

Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony as a Local Wisdom to Maintain Community Social Interaction

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Abstract

The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is a legacy of the Rancakalong people's ancestors through their traditional arts. It is carried out as a form of gratitude for the harvest. This cultural activity can positively impact the community and the local government. It can be an event that can foster noble values in society, such as strengthening family relationships between communities. However, the potential of Ngalaksa traditional ceremony has not been exploited optimally. If managed well it can become a cultural tourist attraction with the concept of cultural advancement. This research aims to reveal the values of local wisdom in the community through the traditional Ngalaksa ceremony. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a case study, this research was conducted in Nagarawangi Village, Rancakalong District, Sumedang Regency. The data were collected using in-depth interviews and observations to explain the research object factually. In addition, literature studies, document searches and field notes were also carried out. The data were validated using triangulation techniques. This research reveals the values of the Ngalaksa tradition, which presents the concept of interaction between humans, nature, and God, wrapped in a traditional ceremony. Hopefully, this research will be a conservation effort through community cultural customs activities to become a tourism potential and improve community welfare.

Keywords: ngalaksa traditional ceremony, local wisdom, community social interaction

1. Introduction

Traditional ceremonies in many cultures of a group of people are a series of rituals to commemorate and celebrate certain events in their lives. Often, these rituals are sacred or religious in nature, such as in respect to ancestors or gods or as a celebration of the community's social activities. It is said to be a traditional ceremony because this ritual activity has been going on from generation to generation and as a tribute to the ancestors. Generally, a traditional ceremony has special provisions or certain rules that respect the ritual event, especially traditional ceremonies that contain sharia religious elements or special respect (Husin, Ab Rahman and Azahari, 2024). Traditional ceremonies or activities are often carried out at specific times and places according to their ancestors' rules, calculations or provisions (Tuan, 2001).

Contemporary science and technology largely widen the gap between the spiritual and ritual of society. With the rapid emergence of increasingly diverse forms of cultural tourism, the sacred practices of indigenous peoples worldwide are increasingly becoming part of the range of experiences available on the global travel market (Ovies and Bautista, 2021). Industrial and technological breakthroughs might radically affect most societal processes, thus losing the cultural heritage (Khazbulatov and Nurpeiis, 2012). Indonesia's abundant cultural heritage must be preserved so that it does not erode. This can be achieved through various means such as promoting cultural education and awareness among the younger generation. Additionally, efforts should be made to safeguard historical sites, artifacts, and traditional practices. Collaboration between the government, communities, and cultural organizations is crucial in ensuring the long-term preservation of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage.

Rural tourism is linked to sustainable development strategies in many developing countries. Due to its unique nature, rural tourism is included in the category or type of small business. Tourism must also respect local customs, preserve the environment, and provide real positive impacts that residents can enjoy at tourist attractions (Adawiah, Praptana and Mafudi, 2017). One area of West Java that is rich in culture is Sumedang. Every village in Sumedang has various kinds of rituals that are always held.

The cultural diversity in Nagarawangi Village is a village asset. This cultural potential can be used as a regional icon and as evidence of the history of the nation's struggle to build unity and solidarity based on the sacrifices of the freedom fighters. Various traditional rituals, especially ceremonies in Nagarawangi Village, are carried out routinely. Thus, cooperation, collaboration and awareness from various parties are needed.

Cross-sectoral participation is very necessary so that the management of historical heritage can be preserved. Tourism development requires various efforts, both through increasing awareness of all parties involved and working together to complement each other's shortcomings in managing cultural tourism attractions. All these efforts are expected to increase the number of tourist visits (Koentjaraningrat, 2000). The objects of Cultural Advancement owned by Nagarawangi Village include the Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony, which is not merely a series of rituals that are a routine for a community in the Rancakalong traditional community, but can also be seen as a form of historical narrative about an event related to that community (Mail, 2020).

The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony includes all aspects of the performance, from dressing, singing, dancing, and involving the audience. The development of this traditional culture provides a point of view for assessing two broader currents in traditional and modern Sundanese culture: customs, rituals, and social structures that have been passed down from generation to generation and coexist and interact with contemporary influences. This creativity not only makes a significant contribution to the continuity and preservation of the Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony but also preserves the lives of rural communities, which are full of gratitude, togetherness and harmony between society and nature (Juwariyah, Trisakti and Abida, 2023). Full support from sectors outside the Nagarawangi community in making the village a tourist village has actually impacted changing customs. The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is no longer a sacred event for the people as a form of gratitude for the harvest, but the performance is more specifically aimed at tourists and is no longer carried out at a certain time, namely based on the calculation of the harvest. This traditional ceremony has become an entertainment show, at any time according to requests or special visits.

