromise their way of life. Changing these taboos is seen as a violation of their identity and spiritual obligations.

¹⁷ This phrase symbolizes the importance of maintaining completeness and continuity in spiritual, environmental, cultural, and social life. It cautions against interrupting or modifying inherited knowledge and practices. For the Baduy, preserving the full length of tradition ensures harmony with ancestral values and natural order.

¹⁸ This principle emphasizes the importance of accepting things as they are, according to the ancestral order. It discourages enhancement or exaggeration, particularly in rituals or traditional practices. For the Baduy, it reinforces the value of originality, modesty, and self-discipline in everyday life.

¹⁹ This principle emphasizes the importance of maintaining boundaries between sacred and profane, insiders and outsiders, or traditional and non-traditional elements. It serves to protect the purity and integrity of Baduy customs and space. This guidance reinforces social and spiritual order within the community by discouraging the mixing of elements that could disrupt harmony.

²⁰ This *Pikukuh* reinforces the importance of adhering strictly to ancestral prohibitions and taboos. It reflects the Baduy community's deep respect for inherited laws that maintain balance and harmony. Violating this principle is seen not only as a disruption of *adat* but also as a moral and spiritual offense against the ancestral order.

²¹ This principle underscores the importance of honesty, integrity, and consistency in upholding the values and knowledge passed down through generations. It reflects a commitment to preserving ancestral teachings as the foundation of *adat* life. The Baduy are expected to live according to these truths without distortion or compromise.

²² It refers to the sacred responsibility of safeguarding *Sasaka Pusaka Buana*, a spiritually significant site located in the Cikeusik hamlet. This location is believed to be the ancestral origin of the Baduy people and holds deep religious meaning. The duty of protecting this sacred space falls primarily on the *Puun* of Cikeusik, who ensures that the site remains undisturbed and ritually pure. This act of custodianship reflects the Baduy commitment to honoring their ancestors and maintaining the sanctity of their sacred landscape.

²³ It refers to the obligation to protect *Sasaka Domas*, a sacred site located in *Parahyang*, within the Cibeo hamlet. This site is considered the spiritual center of the Baduy world and symbolizes the core of their cosmological and religious beliefs. The *Puun* of Cibeo is entrusted with maintaining the sanctity, order, and ritual integrity of this sacred space. Preserving *Sasaka Domas* is essential to sustaining the spiritual balance and ancestral connection within the Baduy community.

²⁴ It refers to the duty of nurturing the king (*ratu*) and guiding the nobles (*menak*), a responsibility that originally signified the Baduy people's spiritual guardianship over the rulers of the ancient Kingdom. Although the kingdom no longer exists, this obligation is still symbolically practiced through the *Seba* ritual, in which the Baduy people visit government officials to offer agricultural products and express their loyalty to the rulers while maintaining their independence. The act represents a respectful yet firm stance on autonomy, cultural integrity, and ancestral duty. It reflects the Baduy's enduring role as moral and spiritual custodians of the land and leadership.

²⁵ It is a symbolic phrase that reflects the Baduy community's spiritual responsibility to maintain harmony and balance across a cosmological landscape. The numbers, thirty-three islands (*nusa tilu puluh tilu*), sixty-five rivers (*bangawan sawidak lima*), and twenty-five spiritual centers (*pancer selawe nagara*), represent the breadth of the natural and spiritual world that must be safeguarded. This expression emphasizes the Baduy worldview that their custodianship extends beyond their physical territory, encompassing a broader moral obligation to protect the universe. It illustrates their belief in interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the spiritual domain.

²⁶ It refers to a ritual hunting tradition in the Baduy community that holds both symbolic and functional significance. This customary practice involves the organized catching of small animals such as lesser mousedeer, deer, squirrels, and fish, typically carried out before major ceremonial events like the *Kawalu*. It is not merely an

act of subsistence but a communal obligation that reflects respect for ancestral mandates and harmony with nature. The activity is led by the *Puun*, and the catch is used as ritual offerings, emphasizing the importance of collective responsibility, sustainability, and spiritual connection to the land in Baduy cosmology.

