

Digital Photographies of *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance : The West Sumatra Folklore Preservation

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Abstract

The *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance, a rich expression of Indonesian folklore and cultural identity—particularly in West Sumatra—requires preservation. To support this effort, a photographic experiment was conducted to explore visual representations capable of conveying the folkloric elements embedded in the dance. Notably, there is a lack of scholarly literature on dance photography in Indonesia, making this study a pioneering contribution to the field. The experiment produced 66 photographs of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance, with 10% selected for inclusion in a questionnaire aimed at evaluating whether respondents could effectively perceive the folkloric content. This research employed Visual Arts-Based Research Practices, with data collected through a literature review and questionnaires completed by 396 participants. Findings indicate that dance photography of *Silek Rantak Kudo* should emphasize traditional elements in both movement and visual representation to ensure its recognition as a traditional West Sumatran art form. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that photographic techniques—such as motion photography and posed imagery—can serve as effective tools for promoting and preserving the dance on social media among the Indonesian public.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a maritime nation composed of diverse ethnic groups, possesses a rich and varied folklore. The country comprises more than 13,000 islands and over 300 languages, with various ethnic communities inhabiting these islands. This cultural diversity is reflected not only in the abundance of traditional dance styles but also in the richness of oral traditions that form an integral part of Indonesian folklore. It is estimated that Indonesia has approximately 300 distinct traditional ethnic dance styles [1]. Traditional Indonesian dance exhibits significant diversity in both form and function. Functionally, traditional dance is performed for a variety of purposes, including religious and ceremonial events,

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social gatherings, spiritual preaching, education, and entertainment [2]. In terms of classification, dances can be categorized into primitive, folk, classical, or palace dances. Additionally, based on the number of performers, traditional dances are classified into solo, duet, and group performances [3].

Several traditional group dances are widely recognized across Indonesia, including the *Bedhaya Ketawang* Dance from Central Java, the *Tor-Tor* Dance of the Batak Toba people in North Sumatra, the *Kawasaran* Dance from North Sulawesi, the *Lenso* Dance from Ambon in Maluku, the *Saman* Dance from Aceh, the *Kecak* Dance from Bali, and the *Piring* Dance of the Minangkabau people in West Sumatra. Passed down through generations, these dances reflect the cultural identities and values of their respective communities. The movements and expressions of the dancers serve as a medium through which these meanings are communicated. In traditional dance, gestures—such as those involving the hands or forearms—can function symbolically as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and more. When choreographed by a dancer, these gestures can form sentences or convey entire narratives [1]. Group dances are commonly performed in the context of religious or traditional ceremonies, often serving specific spiritual or ritualistic purposes. According to Desfiarni, Toruan, and Marzam [3], dance-driven by belief or will is a manifestation of the human soul, typically found in traditional dance forms that are both magical and sacred. Among primitive communities, dance movements are closely associated with intentional acts, such as invoking rain, welcoming births, or celebrating successful hunts.

West Sumatra Province, located on the island of Sumatra, is the homeland of the Minangkabau ethnic group. Like many other ethnic groups in Indonesia, the Minangkabau people possess a rich tradition of dance. According to the classification of traditional dance functions [1]—namely for ceremonial or ritual purposes, entertainment, and aesthetic presentation—the Minangkabau have developed various dances that serve each of these functions. For instance, the *Piring* Dance is performed during ritual ceremonies, where each dancer carries offerings as an expression of gratitude for a bountiful harvest. Another example is the *Indang* Dance, which is traditionally performed as a medium for spreading Islamic teachings. This dance is often incorporated into ceremonies and is enriched with symbolic and spiritual meaning [4].

The *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance and the *Randai* Dance from West Sumatra incorporate elements of *silat*, a traditional Indonesian martial art, into their choreography. These dances emphasize dynamic foot movements as a key aspect of their performance style [1]. Although now associated with West Sumatra, the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance originated in the Kerinci Regency of Jambi Province and was initially performed as a ritual dance. According to Wanda [5], this dance was traditionally dedicated to celebrating agricultural harvests—particularly rice—and was performed continuously over several days. The primary purpose of the performance was to express gratitude for the fertility of the land and to invoke sacred rain, especially during the dry season.

Today, the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance continues to thrive and evolve among both the Minangkabau ethnic group in West Sumatra and the Jambi Malay ethnic group in Jambi Province. In the Minangkabau tradition, the dance is accompanied by *gendang* and *adok* instruments, with singing that incorporates ancestral proverbs and advice [6]. While the choreography remains similar, the naming conventions differ slightly between regions. In both Kerinci and Minangkabau areas, it is referred to as the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance, although local nuances may influence its presentation. Historically, the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance was performed during various traditional ceremonies such as *Alek Nagari* (village festivals), *Alek Perkawinan* (wedding celebrations), *Alek Turun Mandi* (ritual bathing of newborns), and *Alek Penghulu* (ceremonies for the installation of tribal leaders) [7].