Previous articles, especially the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony, have been widely discussed. One of them studied Ngalaksa cultural activities with folklore, and found that the ceremony was a tribute to 'ancestors' (Nyai Pohaci) and proof of rice field culture as authentically Sundanese (Isnendes, 2019). Several other discussions focus on the values of character education as the identity of the nation's personality which is realized from the Ngalaksa ceremony (C.K., 2016; Sari, Hanifah and Kurnia, 2020). Another similar discussion sees this traditional ceremony as a combination of religious values with local cultural values, and is considered as a *da'wah* that makes the community safe, peaceful and respectful of each other (Aliyudin, 2016). Efforts to preserve this culture are also carried out through learning media in the form of animated videos for elementary school students, emphasising Islamic insights presented from these traditional ceremonies (Maulid et al., 2022; Patriamurti et al., 2022). The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is an expression of community ritual, an ancestral tradition as a form of gratitude, and a medium of communication between humans and their gods and fellow community members (Yulaeliah, 2006). Apart from that, this ritual ceremony is an expression of gratitude and a medium for maintaining balance and preserving nature (Aliyudin, 2018). As a form of local wisdom, it also plays a role in maintaining good social interaction between communities and functions as a hermeneutic site to illuminate Sundanese culture (Ozah, 2015). All existing research reveals the values contained in the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony, but in this research, it will be discussed further by focusing on the potential of traditional ceremonies as local wisdom and its preservation through its role in maintaining community social interaction in advancing culture. The lack of regeneration or minimal involvement of youth in implementing this traditional ceremony illustrates the shift in awareness of the cultural values that exist in the Nagarawangi community.

Like local wisdom, tourist attractions can also be described through cultural values in society, both seen from tangible and intangible aspects. The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is a legacy of our ancestors and a potential tourist attraction. This research aims to reveal the values of Ngalaksa traditional ceremonies, especially from the perspective of the community's social interaction, which has a major role in advancing culture, including maintaining, protecting, utilizing and developing this art as a tourist attraction. This conservation measure is also expected to have a welfare impact on the community.

2. Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach. Bogita & Tailor in Moleong (2018) define qualitative research as procedures carried out in research to produce data and facts in the field which are described in the form of sentences or writing about

society and behavior that occurs in the field. The research sources were local traditional elders or *rurukan*, village stakeholders such as the village head (*kuwu*), and the local community.

This research case study was in Nagarawangi Village, Rancakalong District, Sumedang Regency. The objectives of this research are (1) to describe the situation and conditions of village cultural advancement objects and (2) to develop a strategy for empowering village institutions in utilizing cultural advancement objects, in this case the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony as a tourist attraction. The data collection process for this research used in-depth interviews, observations, literature studies, document searches and field notes. Data were validated using triangulation techniques, or checking other sources to ensure data alignment. Then, the data is processed using thematic processing techniques in the form of labeling and coding the data, describing and organizing the data based on logical relationships, and exploring the data based on research concepts as part of the analysis process (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

This was done by observing the factual conditions and rituals of the Ngalaksa arts ceremony in Nagarawangi Village. Observing community events and activities at the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony. The field data is recorded and documented so that it can then be harmonized and explored at the analysis stage based on the concept of this research objective. The results of the observations also saw the potential for tourist attractions in Nagarawangi Village, especially from the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony rituals and saw strategic opportunities that could be implemented by the community in preserving customs.

