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Community Assistance in Preserving the Babarit Tradition to Strengthen Social Solidarity in Jipang Village through Participatory Action Research and Digital Literacy

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Abstract

Purpose: This community service activity aims to describe the process of community assistance in preserving the Babarit tradition in Jipang Village, an agrarian community heavily dependent on farming for its livelihood and affected by significant outmigration of its younger generation, and to analyze its contribution to strengthening the social solidarity of an agrarian community.

Method: The activity was carried out using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach through social mapping, interviews, focus group discussions, direct assistance during the Babarit ritual, and digital literacy training for cultural documentation.

Practical Applications: The results of this assistance can serve as a model for local-wisdom-based tradition preservation that strengthens mutual cooperation, reinforces the identity of agrarian communities, and can be referenced by other villages seeking to safeguard cultural heritage amid modernization.

Conclusion: Community assistance proved effective in sustaining the Babarit tradition while strengthening social solidarity through collective cooperation in organizing the ritual and the harvest thanksgiving ceremony, as reflected in tangible outputs such as an eight-minute documentary film and a digital archive of the tradition.

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Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in local traditions that continue to live and thrive within agrarian communities, one of which is the Babarit tradition. Babarit is a ritual to ward off misfortune as well as an expression of gratitude by the Sundanese community to God for the blessings of the harvest and the safety of the village, embodying a syncretism of Islamic values and local culture (Kahmad, 2006; Sujati, 2020). This tradition is typically held at important moments in the agrarian life cycle, such as before the planting season, after the harvest, or on the village's annual commemoration, and involves nearly every element of society, from customary elders and religious figures to ordinary residents. Various studies show that Babarit is not merely a ceremonial ritual, but also a manifestation of religious devotion in the form of thanksgiving and an effort to seek blessing (Akhirin, 2023), containing theological values passed down across generations (Arif, 2022), and serving as a space for the interpretation of gratitude rooted in Qur'anic values (Hidayat, 2021).

As an agrarian village dependent on the agricultural cycle for its livelihood, Jipang Village has inherited the Babarit tradition as part of its collective identity. This tradition has been carried out from generation to generation and marks the seasons as well as the social life cycle of the local community. However, this tradition faces preservation challenges due to the rapid pace of modernization, the migration of younger generations to cities for work or education, a shift in livelihood orientation from the agrarian sector toward services and industry, and the scarcity of documentation and regeneration of understanding regarding the philosophical meaning behind the ritual. This condition raises concern over a potential rupture in the chain of cultural knowledge transmission, given that most holders of traditional knowledge belong to an increasingly limited older generation. Based on the service team's preliminary social mapping, the majority of Jipang Village households continue to rely on farming as their primary livelihood, while a substantial share of the younger generation has migrated to urban areas for work or education, illustrating the demographic pressure that underlies the urgency of this assistance.

Previous research reinforces the urgency of this issue. Studies on Babarit as a model for local-wisdom-based teaching materials show that the values within this tradition have the potential to be integrated into formal education curricula as an early preservation effort (Anggraeni, 2018). Other studies on the structure and function of the incantations (mantras) within the Babarit ritual affirm that the oral texts accompanying the ritual carry rich and distinctive symbolic meaning that risks being lost without systematic documentation (Noviandi, 2012; Noviandi & Hidayat, 2023). Meanwhile, studies on Babarit practices across various regions of West Java reveal variations in ritual implementation between areas while retaining the same essence, namely a plea for safety and an expression of gratitude (Rusdah, 2018), as well as a reconstruction of Babarit management within the Serentaun ceremony, which reveals the complexity of ritual structures based on the Pikukuh Tilu principle (Suhaenah, Rohaeni, & Listiani, 2017). These findings consistently affirm that such traditions are vulnerable to extinction without systematic and sustained assistance.