Ritual dances in contemporary times have been transformed into forms of entertainment or spectacle, particularly following the spread of Islamic influence in Sumatra. Dances such as the *Randai*, *Piring*, and *Silek Rantak Kudo*—originally sacred and ritualistic—have gradually evolved into social or entertainment performances. In the broader context of societal art, it is common for traditional practices to undergo change, reflecting shifts in societal values and tastes. As such, culture—including artistic expression—is inherently dynamic rather than static [8]. Franz Boas [9][10] emphasized that cultural development often leads to the introduction of new cultural elements, which may marginalize older traditions. In this context, traditional cultural forms can struggle to maintain their relevance within a rapidly evolving cultural landscape.



Figure 1. *Randai* formation

[Source: Research Documentation, 2010-2025]

Digital photography of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance serves as an innovative medium for preserving and transmitting the dance's movement vocabulary to younger generations. It not only enhances accessibility but also helps safeguard the authenticity of the choreography, allowing learners to engage with this traditional art form without compromising its core elements. The application of digital photography extends to various domains, including gaming and the dissemination of cultural messages through social media platforms. In Indonesia, social media has played a significant role in shaping the development and visibility of digital photography. When used in contexts such as gaming, documentation, and dataset creation, the artistic function of digital photography undergoes notable transformation, adapting to new forms of visual storytelling and cultural preservation.

Dance photography is a specialized discipline that focuses on capturing the intricate and expressive movements of dancers, requiring the use of photographic techniques—particularly high shutter speeds—to document the rapid and dynamic nature of dance performances effectively. Through the medium of still photography, the kinetic essence of dancers in motion can be preserved, resulting in images that convey both authenticity and vitality. A pioneering example of this approach is Arnold Genthe's 1915 photograph of Anna Pavlova, which stands as one of the earliest successful attempts to capture the spontaneous freedom of dance movement [11]. Genthe's distinctive approach to dance photography set it apart from contemporary practitioners who relief on contrived methods to simulate buoyant movements through static poses. Genthe's work stands out for its genuine portrayal of dancers in action, underscoring the inherent power of photography to convey the true essence of dynamic movement [11]. The recording of dance movements through photography is crucial for the preservation and documentation of dance, particularly to prevent the potential loss of these intricate movements [12][13]:” The transmission of dance styles across generations is a delicate and somewhat arbitrary process. In the case of historical ballets, there is no concrete script; instead, we rely on ambiguous descriptive notations and equally unreliable oral traditions for hints about form and content. The choreographic legacy, akin to an impressive sandcastle, is gradually eroded by the passage of time, ultimately leaving behind only the architect's footprints and the musical score.”

In Indonesia's historical context, the preservation of dance movements can be traced to the reliefs carved into the walls of the Borobudur Temple. These stone carvings offer a visual record of life in ancient Java, including depictions of cultural dance performances. The reliefs depict a range of dance forms, from solo dances to war dances, offering valuable insights into the diversity and significance of dance during that era. Inscriptions associated with Borobudur further elaborate on the dynamic performance culture of the time, emphasizing the prominence of the performing arts as an integral part of daily life. Historical records indicate that professional dancers frequently performed in public spaces, such as markets or along village roads, engaging with the community through traveling street performances. This practice was referred to in ancient Javanese as *Rara Mabramana Tintonton*, which translates to "the girl who walks around the village to watch." In modern times, street dancers are more commonly known as *tledak* or *tayub* [14].

In addition to the reliefs found at Borobudur Temple, the statues at Plaosan Temple also exhibit various dance poses, offering further evidence of the historical significance of dance in ancient Javanese culture [15]. References to dance are not limited to physical artifacts; they are also present in classical manuscripts. One such example is the manuscript titled *Pratelan Beksa Wireng Karna Tandhing Kaliyan Janaka*, housed in the Library of Reksapustaka Mangkunegara Surakarta under the local catalogue number G56. This manuscript provides detailed information on *gendhing* (musical accompaniment), choreographic descriptions, and floor patterns, including the orientation and direction of the dancers' movements [16]. Similarly, in Western contexts, efforts to document dance movements also predate the advent of photography. As noted in prior research [13]: "The initial endeavours to document dance sequences predate the advent of photographic media and involve the traditional convergence of ink and paper."



Figure 2. *Pencak Silat* on The Relief of Prambanan Temple
[Source: Research Documentation, 2023 - 2025]

In this context, efforts to document dance movements began long before the advent of photography or video technology. These early attempts were carried out using the tools and technologies available at the time. Beyond their function as documentation, such visual representations also served broader artistic and cultural purposes. As noted by scholars [17][13]: "Since ancient times, the visual arts, encompassing painting, architecture, and sculpture, have sought to convey the impression or perception of movement.

The preservation of traditional dance, as a vital part of cultural heritage, requires intentional and sustained efforts. To ensure its continuity for future generations, various methods have been employed to document and store dance movements, including temple reliefs and illustrated manuscripts. In connection with this, Schwartz remarked: "As a cognitive instrument, notation fulfils various functions. It frequently serves as the method through which the dancer, choreographer, or director conceptualizes intricate spatial

patterns that the actual movement might follow, leading to sophisticated conceptual progressions that may appear feasible only on paper. Additionally, notation functions as an instructional tool, facilitating communication between the director and performer. Moreover, it serves as a documentation tool for future reference, establishing a historical connection between one dance form and another, passing down through generations [13]."

