

The Meaning of Weaving Patterns in The Traditional Area of Kampung Naga

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ABSTRACT

Weaving patterns are a cultural heritage that continues to be preserved by the people of Kampung Naga. Beyond their high aesthetic value, these patterns embody philosophical meaning, local wisdom, and practical function in daily life. However, visual studies exploring the symbolism of these patterns— particularly through the lens of visual communication design and semiotic analysis— remain limited. This reveals a significant potential for deeper investigation, especially in the context of visual-based cultural preservation. This study aims to explore the meaning, impression, and visual messages embedded in the weaving patterns found in Kampung Naga's traditional houses, using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, involving field observations, interviews with local customary leaders, and visual documentation. The collected data were analyzed to uncover symbolic relationships within the cultural and visual context of the Kampung Naga community. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the field of visual communication design—particularly in developing visual literacy grounded in local wisdom—and to support efforts in preserving Sundanese cultural values expressed through traditional woven forms.

Keywords: Kampung Naga, local wisdom, semiotics, visual communication design, weaving patterns

INTRODUCTION

West Java, also known as *Tatar Sunda*, is one of the regions in Indonesia that is rich in cultural heritage and blessed with stunning natural beauty. Its natural landscapes are a defining characteristic and serve as a distinctive identity across various areas, particularly in traditional or indigenous villages (*kampung adat*).

The majority of West Java's population is of Sundanese ethnicity, known for their devout religious life and guided by a life philosophy known as *silih asih*, *silih asah*, and *silih asuh*, which means to love one another, to share knowledge with one another, and to nurture one another. This philosophy is closely tied to their traditions, especially in relation to dwellings and villages that remain authentic and continue to preserve the ancestral customs. One of the greatest cultural riches lies in the region's traditional architecture, which can still be found in various indigenous villages. Several traditional villages in West Java include Kampung Cikondang, Kampung Mahmud, Kampung Kuta, Kampung Dukuh, Kampung Urug, Kampung Pulo, Kampung Gede Kasepuhan Ciptagelar, and Kampung Naga (Astuti & Rismawati, 2009:1–2).

Among the most well-known traditional villages is Kampung Naga. Kampung Naga

is one of the indigenous villages in Indonesia that has successfully preserved its cultural legacy. Topographically, Kampung Naga is located at the foot of a valley, where the land on the west side is higher than the land on the east side. For the people of Kampung Naga, this terrain is referred to as *taneuh bahe ngetan*, meaning "land sloping eastward," which is considered favorable for both settlement and agriculture (Rusnandar, 2015, p. 530).

Administratively, Kampung Naga is situated in the village of Neglasari, Salawu Subdistrict, Tasikmalaya Regency, West Java Province (Harun, 2011, p. 89). The effort to establish community integration is not done individually, but rather through a collective framework, as culture cannot exist or be understood without a community (Ciciria, 2015, p. 192). The name "Naga" was not derived from the mythical dragon creature, but from the location of the village on a steep slope. The term "Kampung Naga" comes from the Sundanese phrase *nagawir*, meaning "on a cliff or steep land" (Nurjaman et al., 2021, p. 229). The Kampung Naga area consists of 110 stilt houses, with roofs made of *ijuk* (black aren palm fibers).

The construction of buildings in Kampung Naga uses entirely local materials that are easily obtained in the surrounding area. This aligns with ancestral traditions and principles, with only a small number of external materials used—such as nails, glass, and window panes (Sumarlina et al., 2020, p. 24). These buildings feature woven bamboo patterns rich in artistic value and full of philosophical meaning, visual ornamental wisdom, and functionality. Behind the uniformity and unique architectural style of Kampung Naga's traditional houses lies a community that steadfastly preserves ancestral customs passed down through generations. The residents continue to use natural tools for daily life—such as agricultural tools—and reject the use of electricity from the government or other modern technologies that could damage the cultural ecosystem of Kampung Naga (Hamid et al., 2018, pp. 25–26). The people of Kampung Naga uphold their traditions, culture, and ancestral values while selectively adapting to modern influences in contemporary times.

The construction of houses made from bamboo in Kampung Naga is carried out collectively through mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). The bamboo weaving technique used in the construction is an integral part of daily life in this indigenous community and is deeply embedded in their cultural identity. The residents of Kampung Naga continue to use various handmade crafts made of woven bamboo in their everyday lives. These woven elements are visible on the walls of traditional houses, doors, windows, fences, and other household items. This unique cultural phenomenon prompted the author to investigate the meaning of weaving patterns in the traditional area of Kampung Naga. The weaving patterns found in this region were chosen as the main object of research to explore the types, meanings, interpretations, and functions of these patterns within the traditional context of Kampung Naga.