²⁷ It refers to a series of interconnected ritual acts within the Baduy agricultural and spiritual calendar. *Ngukus* involves burning incense as an offering to purify the space and communicate with ancestral spirits. *Ngawalu* is the period of ritual fasting and seclusion (*Kawalu*), during which newly harvested rice is stored in the *leuit* (rice barn), signifying spiritual discipline and gratitude. *Muja* means to venerate sacred sites such as *Sasaka Pusaka Buana* and *Sasaka Domas*, expressing reverence to the Divine. *Ngalaksa* is the ceremonial offering of new rice in the form of *laksa* (rice noodles), presented to the ancestors. Together, these rituals uphold the cosmological balance and agricultural sustainability at the core of Baduy life.

²⁸ The *Jaro Tangtu* plays a supportive role to the *Puun* in managing practical affairs and in upholding daily *adat* law within the Baduy community. This role is especially significant in the annual purification ritual (*pembersihan adat*), during which various crops and goods prohibited by *adat* are destroyed. The *Jaro Tangtu* also convenes regular meetings in the Outer Baduy to address violations of *adat* laws.

²⁹ The *Parawari* and *Baresan* assist the *Jaro* in the organization and execution of *adat* activities. The *Parawari* are responsible for preparing the necessary equipment and materials for rituals and ceremonies, particularly in the Inner Baduy area. The *Baresan*, on the other hand, play a role in ensuring that rituals proceed smoothly and in maintaining order in accordance with *adat* law.

³⁰ *Girang Seurat*. The *Girang Seurat* is responsible for determining the appropriate time to manage *adat* agricultural activities and for overseeing the administration of *adat* land use.

³¹ The *Jaro Tanggungan Dua Belas* functions as a group of witnesses and serves as the coordinator of all *Jaro* within the Baduy governance system.

³² The *Tangkesan* serves as a ceremonial leader in the Outer Baduy community, particularly during events such as wedding ceremonies and the establishment of new settlements. This figure also provides recommendations to the *Puun* regarding the appointment or dismissal of individuals within the *adat* governance structure.

³³ The *Jaro Dangka* lead the community in the *Dangka* area and are regarded as representatives of the *Puun* outside the *Tangtu* territory. They are authorized to lead the *Ngalaksa* ceremony.

³⁴ The *Jaro Warega* serves as the coordinator of all *Jaro Dangka*, overseeing their roles and responsibilities across the *Dangka* areas.

³⁵ The *Jaro Pamarentah* serves as the secular head of Kanekes Village, responsible for maintaining the relationship between the Baduy community and the government. This role involves mediating between the spiritual leaders (such as the *Puun*) and Indonesian authorities. As part of these duties, the *Jaro Pamarentah* regularly engages with the sub-district head (*camat*), as well as with district civil servants, health officials, and other non-Baduy representatives.

³⁶ The *Carik* is a non-Baduy assistant to the *Jaro Pamarentah*, who serves as the village secretary. This role primarily involves handling administrative tasks and supporting the governance functions of the village.

³⁷ These positions are the hamlet leaders within the Baduy community, reflecting an adaptation of the Indonesian administrative framework. The *Panggiwa* serves as the head of administrative units known as *Rukun Warga* (RW). Meanwhile, the *Kokolot Lembur* functions as the head of smaller administrative household units, similar to *Rukun Tetangga* (RT).

³⁸ The shift to *desa dinas* could weaken *adat* authority because its model introduces standardized bureaucratic roles such as village heads, secretaries, and development committees that operate according to national regulations rather than *adat* norms.