On the other hand, agrarian rituals such as Babarit hold a vital social function, namely strengthening the community's social solidarity. The process of mutual cooperation in preparing ritual offerings, communal prayer, and the shared feast (kenduri) becomes a space for interaction that reinforces social cohesion among residents, transcending divisions of socioeconomic status or age. This is consistent with findings on the symbolic meaning of offerings in the Baritan tradition as a representation of social harmony between people, nature, and fellow residents (Falah, 2020), the Baritan tradition as an effort to harmonize the community with nature while simultaneously strengthening collective bonds among villagers (Hidayati, Sulistiyani, Sutrisno, & Atika, 2021), the strengthening of social solidarity through the village charity (sedekah desa) tradition, which involves participation across neighborhood units (Kumalasari, 2022), and the formation of solidarity through the Baritan ceremony among

the Betawi community, which demonstrates the ritual's integrative function amid the heterogeneity of urban residents (Somantri & Merlina, 2014). These four studies reveal a similar pattern: community-based agrarian rituals consistently function as a social bonding mechanism among societies that depend on agriculture, regardless of specific cultural region.

The problem of preserving local traditions of this kind cannot be resolved through academic documentation alone; it requires the active and sustained involvement of various stakeholders, including universities, village governments, and the community itself. Given the importance of these traditional values, an active role from universities and related institutions is needed to carry out participatory cultural preservation assistance. Various good practices in such assistance have been documented, for instance, assistance in preserving culture as a tourist attraction through village festivals, which succeeded in increasing community participation as well as the economic value of the tradition (Reverawaty, Yusuf, & Ardiyansyah, 2019); cultural preservation as a village community asset for development (Irawan et al., 2023); youth empowerment as agents driving concern for arts and culture (Rohmiyati, Suwarni, & Yanke, 2025); and local-wisdom-based cultural preservation through community activities involving children and adolescents as agents of preservation (Solehah et al., 2024).

In addition to offline approaches, digital-literacy-based assistance has also become an important strategy for cultural preservation in the contemporary era. Studies on digital content literacy for local cultural preservation show that the use of social media and digital platforms can broaden the reach of introducing traditions to younger generations and wider audiences (Fajarianto et al., 2025). Similarly, studies on the digitalization of traditional values within the space of community service affirm that the digitalization process does not diminish the sacredness of the ritual, but instead becomes a more adaptive means of knowledge transmission in response to changing times (Hidayat & Hasfi, 2025). These approaches confirm that tradition preservation cannot be carried out passively, but requires active assistance that simultaneously combines direct participatory approaches (offline) with digital literacy.

A review of prior studies reveals a research gap: studies on the Babarit tradition have largely focused on textual, theological, and incantation-structure aspects (Akhirin, 2023; Arif, 2022; Hidayat, 2021; Noviandi, 2012; Noviandi & Hidayat, 2023), while studies on active assistance efforts for preserving the Babarit tradition that explicitly link such efforts to the strengthening of social solidarity at the village-community level remain relatively limited. Yet, understanding how the assistance process can contribute to both the sustainability of the tradition and the strengthening of the social capital of agrarian communities is essential as a basis for formulating an applicable and replicable model of cultural preservation.

Based on the foregoing, this community service activity was carried out to assist the people of Jipang Village in preserving the Babarit tradition while strengthening residents' social solidarity. The objectives of this activity are: (1) to describe the process of assistance for the preservation of the Babarit tradition carried out together with the community of Jipang Village; (2) to identify forms of community participation throughout the series of assistance activities; and (3) to analyze the contribution of this assistance activity to the strengthening of social solidarity within an agrarian community. This activity is expected to provide a practical contribution in the form of a model for the preservation of local traditions that can serve as a reference for other villages with similar socio-cultural characteristics.