The author employs Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory as the analytical framework. Semiotics is a field of study or an analytical method that examines signs. These signs serve as tools humans use in navigating the world and living among others. Semiotics—or semiology, as Barthes refers to it—essentially seeks to understand how humanity assigns meaning to things. To "signify" in this context should not be confused with "to communicate." To signify means that objects not only convey information for communication purposes but also form a structured system of signs (Barthes in Kurniawan, 2001, p. 53). Barthes applied the concept of semiology as a systematic approach to interpreting how historical signs evolve into myths. He described how what was once a primary sign become a second-order sign system, or myth (Barthes in Mahyudin, 2007, p. 36). Symbols and signs, therefore, carry both direct and

fundamental representations (Wallon in Nazzarudin, 2012, p. 29).

METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation, which are then followed by detailed analysis aimed at discovering relationships between elements. The findings are ultimately presented in a structured and objective descriptive narrative. This research contributes to the identification of weaving patterns found in Kampung Naga. Moreover, it supports the effort to preserve and understand cultural heritage and local wisdom in the context of the modern world. By exploring the traditions and wisdom of indigenous communities—particularly the Sundanese people—this study aims to serve as a valuable source of visual literacy for academics, artists, and illustrators alike.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Simplicity in daily life down to the level of the home has become a deeply rooted trait of the Kampung Naga community. This simplicity is not only a lifestyle choice, but a cultural tradition founded on the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. It serves as a core identity of the Kampung Naga people and is reflected in the architecture of their dwellings as a form of local wisdom (Theresia et al., in Ismanto, 2020, p. 215). Spanning an area of 10 hectares, most Kampung Naga residents meet only their basic needs—clothing, food, and shelter—through farming. For the Sundanese people, including the residents of Kampung Naga, a house carries a meaning far beyond that of a mere place to live. It is part of their cosmological concept, as evidenced in the layout of the village, the form of the houses, and the way the rooms are divided. They believe that the balance between the microcosm and the macrocosm must be maintained to ensure a harmonious life (Hermawan, 2014, p. 144).

The house (*imah*) functions not only as a space for daily activities but also as a silent witness to the life of its inhabitants—from birth to death. In the Sundanese language, the word for house is *bumi*, which also means the earth or the world, emphasizing its role as a vessel for life, including human existence. Thus, a house is not merely a structure; it holds deep symbolic meaning and is governed by a set of traditional rules.

These rules, passed down by the ancestors of Kampung Naga, dictate that buildings must use natural materials sourced from the environment, such as wood. Permanent materials like cement are prohibited—except for use in the bathroom. The use of wood has a practical purpose: to keep the house cool in the dry season and warm during the rainy season (Anggita et al., 2022, p. 123). To build a new house, residents must obtain permission from the *kuncén* (village guardian or spiritual leader), and construction may only begin on days deemed auspicious.

There is also a customary rule that a younger child's house must not *ngalangkangan*—that is, overshadow or be positioned westward of—the house of an older sibling or parent. This belief, rooted in the mythical way of thinking, reflects the view that the relationship between humans (subjects) and the world (objects) is one of mutual resonance and participation.

The term *mythical* derives from *myth*, which means a story that provides guidance and direction for a group of people. A myth is not merely a historical account of past events—it offers moral direction and serves as a compass for human wisdom. Myths are typically passed

down by ancestors and elders and are continuously transmitted from one generation to the next. Through myths, people are invited to participate in a shared worldview.

There are three primary functions of myth. First, it serves to awaken humans to the existence of supernatural forces. Myths do not offer direct information about these powers but allow people to sense and appreciate them as forces that shape and control the natural world. Second, myths function as mediators between humans and the unseen realm. Third, they offer explanations for the origin of the universe. These functions provide a comprehensive strategy for regulating and directing the relationship between humans and the forces of nature. This mythical mindset is what guides the people of Kampung Naga in maintaining their relationship with the surrounding environment. These customary rules, however, do not prevent Kampung Naga residents from adapting to technological advances. For example, while windows and doors were traditionally made without glass, they may now incorporate it. Household furniture such as beds and wardrobes can now be found in bedrooms and living areas.

As long as these influences do not negatively impact the survival of Kampung Naga, the community welcomes them gladly. For example, today some members of Kampung Naga already use mobile phones, and there is electricity available in the shops located outside the Traditional Village. According to the village custodian (*kuncén*) of Kampung Naga, the reason the village can endure is because it has a foundation in Custom (*Adat*) and Culture (*Budaya*). Custom belongs to the descendants, while Culture belongs to the nation.