Chapter 6

³⁹ Seeking an audience with the *Puun* has been a notable point of contact between outsiders and the community. Historically, this practice was primarily reserved for kings and high-ranking figures who sought advice on personal, spiritual, or political matters. Over time, visitors, including government officials and other individuals, sought spiritual guidance, advice, blessings, or ritual intervention, particularly to navigate personal, familial, social, or political challenges, reflecting the *Puun*'s role as both a spiritual and moral authority. This process was highly ritualized, where visitors had to make prior arrangements through local intermediaries, bringing offerings such as

incense and white cloth as part of the spiritual protocol. The audience with *Puun* was strictly limited to these spiritual purposes. Outsiders were generally not permitted to meet the *Puun* for casual or secular reasons.

⁴⁰ *Seba Baduy* is an annual ritual performed by the Baduy community as an expression of loyalty and respect toward the government, while simultaneously reaffirming their autonomy and adherence to *adat*. Historically, *Seba* dates back to the pre-colonial and colonial periods, when the Baduy people would travel on foot from their homeland in Kanekes to deliver symbolic offerings, such as agricultural products and forest goods, to the regional authorities, traditionally the regent of Lebak and the governor of Banten. This journey represented a form of ritual diplomacy, signifying both the Baduy's acknowledgment of the state's presence and their commitment to maintaining *adat* governance over their ancestral land. In contemporary times, *Seba* has evolved into a large-scale cultural event that attracts significant media and tourist attention. While it continues to embody deep spiritual and political meaning for the Baduy, government institutions have increasingly incorporated it into regional tourism promotion efforts, framing it as a cultural festival that celebrates local wisdom and indigenous identity.

⁴¹ *Pokdarwis (Kelompok Sadar Wisata)* is an Indonesian term referring to a community-based tourism awareness group established to organize, manage, and promote tourism activities at the local level. These groups are typically composed of local residents who voluntarily participate in tourism initiatives. *Pokdarwis* was widely initiated around 2010 as part of an attempt to empower communities and enhance local economic opportunities and participation. While the specific roles and structures of *Pokdarwis* may vary by region, they commonly serve as a bridge between government policies, private tourism operators, and the local community, fostering participatory and sustainable tourism practices.

Chapter 7

⁴² In the Indonesian context, *rezeki* refers to sustenance, fortune, or livelihood that is believed to come as a blessing and from divine providence, ultimately comes from God. The term carries both material and spiritual connotations, encompassing not only tangible income or food but also good health, harmonious relationships, and life opportunities.

⁴³ In the Indonesian context, *cukup* conveys a broader philosophical meaning beyond its literal sense of “enough” or “sufficient.” It reflects a worldview rooted in moderation, balance, and contentment, emphasizing the importance of meeting one's needs without excess. In Baduy, *cukup* functions as a moral compass that guides economic behavior, resource use, and daily life, underscoring the idea that well-being arises not from abundance, but from living in balance with one's surroundings.

⁴⁴ *Hajatan* refers to a communal celebration or family ritual commonly held in Indonesian societies to mark important life events such as birth, marriage, or circumcision. It typically involves ceremonial meals, prayers, and gatherings with relatives and neighbors, reflecting both social solidarity and the fulfilment of cultural or religious obligations.

⁴⁵ *Selamatan* is a traditional ritual derived from the word ‘*selamat*’, which means safety, well-being, or blessing. The ceremony is performed to express gratitude, seek protection, and request blessings for individuals, families, or communities.

⁴⁶ *Koja* is a traditional handwoven bag made from the inner bark of the teureup (*Artocarpus elasticus*) tree, crafted entirely by hand using simple tools. Among the Baduy, *koja* is more than a functional item. It embodies values of self-reliance, patience, and connection to nature. The process of making *koja* requires meticulous skill, from stripping and softening the bark fibers to weaving them into strong, flexible strands. Baduy men commonly use it to carry daily necessities, agricultural produce, or ritual offerings during ceremonies and travels. However, *koja* has also been produced for sale as a souvenir for visitors nowadays.