Method

This community service activity employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, positioning the community of Jipang Village as an active subject rather than merely an object of assistance. This approach was chosen because the success of tradition preservation depends heavily on the community's sense of belonging toward both the process and the outcome of the activity, so that the community was not positioned as passive beneficiaries but as partners who helped design, implement, and evaluate each stage of the

activity. The activity took place in Jipang Village, with the main target groups being customary elders and village elders, village officials, farmer groups, religious figures, mothers active in the PKK (Family Welfare Movement), and Karang Taruna youth as prospective torchbearers of the tradition. These subjects were selected based on their respective roles in sustaining the Babarit ritual, whether as holders of traditional knowledge, technical implementers of the ritual, or future agents of preservation.

The instruments used in this activity included a participatory observation guide, a semi-structured interview guide, an FGD facilitation guide, and a participatory evaluation sheet developed together with the facilitators and community representatives. The observation guide was designed to record the sequence of stages in the Babarit ritual chronologically, from the preparation of offerings to the closing of the event. The interview guide focused on exploring the philosophical meaning of the ritual, its history in Jipang Village, and residents' perceptions of the current challenges to preserving the tradition. Meanwhile, the FGD guide was designed to facilitate group discussions on realistic preservation strategies that could be sustained independently by the community after the assistance activity concluded.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: participatory observation of the sequence of the Babarit ritual, semi-structured interviews with customary elders and residents, and focus group discussions (FGDs) with village officials and youth groups to map the challenges of tradition preservation. Participatory observation was conducted by the service team by taking part in the preparation and implementation process of the ritual, so that the data obtained was contextual and in-depth. Interviews were conducted with key informants selected purposively, namely customary elders, the village head or representative, and youth representatives. FGDs were held twice: once during the planning stage to formulate an agreed form of assistance, and once during the evaluation stage to reflect on the outcomes and formulate recommendations for the program's sustainability.

The implementation of the activity consisted of five main stages in detail. First, an initial social assessment and mapping to identify the condition of the Babarit tradition, the social structure of the community, and the challenges to its preservation, including mapping key figures who possess in-depth knowledge of the ritual's procedures. Second, socialization and FGDs with residents to present the objectives of the community service activity and formulate an assistance plan in a participatory manner, so that the activity design truly reflected the community's needs and readiness. Third, direct assistance during the implementation of the Babarit ritual, including assistance with the mutual-cooperation process of preparing offerings, documenting the prayers and incantations recited by customary elders, and assistance during the communal feast. Fourth, digital literacy training for youth to document the tradition in the form of photographs, short videos, and social media content that would be informative and appealing to a younger audience. Fifth, participatory evaluation with the community to reflect on the achievements of the activity and formulate steps for the program's sustainability beyond the assistance period. In terms of the Participatory Action Research framework, these five stages correspond to the four PAR cycles: the initial assessment and the socialization/FGD stage together constitute the Planning phase; the direct ritual assistance constitutes the Acting phase; the participatory observation carried out throughout the process constitutes the Observing phase; and the participatory evaluation stage constitutes the Reflecting phase, the results of which serve as the basis for planning subsequent rounds of assistance.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach with source triangulation, comparing the results of observation, interviews, and activity documentation to ensure the validity of the findings. The analysis process was carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with member checking involving key informants to ensure that the service team's interpretations aligned with the local community's understanding. The digital literacy approach in this assistance drew on good practices previously developed for digital-based local cultural preservation (Fajarianto et al., 2025; Hidayat & Hasfi, 2025), which enable the documentation of a tradition to reach a wider

audience without altering the essence and sacredness of the ritual itself. Throughout the activity, the service team also consistently observed ethical considerations, including obtaining informed consent from customary elders and residents prior to documentation or the publication of activity results.

Table 1. Target Groups of the Assistance Activity

No.	Target Group	Number	Role in Activity
1	Customary Elders/Village Elders	6 people	Resource persons on ritual procedures and meaning
2	Village Officials	4 people	Facilitation of permits and field coordination
3	Religious Figures	3 people	Prayer leaders and explanation of religious values
4	Farmer Groups	10 people	Providers of agricultural produce for offerings
5	Mothers (PKK)	12 people	Preparation of food and ritual equipment
6	*Karang Taruna* Youth	15 people	Participants of digital literacy training

Source: Author's Work, 2026.