Recording dance movements holds significance beyond mere documentation. As Reason highlights, Arnold Genthe's dance photography captures the authentic essence of movement, demonstrating photography's unique ability to freeze fleeting moments and reveal the expressive power inherent in dance. When motion is momentarily suspended through the photographic lens, it invites reflection and deeper appreciation of the dancer's form and gesture. Dance photography, therefore, becomes not only a method of preservation but also a distinct form of artistic expression. Lack [13] argues that similar to traditional dance notation, photography produces a tangible and lasting record. At the same time, it holds the potential to stand as an independent art form. Within the context of art and dance, a nuanced interplay exists between two roles of the photographer: the 'documenter,' who captures reality, and the 'creator,' who interprets and elevates beauty. This dual role reflects the broader artistic tension between art as a means of historical preservation and art as an aesthetic pursuit.

Photographing the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance requires specialized techniques that are sensitive to the unique characteristics of its movements. A key focus is capturing the precision of motion as it aligns with the rhythmic accompaniment, ensuring that the energy and timing of the dance are faithfully represented. Equally important is the concept of *wirasa*—a term that refers to the emotional depth or "taste" that imbues the performance with its distinctive expressive quality. Dancers who embody *wirasa* in every subtle movement can be recognized through their intense gaze and evocative facial expressions, which reflect a deep internalization of the dance's meaning.

This attention to detail is especially critical in Minangkabau dance, where each movement carries symbolic and philosophical weight. Thus, dance photography in this context must not only document motion but also convey the cultural and emotional essence embedded within each gesture [18].

The presence of the *aparapa* imaginary [24] is perceptible in the dynamic imagery captured through dance photography. *Photo motion*—the visual representation of movement—emerges from the integration of advanced camera technology with the expressive energy of the dancer and the photographer's perceptive timing. This form of representation offers more than just a visual record; it provides insight into the dancer's technical mastery and expressive depth. The captured poses, nuanced expressions, and the harmonious coordination of bodily movement collectively reflect the aesthetic sophistication of local artistic genius in West Sumatra."

The essence of dance lies in the graceful, rhythmic, and harmonious movement of the human body, serving as a manifestation of beauty [19]. Dance functions as an expressive art form that emerges from the human soul, incorporating key elements such as rhythm, spirit, aesthetic balance, and emotional depth. According to scholars [20], the origins of dance can be traced to natural movements—those associated with daily labor, the observed motions of animals or plants, and instinctive human gestures. These raw movements are then refined, stylized, and developed into structured forms of dance that reflect cultural values and artistic expression.

Aligned with this perspective, John Martin emphasized that the fundamental substance of dance is motion. Dance is composed of several core components, including motion, space, energy, time, expression, and musical or rhythmic accompaniment. Drawing from

established theories of dance movement, it can be concluded that the essential elements—motion, space, energy, and time—play a critical role in shaping the form, meaning, and aesthetic of the dance. These elements collectively influence how dance is performed, interpreted, and experienced as an art form.

The majority of *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance practitioners are elderly, raising significant concerns about the continuity and intergenerational transmission of this traditional art form. Consequently, targeted efforts toward the regeneration and revitalization of practitioners are essential to prevent the dance's potential extinction. Notably, *Silek Rantak Kudo* serves as a foundational source of movement within broader Minangkabau dance traditions. Its cultural importance is reflected in its inclusion within the academic curriculum at ISI Padang Panjang, where it is taught as part of the formal dance syllabus. Recognized as one of the oldest Minangkabau dances, it holds substantial cultural and historical significance. In this context, digital photography emerges as a strategic tool for visual archiving and cultural preservation. Through digital dissemination—particularly via social media platforms—the visual documentation of *Silek Rantak Kudo* enhances public awareness. It contributes meaningfully to the conservation of this heritage in the digital era. This research aims to explore the role of digital photography in safeguarding the cultural heritage of *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance in West Sumatra and to assess the perceptions of younger generations regarding its digitally archived representations.

2. METHODS

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques through visual experimentation and an online survey. A total of 394 respondents—comprising members of the younger generation who are active social media users and familiar with the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance—participated in the study. The survey included seven structured questions, each accompanied by an image derived from the visual experiment, designed to elicit both perceptual and evaluative responses. To ensure accessibility and maximize participation, the questionnaire was distributed via an online platform, enabling respondents to engage with the content conveniently and directly.

Silek Rantak Kudo Dance as part of Indonesia's rich folklore heritage, represents a collective traditional culture passed down through generations. It serves as a vital cultural identity for both the Minangkabau and Jambi Malay ethnic groups in particular and Indonesian society as a whole. Its continued existence must be safeguarded and preserved. Without dedicated preservation efforts, *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance—along with other forms of Indonesian folklore—risks disappearing under the influence of rapid technological advancement, which is reshaping societal values and ways of life. Like many different countries, Indonesia faces significant challenges in maintaining its traditional cultural identity amid the forces of globalization and digitalization. Advances in information and communication technologies have contributed to what some describe as a cultural erosion, where global and postmodern influences increasingly overshadow traditional values. This phenomenon has led to the emergence of a homogenized global culture, where traditional cultural conditions in different parts of the world begin to resemble one another. Tobroni [22][23] stated, "the element of globalization enters uncontrollably possessing a national culture that is the incarnation of local culture that exists in every region from Sabang to Merauke".