Library research and field research are carried out in the heuristic stage to achieve optimal results. Literature research was carried out to obtain maximum understanding about Cultural Advancement Villages and Cultural Tourism Destinations. Meanwhile, field research was carried out to trace cultural advancement villages that had succeeded in establishing themselves as Cultural Tourism Destinations, both in West Java Province and outside West Java Province. Thus, through this field research, best practices will be obtained regarding Cultural Advancement Villages which have succeeded in establishing themselves as Cultural Tourism Destinations. Through these efforts, it is hoped that the results of this research can truly become a reflection for culturally advanced villages that will develop into Cultural Tourism Destinations.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on data released by the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration, in 2021, of the 5312 villages in West Java Province, no Very Disadvantaged Villages were recorded. However, there are still 18 Disadvantaged Villages or 0.34%. Of the remainder, there are 2606 Developing Villages or 49.06%, 2102 Advanced Villages or 39.57%, and 586 Independent Villages or 11.03% (The Directorate General of Village and Rural Development, 2021). The reality of the village profile in West Java Province which is not very encouraging gives a signal that village development still requires the attention of all elements of the nation, including the university academic community. The key word for village development today is to make villages in West Java independent villages. Many approaches can be taken to make villages in West Java independent villages. One of them is carried out through a cultural approach by developing a Cultural Advancement Village. The village development approach through the development of Cultural Advancement Villages is carried out by promoting Cultural Advancement Objects, as stated in Law no. 5 of 2017 concerning Cultural Advancement.

There are special regulations regarding culture, namely Law no. 5 of 2017 concerning Cultural Advancement. The existence of this law means that cultural development in Indonesia has a clear direction. Substantially, Law no. 5 of 2017 pays attention to ten Objects for the Advancement of Culture: oral traditions, manuscripts, customs, rites, traditional knowledge, traditional technology, art, language, folk games and traditional sports. Apart from that, there is one other which is also the focus of advancement, namely cultural heritage. Culture-based village development prioritizes cultural heritage with practices carried out from generation to generation, traditions, values, and artistic expressions which are the characteristics and distinctive elements of the development of a community (Vidaurre-Rojas et al., 2024).

A new approach to village development, the Cultural Advancement Village, not only enriches various previous approaches in village development but also provides a new space for village development, namely cultural space. The novelty of this approach will not only make the village more concerned about its culture but also make it a center for cultural advancement. In many places, these business concepts have become steps in rural tourism development, which have an important impact on optimizing the structure of rural industry and stimulating local economic growth (Kou and Xue, 2024). The village's existence as a cultural advancement centre is expected to facilitate efforts to promote culture at the regional level above it, from sub-district, district, provincial, to national levels. Several community groups that can be involved are the Tourism Awareness Community Group and Village-Owned Enterprises. This group can collaborate with the Cultural Sector of the Education and Culture Service, Tourism Service, related ministries, and Non-Governmental Organizations, both national and international (Beni et al., 2021).

In relation to efforts to develop a village into a culture-based independent village, efforts need to be carefully studied so that the Cultural Advancement Village is not only able to play a role as a center for cultural advancement but can also

provide benefits for improving the welfare of the people in the village. Cultural development through promotion and enrichment of village potential can strengthen tourism dynamics and provide added value to the community, which can also be done by highlighting their unique aspects and attractions (Leung, 2022). However, if the focus is only on tourism purposes, this can have an impact on weakening the social order by creating conflict and increasing tensions such as between local communities and political stakeholders (Ovies and Bautista, 2021). In many ways, village tourism development has had a more positive impact, such as improving the image of the village and the living standards of indigenous communities, but some things also have negative impacts, such as environmental problems, shifting values, etc. (Wani et al., 2023). Efforts that can be made so that the Culture Advancement Village is able to provide beneficial value for improving community welfare include making the Culture Advancement Village a culture-based village and involving community participation in the development and development of the village.

According to previous ancestors / as well as trusted community figures, Nagarawangi Village is an expansion village. Previously, Nagarawangi Village was part of the Cibunar Village area. Regarding this expansion, the expansion area of Cibunar Village must be assigned a village name. After going through village deliberations, finally, the name of the expansion village, namely Nagarawangi Village, was agreed upon. Nagarawangi Village means a fragrant place (*Nagara* = Place, *Wangi* = Fragrant). After regional expansion, Nagarawangi Village has an area in the eastern part of the former main village area.