Table 2. Stages of the Assistance Activity

No.	Stage	Activity	Output/Target
1	Initial Assessment	Social mapping and identification of the condition of the *Babarit* tradition	Map of tradition preservation issues
2	Socialization & FGD	Discussion with customary elders, village officials, and youth	Agreed assistance plan
3	Ritual Assistance	Assistance with mutual-cooperation preparation of offerings and communal prayer	Full implementation of the *Babarit ritual*
4	Digital Literacy	Training in photo, video, and social media content documentation	Digital archive of the *Babarit* tradition
5	Participatory Evaluation	Joint reflection with residents on the assistance process	Recommendations for program sustainability

Source: Author's Work, 2026.

Result

The assistance activity began with a social assessment involving 6 customary elders, 4 village officials, 3 religious figures, 10 members of farmer groups, 12 mothers active in the PKK, and 15 Karang Taruna youths from Jipang Village, as presented in Table 1. The assessment found that in-depth knowledge of the procedures and philosophical meaning of Babarit was largely held only by the older generation, while the younger generation tended to know the tradition only superficially, as an annual ceremonial activity, without understanding its theological and social significance. This finding reinforced the urgency of assistance so that intergenerational knowledge transfer could take place before the tradition lost its heirs. In addition, the assessment identified that both written and visual documentation of the Babarit tradition in Jipang Village was very limited, meaning it risked disappearing without a trace if not promptly archived.

During the first stage of socialization and FGD, the service team and residents jointly formulated an assistance agenda encompassing the reinforcement of ritual procedures, the strengthening of cross-generational participation, and the introduction of digital literacy as a means of documentation. The FGD process was dialogical in nature, with residents actively expressing their concerns over the waning interest of the younger generation in the tradition, while also proposing that the assistance activity involve local schools and Islamic study groups (majelis taklim) as partners for the program's sustainability. The agreements reached during this FGD served as a reference for the service team in designing the subsequent series of

assistance activities, as summarized in Table 2.

Subsequently, direct assistance was carried out during the sequence of the Babarit ritual, beginning with mutual cooperation in preparing the offerings, which took place over the two days preceding the main event; the recitation of prayers and incantations by customary elders at the village's sacred sites; and culminating in a communal feast attended by nearly the entire hamlet. This entire process involved almost all residents of the hamlet, from mothers preparing traditional dishes, to men erecting the venue and preparing agricultural produce, to youths assisting with activity documentation. The service team took part in each of these stages, meticulously recording the sequence of implementation, the types of offerings used, and the arrangement of prayers and incantations recited by the customary elders as documentation material.

During the digital literacy training stage, 15 youths participated in training on photo and video capture, basic interview techniques with customary elders, video editing using smartphone applications, and management of the village's social media account. This training was conducted over two sessions: a basic digital literacy theory session and a hands-on practice session during the implementation of the babaritan ritual. The results of this training included a short documentary video approximately eight minutes long about the sequence of the Babarit ritual, a collection of photographic documentation, and educational content uploaded to the village's social media account, which received a positive response from residents outside the village as well as from migrants who felt reconnected with their hometown.

During the participatory evaluation stage, residents stated that the assistance activity helped them rediscover the importance of the Babarit tradition, not only as a religious ritual but also as a bond of togetherness among residents in their daily agrarian life. Most participants in the evaluation FGD also expressed the hope that similar assistance activities could be held regularly, not only during the annual ritual, but also through supporting activities such as traditional arts training and cultural literacy classes for elementary school children. Evidence of strengthened social solidarity emerged directly from the evaluation FGD, where residents reported concrete instances of cross-group collaboration that had rarely occurred in previous years, such as the joint involvement of farmer groups, PKK mothers, and Karang Taruna youth in preparing the ritual, as well as a shift in residents' perception of the Babarit tradition, from a routine ceremonial obligation toward a shared source of collective identity for residents of Jipang Village.