To ensure the sustainability of *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance, a valuable element of West Sumatra's folklore, preservation efforts are essential. In this context, the government holds a key responsibility in safeguarding and promoting the cultural heritage of *Silek Rantak Kudo*. According to the official website of the West Sumatra regional government, preservation efforts have been carried out through the Center for the Preservation of Cultural Values of West Sumatra (BPNB Sumbar) and the Tourism and Culture Office of

Padang City. These institutions function as technical implementation units under the Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. Some of the initiatives include the 2016 Minangkabau Traditional Arts Festival, the 2013 *Padang Bagalanggar*: Minangkabau Performing Arts International Festival, and the 2020 Eid Holiday Traditional Art Performance Festival. However, these efforts are still considered insufficient in supporting regular performances of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* traditional dance. Currently, its performances remain largely confined to the West Sumatra region, and as a result, wider dissemination and recognition—both nationally and internationally—have yet to be achieved.

Given these conditions, it is increasingly difficult for the current generation—and the Indonesian public at large—to witness *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance performances in person. Therefore, it is essential to implement efforts to disseminate information about the dance through information technology, particularly via web pages and social media platforms. The use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and GoPro is particularly relevant for promoting *Silek Rantak Kudo*, as these platforms leverage the power of photography. Their widespread user base and extensive reach surpass the audience size typically achieved through live festival performances. Many industries already utilize the visual appeal of photography to market their products; similarly, cultural products like traditional dance can benefit from visual storytelling through photo-based platforms as a strategy for preservation and promotion.

Accordingly, to effectively promote the folklore of *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance through social media, preliminary experiments must be conducted. These experiments are designed to visually represent the folklore of *Silek Rantak Kudo* from West Sumatra through photographic works. To evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, public testing is carried out using questionnaires. This aims to assess whether viewers can visually interpret and recognize the folkloric elements embedded in the photographic representations of the dance. This research is specifically limited to visual experimentation with the folklore of *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance through the medium of photography.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Rantak Kudo* Dance as Indonesian Folklore

The extensive breadth of folklore in Indonesia is attributed to the diverse cultural landscape formed by various ethnic groups. Consequently, numerous traditional community entities exhibit distinctions in physical attributes, identity, and cultural traditions. This diversity is articulated in the *Strategi Kebudayaan Indonesia* [24] in the following manner:

“Indonesia, characterized by a complex societal structure forged through a lengthy historical evolution, is a nation marked by profound diversity. The reality of this diversity is evident among inhabitants residing on myriad islands and belonging to over a thousand ethnic groups, each speaking hundreds of languages. The cultural landscape of Indonesia, shaped by such diversity, defies simplification into a singular form. Indeed, diversity constitutes the fundamental essence of the archipelago’s culture, setting contemporary Indonesia apart from numerous other nations globally”

Traditional dance is classified within the domain of folklore [25]. The term *folklore*, a compound of “folk” and “lore,” refers to a group of people who share distinct physical, social, and cultural characteristics that differentiate them from other communities. These distinctions may include physical appearance, language, and shared beliefs. Such groups also maintain hereditary traditions that have been passed down for at least two generations and possess a collective consciousness of their identity as a social unit. The *lore* component of folklore represents the body of knowledge, values, and cultural expressions that are

integral to the group's identity. This cultural knowledge is transmitted across generations through various means, including demonstration, symbolic gestures, storytelling, and the use of mnemonic devices.

In this context, Danandjaya [26] defines folklore as an essential component of traditional collective culture, transmitted and inherited across generations through oral, semi-oral, or non-oral channels. The conventional dance categorization within the broader scope of folklore is further supported by Lynne Hamer, who describes folklore as a cultural domain that includes traditional expressions such as verbal art, material culture, belief systems, music, dance, and visual art, all conveyed through individual performances [27]. Similarly, Dharsono [28] characterizes folklore as "artistic communication in small groups." Based on these perspectives, it can be concluded that traditional dances—rooted in a group's cultural heritage, passed down through generations, and expressed through choreographed movement—represent a significant form of folklore.

Folklore, as an integral aspect of culture, is a product of human creativity and is transmitted from one generation to the next primarily through oral or semi-oral means [29]. As a cultural product, folklore originates from human activities situated within a specific cultural context and can be understood through three primary forms: ideas, activities, and artefacts [30]. Ideas represent the conceptual dimension of culture, encompassing beliefs, values, norms, rules, and other abstract elements that guide social behaviour. Activities refer to culturally patterned behaviours and practices observed within a community. Artefacts are the tangible outcomes of human creativity—physical objects that reflect the material expression of cultural values.