⁴⁷ During fieldwork in 2023, the *Jaro Pamarentah* was still Jaro Saija, who had held the position since 2014. I met him to obtain permission to conduct research in the Baduy community. At that time, the official village administrative structure, including the village office and other administrative officials, was still in place. However, during a subsequent visit in 2024, the baduy shifted toward a fully *desa adat* with Jaro Oom replacing Jaro Saija. A new *carik*, drawn from a former Baduy member who has been trained in administrative matters (particularly reading and writing skills), was appointed to assist the *Jaro* in managing interactions with external actors.

⁴⁸ While it is a core principle in Baduy social life, *gotong royong* is also widely recognized as a foundational value across Indonesian society. *Gotong royong* refers to the practice of mutual cooperation and collective responsibility, in which community members work together to achieve shared goals or address common needs. It embodies both

practical collaboration and social solidarity, reflecting a cultural emphasis on interdependence, reciprocity, and the prioritization of communal well-being.

⁴⁹ It is a Baduy word, which means heavy and unsettled.

⁵⁰ Kawalu is one of the most sacred annual rituals in the Baduy community, marking a period of spiritual retreat and renewal, particularly observed by the Inner Baduy. Lasting for three consecutive months, based on the Baduy calendar, which usually falls between February and April, Kawalu is dedicated to fasting, rituals, and retreat. During this period, the Baduy strengthen their relationship with ancestors, nature, and the divine, focusing on the restoration of cosmic balance and reaffirming the moral order of *adat*. Daily activities are subdued, and rituals are performed collectively to express gratitude for the harvest and to seek harmony between the seen and unseen worlds. Through *Kawalu*, the Baduy enact a profound form of spiritual custodianship, emphasizing purification, restraint, and the cyclical renewal of their way of life.

⁵¹ In the Baduy context, the concept of commercialization and excessive profit-seeking are understood not in strictly measurable economic terms, but through alignment with *adat* principles and the community's ascetic lifeways. Tourism-related activities are considered acceptable when they support livelihoods without disrupting daily life, spiritual obligations, or ecological balance. Small-scale engagement, such as selling handicrafts or guiding and hosting visitors modestly, are tolerated, whereas operations that prioritize monetary gain over *adat* values, constructions of homestays and tourism-related facilities inside the territory or other pressure on sacred areas, are viewed as excessive. The extent of acceptable economic activity is assessed collectively by the *Lembaga Adat* and elders, who determine whether the community's balance, social cohesion, and adherence to ancestral norms are maintained. In this way, the measure of commercialization is inherently qualitative, reflecting the community's ethical standards and spiritual worldview rather than numerical profit thresholds.

⁵² In the Baduy community, the *saung*, a hut usually located near the *huma* (dry rice field), serves as more than just a temporary shelter. It functions as a second home closely tied to their agricultural rhythm and social life. During the farming and harvest seasons, many Baduy families spend most of their days in the *saung*, engaging in cultivation, resting, and sharing meals. The *saung* allows them to remain close to their fields, especially when their main homes are far from the *huma*. Beyond its practical role, the *saung* embodies the Baduy's harmonious relationship with their environment. It is built from natural materials such as bamboo, wood, and *kiray* leaves, blending seamlessly with the surrounding landscape. By spending much of their time in the *saung* and returning to their village homes only in the late afternoon, the Baduy sustain a lifestyle that values simplicity, labor, and proximity to the land that nurtures them.

⁵³ I was accompanied by a female friend from Jakarta who shared an interest in visiting Baduy and joined the private trip to Inner Baduy. Having a companion was necessary to observe gender propriety, as the host, who also served as the guide leading the way to Cibeo, was male. This companion's presence ensured respect for social and cultural norms regarding interactions between men and women during the visit.

⁵⁴ *Honje* (torch ginger, *Etlingera elatior*) is a local plant used by the Baduy as a natural alternative to soap, in accordance with traditional hygiene practices that avoid chemical products.

⁵⁵ QRIS (Quick Response Code Indonesian Standard) is a national digital payment system launched by Bank Indonesia to standardize QR code transactions across various platforms and financial institutions. It enables users to make cashless payments through mobile applications, promoting efficiency and financial inclusion.