Discussion

The results of the assistance show that the Babarit tradition in Jipang Village cannot be separated from the religious dimension of the Sundanese community, which is syncretic in nature, blending Islamic values with local wisdom, as affirmed by Kahmad (2006) and Sujati (2020). The series of prayers and incantations led by customary elders reflects religious devotion in the form of thanksgiving (Akhirin, 2023) and embodies theological values passed down across generations (Arif, 2022), while also serving as a medium for the interpretation of gratitude rooted in Qur'anic values (Hidayat, 2021). This finding is consistent with studies on incantations within the Babarit ritual in other regions, which reveal a similar pattern in narrative structure and social function (Noviandi, 2012; Noviandi & Hidayat, 2023), as well as with studies on Babarit as a potential source of local-wisdom-based teaching materials, which affirm the relevance of these values for younger generations (Anggraeni, 2018).

Variations in the implementation of the ritual in Jipang Village, when compared with Babarit practices in other regions such as Pangandaran (Rusdah, 2018) or the Serentaun ceremony in Cigugur, Kuningan (Suhaenah, Rohaeni, & Listiani, 2017), show that although technical differences exist in implementation across regions, the essence of the ritual as an expression of gratitude and a plea for safety is consistently preserved. This reinforces the argument that Babarit is a tradition that is adaptive to local context while retaining the same

core value structure, suggesting that the assistance strategy developed in Jipang Village has the potential to be adapted to other village contexts with appropriate adjustments.

Photo 1. Documentation of the Mutual-Cooperation Assistance Activity for Preparing Babarit Offerings



Source: Private Documentation, 2026.

In terms of social solidarity, the process of mutual cooperation in preparing offerings and organizing the communal feast proved to be a space of interaction that strengthened residents' social cohesion, consistent with findings on the symbolic meaning of offerings as a representation of social harmony (Falah, 2020) and the Baritan tradition as an effort to harmonize the community with nature (Hidayati et al., 2021). A similar pattern was also found in the strengthening of solidarity through the village charity tradition (Kumalasari, 2022) and in the formation of solidarity during the Baritan ceremony among the Betawi community (Somantri & Merlina, 2014). It can therefore be argued that agrarian rituals such as Babarit consistently function as an instrument of social bonding among communities dependent on agriculture, regardless of specific cultural region. The solidarity formed in this context is not merely mechanical solidarity based on a shared occupation as farmers, but is also solidarity shaped through a complementary division of roles among different groups of residents, ranging from farmer groups and mothers to religious figures and youth. This theoretical account is reinforced directly by the assistance team's own field data: participatory observation recorded increased cross-group collaboration during the preparation of offerings compared with previous years, while the evaluation FGD captured residents' own testimonies of a renewed sense of collective ownership over the tradition, providing empirical grounding for the claim that Babarit functions as a mechanism of social solidarity rather than a merely conceptual argument.

The pattern of cross-group participation observed during the assistance activity, as illustrated in Table 1, shows that the sustainability of the Babarit tradition is in fact supported by a complex and interdependent social network. Farmer groups play a role in supplying agricultural produce as offering materials, mothers play a role in food preparation, religious figures lead the prayers, while village officials facilitate legitimacy and coordination. This division of roles indicates that Babarit is not merely a religious ritual, but also a social mechanism that organizes collective division of labor and reinforces a sense of mutual dependence among residents, consistent with the integrative function of communal rituals identified by Somantri and Merlina (2014) in the context of the Betawi community.

The success of this assistance is also inseparable from the role of digital literacy training in supporting the sustainability of tradition preservation. This approach reinforces earlier findings on digital content literacy as a strategy for local cultural preservation (Fajarianto et al., 2025) and the digitalization of traditional values within the space of community service (Hidayat & Hasfi, 2025). Digital documentation allows the Babarit tradition to be known by younger generations and the wider public without diminishing the sacredness of the ritual, while also serving as a cultural archive that can be sustainably passed down. The involvement of youth in the documentation process also produced a psychological impact in the form of a

growing sense of pride and ownership toward their ancestral tradition, which had previously tended to be regarded as an activity belonging solely to the older generation. This phenomenon confirms that digital literacy can serve a dual function: as a means of documentation and as a bridge for regenerating cultural concern across generations.