Based on the preceding explanation, the cultural manifestation of *activities* refers to individual behaviours and active participation in communal social practices, which give rise to customs, traditional dances, and artistic expressions that may also result in tangible artefacts. As an example, the *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance—recognized as a form of folklore—emerges from the dynamic interplay between *ideas* and *activities* within its cultural context. It embodies both the intangible values and beliefs of the community and the physical expression of those values through choreographed movement and performance [31]:

“The genesis of a dance composition occurs through the conception of ideas or concepts emanating from the creative thoughts of a dance choreographer. These ideas, content, or notions constitute the visible aspects of the dance, representing the outcome of incorporating psychological elements and emotional experiences into the choreographic process.”

The *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance, when viewed from the perspective of its regional origins, is an important element of the folklore traditions found in both West Sumatra and Jambi Provinces. According to Nerosti [7], *Silek Rantak Kudo* is recognized as a traditional dance within Minangkabau culture, particularly thriving in the areas of East Painan, Laban, and Talaok. More specifically, *Silek Rantak Kudo* is a traditional dance of the Nagari Lumpo community, located in the South Coastal Regency of West Sumatra Province [32]. The dance is deeply rooted in history, having existed since the ancestral migration of the Nagari Lumpo people from the Kubuang Tigo Baleh region, which is now part of Solok.

The *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance is not only practised in Nagari Lumpo but is also widespread in surrounding areas near Painan, including Aia Duku Village, Tarusan, Bayang, and Pasa Baru [33]. The origins of the dance can be traced to the Hamparan Rawang Kerinci region in Jambi Province, with its emergence believed to have occurred around 1968 [5]. Senior artists affirm that the study and performance of this traditional art form have existed long before their time, indicating its deep-rooted presence in local culture. Given these

accounts, it is evident that *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance contributes significantly to the folklore heritage of both West Sumatra and Jambi Provinces, thereby enriching the broader cultural tapestry of Indonesia.

The traditional dance known as *Silek Rantak Kudo*, regarded as a cultural treasure of West Sumatra, is distinguished by its unique movements and symbolic meaning. Within the traditional social structure of West Sumatran society, this dance fulfills a specific ceremonial and cultural function. The residents of Hamparan Rawang Kerinci in Jambi Province [5] identify the dance as *Silek Rantak Kudo* due to its characteristic horse-like stepping movements. Typically, the performance includes the ritual burning of incense, which is believed to induce a trance or possession state among the dancers. The *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance plays a central role in sacred celebrations held by the Rawang Kerinci community.

This dance is traditionally performed to commemorate the agricultural harvest in the Kerinci region, with a particular emphasis on rice cultivation. The associated festivities often span several days, reflecting a spirit of continuous celebration. The primary purpose of the dance is to express the Kerinci people's gratitude during both the fertile and dry seasons while also serving as a ritual to invoke the sacred blessings of rain. Historically, the *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance held profound cultural significance for the people of Nagari Lumpo in West Sumatra. It was not only recognized as an artistic expression but also served as a central symbol of cultural identity. The dance was deeply embedded in social customs, communal activities, and the broader cultural framework of the Nagari Lumpo community [33].

From a conceptual perspective, Minangkabau dance from West Sumatra is influenced by Malay movement traditions and *Pencak Silat* martial arts. The aesthetic principles underlying Minangkabau dance are rooted in the local oral folklore wisdom known as "alua patuik raso pareso." This philosophical foundation is integrated into an aesthetic framework referred to as *aparapa* [34]. The concept of *aparapa* is derived from the values embedded in *alua patuik raso pareso*, and it functions as a guiding principle for evaluating a dancer's proficiency in performance. Based on this framework, the technical and expressive elements of Minangkabau dance are classified into three levels of difficulty : 1) Alua level, 2) Patuik Level, and 3) Raso-Pareso Level [35].

The *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance has undergone notable evolution in both its musical accompaniment and choreographic structure. A significant transformation took place around the year 2000 with the emergence of a modern rendition of the dance. One of the key changes was a shift in musical instrumentation—from traditional drums to the use of single-organ keyboards. Choreographically, the movements became more flexible and expressive, moving away from the conventional separation of male and female dancers. Furthermore, there has been increased diversity in the lyrical content of the accompanying songs, and the number of performers has grown, sometimes involving three to four individuals [8].

The *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance has evolved in both provinces, giving rise to stylistic variations that reflect regional interpretations. In West Sumatra Province, different versions of the dance can be found, including those from Talaok (Bayang District), Laban, and East Painan (both located in District IV Jurai). While the *Silek Rantak Kudo* dances of East Painan and Laban are situated within District IV Jurai, the version from Talaok belongs to the Bayang District. These regional styles highlight the adaptive and diverse nature of *Silek Rantak Kudo* within the broader Minangkabau cultural landscape [7].

Furthermore, the *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance has consistently played a significant role in a wide range of traditional ceremonies and social events. It has been featured in *Batagak* ceremonies, the enthronement of local leaders, and receptions for visiting tribal

representatives and government officials, both during the colonial period and in the post-independence era—particularly under the governance of *Nagari* in the South Coastal region. In addition, the dance is regularly incorporated into various customary social gatherings, including weddings, mass circumcisions, and infant naming ceremonies. It also appears in broader cultural celebrations such as the commemoration of the Islamic New Year (*1st Muharram*), public festivities, and national holiday events [33].