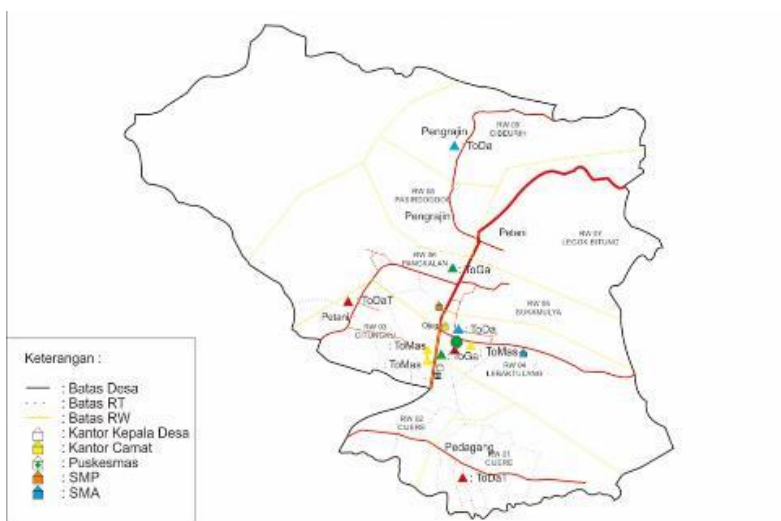


Figure 1. Map of Nagarawangi Village, Rancakalong District, Sumedang Regency

Source: Desa Nagarawangi (2022)

3.1 History of the Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony

In general, the livelihood of Rancakalong residents is farming. The people there not only farm in rice fields, but also in moorlands, plantations and forests. Planting rice is a tradition passed down from generation to generation in Rancakalong. Even though the area of rice fields is not that large, they believe that they can achieve food self-sufficiency. Strong social and organizational ties can be seen in 47 farmer groups that organise farming activities and market agricultural products. Apart from that, there is an important part of farming procedures and is part of the cultural identity of the Rancakalong people, namely the Ngalaksa custom. Because the majority are farmers for their livelihood, this is related to the history of the Ngalaksa custom, where initially, Rancakalong did not have rice seeds and the situation at that time was still lacking. According to the oral tradition that has developed in the community, it is said that the Kasepuhan Rancakalong figures, including three male Kasepuhan and a female Nyai Kasumedangan, went to Mataram and traveled for 3 months to look for rice seeds. In order not to be known by the rulers of Mataram at that time, rice seeds were put into a harp instrument. However, in the middle of the journey, there were many disturbances from criminals, which resulted in Nyai Kasumedangan being unable to continue her journey home. Nyai Kasumedangan then died in Solo, and the journey continued until the rice seeds were successfully brought to Rancakalong. From there, Rancakalong became prosperous, had lots of rice seeds, and the traditional ngalaksa ceremony was held as a form of gratitude. This is done to appreciate the services of the ancestors. Apart from expressing gratitude, the Ngalaksa custom also aims to strengthen ties between one another. Understanding society without based on understanding of local culture or not will work. Hence, dig in cultural values like this need to be implemented so that society does not just become like development (conservation) objects, but become the subject of environmental maintenance nature (Sobarna et al., 2017). The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is

carried out once a year by five *rurukan* (customary areas which later become village areas), namely Rancakalong Village, Nagarawangi Village, Pasirbiru Village, Cibunar Village, and Pamekaran Village, taking turns every year. In 2023, Ngalaksa will be led by Legok Picung Hamlet in Pamekaran Village.

3.2 Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony

The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony procession includes, first, the preparation stage. In 2023, the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony will be led by Legok Picung Hamlet from Pamekaran Village. All the needs are prepared at this stage, such as a place, committee, tools and materials for Ngalaksa. Community members started collecting food ingredients for *laksa*, such as rice, ready-to-eat food, agricultural products, and others. The foods are such as *opak*, *rangginang*, *wajit*, seeds, and hanging fruit. in ancient times this was meant if you wanted to eat, it was readily available and could be enjoyed immediately.

Second, is the implementation stage, the event will begin on Tuesday, August 8 2023. Before the event begins, a procession is held to welcome the guests, accompanied by music and dancing, there are also *rengkong* and *renggong* horses. This was followed by remarks from the deputy regent and the hitting of a gong indicating that the series of Ngalaksa traditional ceremonies were officially opened.