From Kampung Naga's perspective, Culture is first and foremost a guideline, not merely a spectacle to watch. Secondly, Culture is a way of life, not just a style or fashion. Faced with various eras and times, imported culture cannot be completely resisted, but priority is given to inherited culture over imported culture. From the perspective of Kampung Naga's community, imported or foreign culture is not about maintaining a way of life, but rather about living for style. The *kuncén* believes that the people of Kampung Naga can live stylishly, but must not abandon their way of life. Thus, foreign or imported culture should not be glorified while the cultural heritage of ancestors is abandoned.

The cultural foundation of Kampung Naga's community is a way of life that exists in harmony with nature, because nature aligns with the religion they practice, which emphasizes Rahman and Rahim (the Compassionate and the Merciful). Nature itself does not cause disasters; disasters are caused by human behavior—morality and greed that fail to protect nature.

This is a tangible reality showing that although Kampung Naga is located in a valley near a river, it has never experienced flooding or landslides because the community truly maintains their relationship with nature. Kampung Naga itself does not distinguish ethnicity, religion, or creed, because through the lens of Culture, these differences are not grounds for dispute or conflict but rather enrich the colors of life. This is what makes the local wisdom values of Kampung Naga and its cultural foundation resilient and enduring.



Figure 1. Front View of a Traditional House in Kampung Naga

Talking about ornament motifs cannot be separated from the meanings behind them (Saragi, 2018, p.164). There are elements of communication involved, which consist of the artist's elements—expression, creativity, originality, intuition, etc. Meanwhile, the art object emphasizes important aspects such as form, material, structure, symbolism, and so forth. Finally, the art audience involves matters of appreciation, interpretation, evaluation, context, and so on (Sumardjo, 2010, p.51). Speaking of the Sundanese traditional village (kampung adat), one cannot avoid understanding various aspects of Sundanese human life (Heryana, 2010, p.365). Accordingly, the meaning of the weaving patterns on the traditional houses of

Kampung Naga is inseparable from the Sundanese way of thinking known as “Tri Tangtu.” Tri Tangtu Dina Buana consists of three interconnected components: God, the universe (nature), and humans (Fairuzahira et al., 2020, p.34). Nature and place of residence are closely linked to Sundanese culture.

In searching for identity, a Sundanese person living amidst abundant, fertile nature with many high mountains that provide various types of plants and animals, views these natural blessings as gifts from something desired and created with full love and purity. Thus, what is called God, Gusti, Anu Maha Asih (The Most Loving), Anu Maha Suci (The Most Holy), Anu Maha Agung (The Greatest), and Anu Maha Asih is the primary energy of God's plan. The loving creation process began with God first creating the world, or nature, consisting of five elements: air (also called space), earth, water, plants, and animals.

When we feel and accept the blessings in life, such as enjoying food and clothing, we realize we possess nothing, not even ourselves—everything is entrusted by God. All will return to Him according to His will, and this is called Wiwitan. This awareness instills in us the responsibility as humans to take care of all that belongs to God and is entrusted to us. Therefore, humans must nurture themselves, others, and their environment.

In short, the terms above are interpreted as Gusti anu Asih (God who Loves), Alam anu Ngasah (Nature that Sharpens), and Manusa anu Ngasuh (Humans who Nurture), including honesty, community, and village. The terms Asih (Love), Asah (Sharpen), and Asuh (Nurture) are natural laws, which are God's laws or the basis of God's will. The essence of natural law is certainty or “tangtu.” This certainty is part of the process of wiwitan and the law of cause and effect, known in Sundanese as “hukum pepelakan” (the law of planting). The three elements often mentioned in Sundanese pantun (poetry) and mantras are Wenang, Kala, and Wening. These are elements of the spiritual or unseen world. Wenang is something possessed only by God, so this world is called the realm of Wenang (pawonangan). Kala is the process of creation containing the will or plan of the Creator, which requires time or “kala” (often translated as time). Wening is everything created and in the sense of Tauhid (monotheism), it means knowing the Creator's will, accepting it, and being calm. The Tri

Tangtu expression arises from these meanings—God, Nature, and Humans as the three main elements of the universe.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Tri Tangtu is the basis of Sundanese philosophy because it reflects and is represented in all Sundanese cultural systems and subsystems, such as government, social structure, law, art, and others. We must research and find the existence of the “Hukum Tiga” (Law of Three) as the foundation of Sundanese culture. For example, the three elements Wenang, Kala, and Wening flow and are represented by three colors of light: white inside the tumpang (a cone-shaped rice dish), such as white egg or white anchovy fish; yellow on the body or rice; and red on the top represented by a red chili pepper. Also, the shape of the triangle is used to symbolize Tri Tangtu. All forms derived from the triangle, such as the roofs of traditional Sundanese houses, have this triangular shape. The highest ornament, Cagak Gunting, consists of two triangles: one infinite triangle and one bounded triangle, representing both the real world and the spiritual world where we live.