The evolution of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance has brought about a transformation in its function, shifting from a traditional ceremonial expression to a form of performance-oriented art. The contemporary version of *Silek Rantak Kudo* [5] has seen a decline in traditional values and authenticity, largely due to the incorporation of modern performance practices and musical instruments. These adaptations have significantly altered the original character of the dance, marking a departure from its ritualistic and cultural roots over time.

3.2. Preservation of West Sumatra's Rantak Kudo Dance

A significant challenge currently facing the traditional performance art of *Silek Rantak Kudo* is its struggle to maintain continuity through regular performances and the regeneration of performers, including both dancers and musicians. This issue stems from several factors, notably the declining interest among younger generations in learning and practising dance. There is also a general reluctance to inherit the tradition, particularly in contexts such as festivals or competitive events. Moreover, the community predominantly engages with the dance as passive spectators, with limited awareness of its cultural value and potential for sustainability and revitalization [36].

The challenges facing *Silek Rantak Kudo* also stem from broader shifts in societal structures influenced by rapid technological advancements, which have significantly impacted human life and, more specifically, cultural dynamics. Social change [30] arises from both internal and external factors. Internally, generational transitions and local innovations contribute to cultural transformation. Externally, factors such as direct intercultural interactions, the dissemination of global artistic influences, and environmental changes further accelerate social and cultural evolution. These dynamics compel individuals and communities to adapt and restructure their ways of life continuously.

In addition to internal community factors, the limited accessibility of *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance practitioners poses a significant obstacle to the dance's sustainability and development [37]. Senior practitioners, referred to as *tuo* in the *Silek Rantak Kudo* tradition, tend to maintain a closed approach to knowledge sharing, seldom engaging openly with the broader community. As a result, knowledge about the dance remains concentrated among a small group of individuals. This restricted transmission is rooted in customary regulations governing cultural inheritance [38], which state: "Traditional art, flourishing and evolving within a specific locality and sustained by communities that adhere to mutually accepted customary rules, has been preserved across generations."

Traditional art is generally characterized by several key features [39] [38]. First, its influence tends to be limited to the cultural environment that sustains it. Second, it evolves gradually, reflecting the broader dynamics of the society in which it exists. Third, it is not constrained by strict specialization. Lastly, it is not typically the product of individual creativity but rather the result of collective, anonymous contributions from the community that supports it. These characteristics are also evident in the *Silek Rantak Kudo* dance, which aligns with the definition of partially oral folklore [40]. In this context, folklore refers to cultural expressions that are communally owned and transmitted across generations.

Opportunities for the open transmission of traditional art still exist [32]. The conventional dance inheritance can occur through multiple channels. First, *closed inheritance* typically

occurs within kinship structures, where knowledge is passed exclusively to family members, thereby limiting access for outsiders. Second, *open inheritance* allows for broader dissemination through educational institutions, community workshops—particularly those focused on *Silek Rantak Kudo*—and general educational settings. This type of inheritance can also occur within ethnic communities or be extended to the wider public. This perspective is consistent with Widjaja's [41][42] definition, which underscores the importance of preserving cultural values and traditional arts. It promotes the development of dynamic, flexible, and selective methods that are responsive to changing social and cultural conditions.

3.3. *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance Photography Experiment

The approach employed in this investigation is Visual Arts-Based Research Practices, a method centred on utilizing photography for research purposes [42]. The utilization of photography techniques aims to preserve a specific moment of the dance within a fixed frame. Furthermore, photography possesses the capacity to immortalize dance movements into enduring records [43][34]. Ewing [43] notes that photography inherently favours certain aspects of dance, regardless of their significance in relation to the entirety of the performance. For instance, a visually striking leap might be more photogenic than a subtler movement that holds greater choreographic importance. Given the transitory nature of dance contrasted with the enduring nature of photography, imperfections or nuances that may be overlooked or forgiven in the swift pace of a live stage performance are deemed less acceptable in what essentially becomes a lasting document.

The use of specific photographic techniques aims to preserve singular moments of a dance within a fixed frame. Moreover, photography can immortalize dance movements as enduring visual documents [43][34]. As Ewing [43] observes, photography inherently favours certain aspects of dance, often independent of their overall choreographic significance. For example, a visually striking leap may appear more photogenic than a subtler movement that holds deeper artistic or cultural meaning. Given the ephemeral nature of live dance performances, where imperfections and nuances may be overlooked or forgiven in the moment, photography imposes a sense of permanence. Consequently, details that may pass unnoticed on stage become subject to lasting scrutiny in the photographic medium.

Photography techniques in this study were implemented using the Canon EOS 5D 12.8MP Digital SLR Camera, chosen for its specific advantages in capturing high-quality images. Released in 2005, this device features a resolution of 230,000 pixels, enabling the production of detailed and sharp photos directly from the camera. In Visual Arts-Based Research, the camera functions as a vital research instrument. Technology continues to play a pivotal role in advancing visual research methodologies. Cameras, particularly in early visual anthropology, introduced new perspectives for interpreting social realities, formulating unique research questions, and presenting findings in innovative visual formats.