This participatory assistance model is also consistent with good practices in cultural preservation assistance through village festivals, which successfully increased participation and the economic value of the tradition (Reverawaty et al., 2019); youth empowerment as agents driving cultural concern (Rohmiyati et al., 2025); local-wisdom-based cultural preservation through community activities involving younger generations (Solehah et al., 2024); and cultural preservation as a potential asset for village community development (Irawan et al., 2023). The consistency of this pattern across various geographical contexts indicates that participatory assistance combining offline and digital approaches is a relatively universal strategy applicable to a wide range of local traditions, not limited to the Babarit tradition alone.

Nevertheless, this assistance activity faced a number of limitations, including a relatively short assistance period that prevented intergenerational knowledge transfer from taking place comprehensively, limited facilities and internet connectivity to support digital literacy at the village level, and the not-yet-optimal involvement of formal educational institutions such as elementary schools and madrasas in the assistance process. A further limitation is that the target scope remained centered on a single hamlet, so it does not yet fully capture the dynamics of Babarit tradition preservation across the entire village. For the sustainability of the program, it is recommended that further assistance be developed involving local educational institutions, that the capacity of youth groups be strengthened as regular tradition-preservation cadres, and that collaboration be explored with regional cultural and tourism agencies to expand the impact and sustainability of Babarit tradition preservation in Jipang Village.

Conclusion

This community service activity aimed to assist the people of Jipang Village in preserving the Babarit tradition while strengthening the social solidarity of the agrarian community. The results of the assistance show that the process of mutual cooperation in preparing offerings, communal prayer, and the harvest thanksgiving feast tangibly strengthened social cohesion among residents, while also serving as a means of transferring traditional knowledge from the older to the younger generation. The division of roles among different groups of residents, from farmer groups, mothers, and religious figures, to village officials and youth, shows that the Babarit tradition functions as a social mechanism that integrates various elements of the community toward a shared purpose.

The digital literacy training provided to youth further strengthened the sustainability of tradition preservation through documentation accessible to a wide audience, without diminishing the sacredness of the ritual itself. The involvement of youth in the documentation process also fostered a sense of pride and ownership toward their ancestral tradition, which constitutes an important asset for the sustainability of the tradition's preservation in the future. It can therefore be concluded that community assistance combining direct participatory approaches with digital literacy is effective in sustaining the Babarit tradition while strengthening the social solidarity of the Jipang Village community.

The main contribution of this activity is the presentation of a local-wisdom-based tradition preservation assistance model that combines direct participatory approaches with digital literacy, making it replicable in other agrarian villages with similar traditions. This model offers an alternative cultural preservation strategy that does not rely solely on academic documentation, but actively involves the community as both the subject of preservation and the beneficiary of the process. Beyond its practical outcomes, this activity also offers a theoretical reflection on the role of higher education institutions in rural development and

cultural sustainability: universities are positioned not merely as external facilitators of documentation, but as long-term partners in the regeneration of local cultural knowledge and the strengthening of agrarian communities' social capital, a role that merits further institutionalization within community-service curricula and rural development policy alike.

The limitations of this activity lie in the relatively short assistance period, the target scope that remained limited to a single hamlet, and the not-yet-optimal involvement of formal educational institutions in the assistance process. Further research and community service is recommended to develop a sustainable assistance program involving formal educational institutions, to expand the target scope to the entire village, and to explore collaboration with regional cultural and tourism agencies, in order to ensure that the regeneration of understanding and appreciation of the Babarit tradition in Jipang Village can continue in a sustainable manner.

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