The house consists of three parts: the base (tatapakan), the middle space (kolong), the middle section, and the roof. Besides Tri Tangtu, there is Tri Tangtu Salira, which represents the center points of the three body parts: chest, abdomen, and head. These points are called DA, SA, and RA. DA: The center of the chest, which is the heart, representing the element of God. The heart is described as the center of life energy, or Daha, the place where God’s energy comes. This chest area symbolizes love and divinity. SA, The center of the abdomen, the navel or belly button. It functions as the center of manifestation because the umbilical cord connects the placenta and the navel. This abdominal region represents the element of nature, which shapes or sharpens the self. RA, The center of the brain, the gland that serves as the center of the nervous system and body control. This head region distinguishes humans from other creatures, representing the human element.

As stated in the foreword of the Galunggung manuscript translation, the Galunggung Kropak 632 manuscript discusses the position of Tri Tangtu on Earth, meaning Rama-Resi-Ratu. None of these three has a higher position than the others, though each has different duties. These three leaders must work together to uphold virtue and dignity through words and deeds. The “Jagat Palangka” (realm of the king) is owned by Prabu, “Jagat Daranan” by Rama, and “Jagat Kreta” by Resi. Rama is responsible for prosperity and welfare, while Resi is responsible for governance. Rama represents the divine element, exemplified by his role as a spiritual leader. A “rama” is a person who leaves worldly interests to maintain high and wise love. Resi represents the element of nature providing life necessities. Resi are experts or educators in various fields like education, military, agriculture, arts, trade, and so on. Their mission is to learn. Ratu represents the human element, responsible for all state activities and wealth. Because their mission is to nurture, these leaders are called “Pamong” or “Pangereh,” terms used in the Sundanese governance system.

Looking at the current Sundanese society, we must acknowledge that the Tri Tangtu Di Bumi system has nearly vanished in recent Sundanese history, except among traditional communities. The worldview of the Kampung Naga traditional community still adheres to Sundanese ways of thinking and preserves ancestral values. This is evident in the weaving patterns that symbolize the relationship between humans and God, between humans themselves, and between humans and nature.

These local wisdom values are real evidence that the Kampung Naga traditional community still firmly upholds ancestral values. Moreover, using natural bamboo material, if only one bamboo strip is used, it will be weak or flimsy. To strengthen the bamboo material,

many bamboo strips are needed to weave and bind together, symbolizing that the Kampung Naga community holds the values of *Silih Asih* (mutual love), *Asah* (mutual sharpening), and *Asuh* (mutual nurturing).

The residential houses of Kampung Naga are made from various natural, locally sourced materials easily found around Kampung Naga, such as wood, bamboo, ijuk (sugar palm fiber), and tepus leaves, which have proven to be strong and durable. Buildings constructed from these materials offer many advantages, including low pollution, lightweight building loads to support, and cost efficiency over the long term, making these materials valuable assets. The use of these local natural materials is an ancestral effort to adapt to the potential and carrying capacity of the surrounding environment. The Kampung Naga community's fear of fire—due to the vulnerability of these materials to burning—may explain why they reject the installation of electrical wiring within the village.

Their ancestors required the use of *sasag*, a woven bamboo panel with relatively wide gaps, to facilitate easy monitoring of fire sources inside the house. The wooden frame of the house is also sensitive to moisture, so it is placed on stilts, elevated 40-60 cm above the ground. This creates a “kolong” (space) under the house that allows air to flow underneath. The strict uniformity in materials, shapes, colors, and orientation of the houses is a legacy from the ancestors intended to prevent social inequality and foster harmony among the Kampung Naga community.

Even today, the Sundanese people, especially Kampung Naga residents, continue to use bamboo as a primary building material. Bamboo is the main material used for the traditional weaving of *sasag* and *bilik* panels. Horizontal *sasag* weaving is used for kitchen walls, while vertical *sasag* weaving is used for kitchen doors. Because of its strength and durability, this type of weaving is highly popular. The woven panels must be used according to customary regulations. The basic weaving patterns used in Kampung Naga houses consist of two types: horizontal *sasag* for the kitchen walls and windows, and vertical *sasag* for the kitchen doors (Apiati et al., 2019, p.113).