The rise of digital photography, the widespread availability of camera-equipped mobile devices (such as smartphones and tablets), and the proliferation of the internet—especially through social media and photo-sharing platforms—have significantly expanded the use of photography in research. For example, in 2008 alone, an estimated 478 billion photographs were taken using mobile phones. Platforms such as Flickr, Facebook, and Instagram have since facilitated the sharing of billions of images globally [44][42].

Photography techniques are utilized to capture the diverse expressive movements found in the performance of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance. As outlined by [45], the range of movement in dance typically includes actions such as vibrating, spinning, swinging, falling (falls and recovery), breaking (staccato), tension and release (contract and release), flowing, locomotor movement, drifting, grounding, and holding. In *Silek Rantak Kudo*, one

of the most distinctive movements is known as *alua patuik raso pareso*, a philosophical concept rooted in the local wisdom of the Minangkabau people of West Sumatra, Indonesia.

The dance features several characteristic forms of motion, notably the *pitunggue* stance—a horse-like posture that emphasizes strength in the lower body. The term *pitunggue* refers to the grounded, powerful stance resembling the gait of a horse. Additional movements include full-body rotation using the legs as a pivot, torso rotation with isolated movement of the shoulders and head, and the rapid, forceful stamping of the feet, referred to as *rantak*—a signature element of the dance that conveys energy and strength.

Many of the movements found in Minangkabau dance can be traced back to *pencak silat* [20]. A defining characteristic of Indonesian dance in general is its grounded quality, where performers maintain a close connection to the earth and avoid elevated movements [46]. This grounding is often expressed through seated, kneeling, bowing, or semi-hunched positions—features that are integral to the Minangkabau dance aesthetic, commonly described as "treading the earth." In the choreographic conception of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance, particular emphasis is placed on the strength and engagement of the lower body, especially the *pitunggue* stance, which utilizes the legs and knees as foundational elements. Extended leg lifts are rare in this tradition; when they do occur, they are momentary and lack the repetition or height commonly seen in other regional dances. For example, in contrast to the forceful foot movements of *sabetan* in Javanese dance or *jangkung ilo* in Sundanese dance, *Silek Rantak Kudo* maintains a consistent emphasis on returning the foot swiftly to the ground. The foot stance—referred to variably as *pitunggue*, *adeg-adeg*, or simply "stance"—serves a fundamental role in supporting the dance's grounded movements and philosophical orientation.

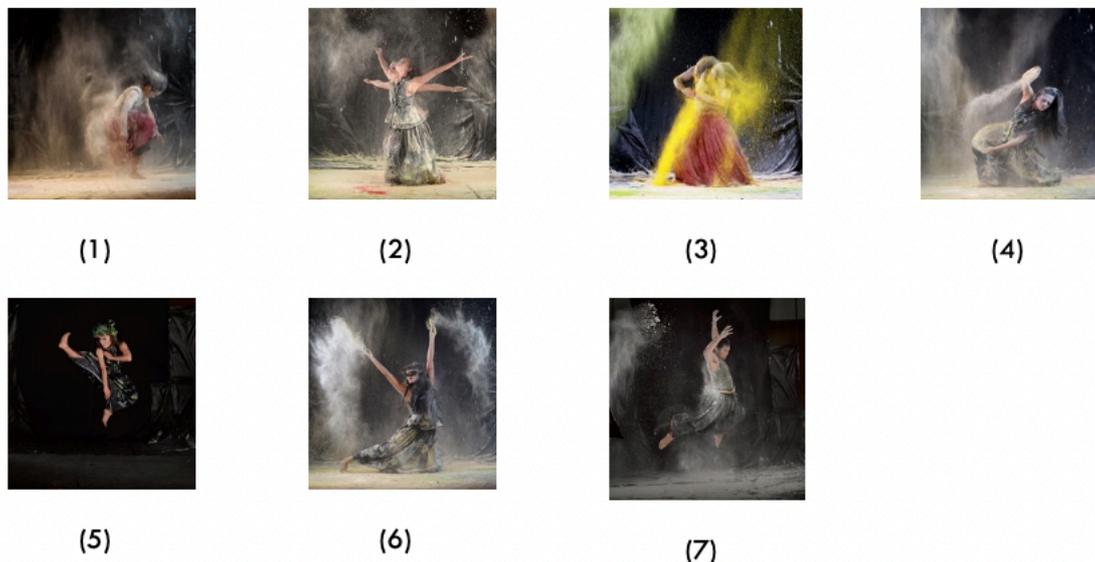
The dance movements of *Silek Rantak Kudo* were meticulously documented through a range of photographic perspectives, including close-ups, high angles, eye-level shots, and low angles. This comprehensive approach allows for the detailed and fluid capture of dancers' gestures and facial expressions. The photographic documentation features five dancers—Alfyanto, Dadan, Oneng, Komalasari, and Yeni Yunita—who are students from the Dance Arts Study Program at the Faculty of Performing Arts, Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia Bandung. The photographs were taken by Andang Iskandar, who served as the project photographer.

A total of 66 photographic works were produced, each capturing a distinct dance movement. These images include both static poses and dynamic actions, providing a comprehensive visual record of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance. The objective of this photographic documentation is to support the dissemination of information about this traditional West Sumatran folklore dance, particularly through social media platforms. The photography experiment serves as a prerequisite step before the public sharing of these materials.

Out of the 66 photographs capturing the movements of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance, a curated selection of 7 images was chosen for inclusion in a questionnaire designed as part of an experimental study involving respondents. Each selected image aimed to elicit specific insights related to visual perception and cultural recognition. The questionnaire was structured to determine whether respondents could (1) interpret the depicted dance movement, (2) identify the expression and emotional content conveyed, (3) recognize *Silek Rantak Kudo* as a traditional Indonesian dance, and (4) detect traditional elements in the movements and costumes. This survey was distributed to a total of 394 respondents, comprising 27.4% male and 72.6% female participants, with ages ranging approximately from

18 to 50 years. The participants represented diverse regions across Indonesia, providing a broad cultural and demographic context for the responses.

Figure 3. Photography of Rantak Kudo Dance Experiment
[Source: Research Results, 2023-2025]



The results of the experiment, which involved photographic representations of movements from the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance and were assessed through respondent questionnaires, are presented as follows. The evaluation focused on seven selected images, each depicting a specific dance movement. Regarding the first question—whether respondents were able to perceive and interpret the dance movements depicted in the images (1-7)—a significant majority, 80.3%, affirmed their ability to recognize the movements. In contrast, 19.7% of respondents reported difficulty or an inability to discern the dance movements presented.

Second, in response to question 2, which addressed the respondents' ability to perceive the expression and emotional representation conveyed in the dance (as depicted in images 1-7), 84% affirmed their capability to interpret the expressions, whereas 16% reported an inability to do so. Third, question 3 pertained to the recognition of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance as one of Indonesia's traditional dances. Based on the same set of images (1-7), only 23% of respondents recognized it as a traditional Indonesian dance, while the remaining 77% did not identify it as such.

Fourth, question 4 addressed the recognition of traditional Indonesian elements in the dance movements and costumes presented in images 1-7. A majority of respondents (73%) reported an inability to identify these elements as traditional. In contrast, 19% recognized the movements and costumes as representative of traditional Indonesian culture, while the remaining 8% interpreted them as characteristic of contemporary dance styles.

The research findings indicate that the movement vocabulary of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance, as captured through photographic documentation, exhibits a distinctive unity and complexity. This visual approach enables segmented analysis, thereby facilitating both scholarly research and the transmission of specific movement idioms inherent in the dance.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the responses from 394 participants, it can be concluded that images 1-7 effectively convey both the movement and expressive aspects of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance, as evidenced by positive feedback on questions 1 and 2. However, in response to question 3, the images did not achieve broad recognition as representative of a traditional Indonesian dance. Similarly, for question 4, the conventional elements embedded in the movements and costumes remained largely unrecognized. Notably, respondents demonstrated a relatively higher ability to identify traditional characteristics in images 5, 1, and 7. These three images, therefore, may serve as effective visual exemplars for representing Indonesian folklore within traditional dance, particularly *Silek Rantak Kudo*. The results underscore the necessity of reinforcing traditional visual markers—both in choreography and costume design—to enhance public recognition of *Silek Rantak Kudo* as a conventional dance form originating from West Sumatra. This is particularly vital for promoting and preserving the dance through social media platforms, supporting broader efforts to safeguard and disseminate Indonesia's cultural heritage.

This study is limited to the analysis of high-level movements in the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance tradition, including *pancuang*, *suduang*, and *gelek*. Consequently, future research is recommended to explore low-level movements such as *sambah*, *pitunggue randah*, *jongkok*, and other grounded forms. Such inquiry would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the full range of motion within the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance vocabulary. As a traditional dance form, *Silek Rantak Kudo* holds a prominent place within Indonesia's rich tapestry of folklore and constitutes a vital expression of cultural identity for the people of West Sumatra. Preserving this tradition is of critical importance, particularly in light of shifting social dynamics that have transformed the dance's function—from a ritualistic and ceremonial practice to one of entertainment. This functional shift raises concerns about the sustainability and intergenerational transmission of *Silek Rantak Kudo*, underscoring the urgency of targeted efforts in documentation, education, and cultural revitalization.

In collaboration with the government and the local communities of West Sumatra, a photographic experiment was undertaken to document the movements of the *Silek Rantak Kudo* Dance. This initiative aims to produce visually compelling and compositionally appropriate images that effectively disseminate information about the dance across social media platforms throughout Indonesia. Significantly, there remains a notable gap in the scientific literature in Indonesia, specifically addressing dance photography. As such, this photographic experiment represents a pioneering effort in initiating academic discourse and scientific publication in the field of dance photography, particularly as it relates to the documentation and preservation of Indonesia's folkloric and cultural heritage.

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