Figure 2. Door of a Traditional House in Kampung Naga

There are two types of doors in the Kampung Naga traditional house. Wooden doors are used for the main entrance or the living room door, while doors with *sasag* woven patterns are used for the kitchen. The two doors also differ in circulation areas: women enter through the kitchen door, while men enter through the main door (Riany et al., 2014, p.7). Hanging on the kitchen door is a *sawen*, made from the leaves of *jukut palias* and *darangdan*. The *sawen* is

believed to act as a talisman protecting the house from various dangers or disasters.



Figure 3. Kitchen Door of a Traditional House in Kampung Naga

The center of the house, or *pawon* area, is the kitchen, where women carry out cooking activities. Bamboo is predominantly used in the kitchen walls and floor. The front wall is woven with vertical and horizontal bamboo patterns known as *bilik sasag* (Putra et al., 2018, p.109). Bamboo weaving is also applied to the kitchen door using the *saregseg* or *sasag hambalan* (vertical *sasag*) pattern. The function of the *sasag hambalan* weaving is to provide ventilation, allowing air to enter the house. Additionally, it functions as a substitute for glass windows commonly found in other houses.

The *sasag hambalan* pattern has a unique characteristic: from inside the house, one can see outside, but from the outside, one cannot see inside. Based on semiotic analysis, the *sasag hambalan* weaving's signifier is a vertical line with closely spaced weaves—known in Sundanese as *saregseg*—and consists of 17 horizontal bands.

The signified meaning of *sasag hambalan* has vertical supports symbolizing the vertical relationship between humans and God (*Habluminallah*), while the horizontal bands represent relationships among humans (*Hablum Minannas*). The natural bamboo material signifies the relationship between humans and nature (*Hablum Minal Alam*).



Figure 4. Kitchen Window of a Traditional House in Kampung Naga

The kitchen window uses the *sasag jarugjug* or horizontal *sasag* weaving pattern. Its function is similar to *sasag hambalan*, serving as ventilation and allowing visibility of the kitchen fire from outside during the night to prevent fire hazards. The *sasag jarugjug* pattern appears transparent from inside during the day, but from the outside, one cannot see inside.

Conversely, at night, people inside cannot see outside, but people outside can see inside. The kitchen window uses five bamboo rods extending horizontally, serving as the signifier. The signified meaning is similar to *sasag hambalan* but with reversed roles: the bands are vertical while the supports are horizontal. This reflects the vertical relationship between humans and God (*Habluminallah*), horizontal relationships among humans (*Hablum Minannas*), and the use of natural materials symbolizes the human-nature relationship (*Hablum Minal Alam*).

The Kampung Naga indigenous community upholds ancestral values that maintain harmonious relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature, deeply rooted in the Sundanese philosophy of *Tri Tangtu*. This philosophy is clearly reflected in the weaving patterns used by the community.

Besides the horizontal and vertical *sasag* weaving, there is also a cross-weave pattern called *saregseg silang*. This cross-weave is a basic weaving technique where bamboo strips are alternately crossed to form a sturdy and attractive pattern. This pattern is used for protective enclosures or fences separating yards from gardens or gardens from ponds. These enclosures act as natural barriers to prevent animals from entering, as vegetables and fruits are planted inside.

The cross-weave *saregseg silang* pattern has a signifier in the form of an X-shaped cross, standing 180 cm tall. The signified meaning of this X shape is a warning or “do not enter” sign. It features three vertical bands—top, middle, and bottom—representing the *Tri Tangtu* philosophy. The top part symbolizes the spiritual world or higher realm, connecting humans with God; the middle represents the human world, relating to social interactions; and the bottom relates to the earth or nature, signifying the connection between humans and their environment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of higher education adopting inclusive policies that acknowledge tattoos as a valid means of self-expression. As younger generations increasingly pursue authenticity in their identities, accepting tattoos in academic settings signifies a considerable change in societal perspectives on individuality. By welcoming this form of body art, universities validate their students' personal choices and contribute to fostering a more accepting and diverse educational environment. This development reflects changing attitudes towards identity, where creative expressions such as tattoos are considered legitimate and significant elements of one's narrative. Thus, this creates the potential for developing inclusive aesthetics about tattoo acceptance within the Malaysian academic sphere.

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