This stage is called *bewara*, namely notification to the community that the time for the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony has arrived. Apart from finally making *laksa* on the 6th day, food is also made for the committee and guests who come every day. On the first day, the rice is stored first in the rice barn, then 2 days later the *meuseul* process begins, namely pounding the rice using a *pestle* and *lisung* or mortar by the women. After the rice is pounded, the rice is stored in the *goah* (a special room for storing rice). Next is the *ngawasuhan* process, namely the process of washing the rice, this is intended to facilitate the process of pounding the rice into flour more easily. Then the *ngineb* process, which is the process of storing rice for three days and three nights, after that it goes into the process of *nipung* or making flour, the rice is removed from the *ngineb* place and then taken into a mortar to be pounded until it becomes flour, then the flour is taken to the place provided. Next, the main event is *ngalaksa* or making *laksa*, starting with preparing the tools and ingredients for making laksa cake, after the dough is made it is wrapped in *congkok* leaves and then boiled. During the series the process takes place accompanied by Tarawangsa music and dance which never stops until the closing ceremony.

Third, the closing stage, the closing ceremony is carried out by distributing laksa to the committee and community members who participated in the Ngalaksa event.



Figure 1. A group of government officials visiting the location of the Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony



Figure 2. Tarawangsa artists preparing for the stage



Figure 3. People or men start to dance in Tarawangsa art



Figure 4. People or women start to dance in Tarawangsa art



Figure 5. Public kitchen that provides food during the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony



Figure 6. Community elders giving information to researchers



Figure 7. KKN researchers and students taking a photo with the Vice Regent of Sumedang

Source: Researcher documentation, August 2023

3.3 Local Wisdom in Maintaining Community Social Interaction

The local wisdom contained in several groups/minorities or indigenous communities in Indonesia contains many of the nation's cultural values which still form the identity of the nation's character. Local wisdom plays an important role in maintaining ecosystem balance, promoting sustainability, and preserving cultural identity amidst the currents of modernization and globalization. Understanding and appreciating local wisdom can help create more appropriate solutions to the local context and contribute to sustainable development. Local wisdom can prioritize and be able to build noble values such as nationalism, harmony and morals to build an identity that can be used as an example in developing Indonesian culture (Meliono, 2011).

The activity, namely the Ngabubur Suro Tradition, is local wisdom as a form of community gratitude to the Creator and serves to preserve and maintain nature's sustainability. Local wisdom values in the Ngabubur Suro tradition are related to community efforts to maintain the continuity of the relationship between humans and humans, humans and nature, and humans and the creator. Efforts to maintain sustainability (*babasan saréréaeun*), frugal and simple living (*patih goah* concept), orderly and regular living (*tataliparanti, dawegan diparés*), mutual cooperation and a symbol of hard work as a form of protection for local plants (Julaeha et al., 2019).

As is the case in Vietnam, although changes in trends are inevitable, we need solutions to continue promoting the values of Khmer folk music in the South in new conditions and contexts without losing its identity, including training core human resources for this purpose. Understand the Vietnamese government's policies and the results of practical training of human resources to preserve and promote the cultural values of Khmer folk music heritage in South Vietnam and the second is to understand to propose solutions in the development and training of human resources to preserve and promote musical values and Khmer folk culture in South Vietnam (Khanh, 2022). This also happens in other communities, as the traditional songs of the Nara people are an important part of their folklore and culture. These songs reflect the people's customs, traditions, and events that shape their daily lives. *Wonaan ndilee* is one of the most famous wedding ceremony songs of all time which is sung at the wedding venue in the bride's family's house, upon the arrival of the groom and his entourage (Issa, 2020).

Another example related to cultural preservation which is currently being promoted is also the Historical Karacabey Bath, which has been a witness to the tradition for many years in Ankara, is one of the Turkish baths that has tried to revive this tradition under the name of bachelorette parties or girlfriend nights in recent years final. The importance of historical baths in relation to concrete cultural heritage and the cultural traditions of bathing and bridal bathing is lost as intangible

cultural heritage. It can be seen that these baths are trying to be protected with their historical and architectural features, and on the other hand, trying to revive the old practice of bridal baths with their new functions to revive and preserve them. the cultural tradition of bathing is still alive (Kasapoglu, 2020).

Reflecting on several cases in other countries, government efforts are needed to also promote the values of people's music so that it remains sustainable. Due to the unique cultural identity of the area, such as traditional ceremonies, food, crafts, and equipment related to production, a real cultural aspect that is unique to the area is formed. Historical, aesthetic, scientific, economic and social values are important for society at large. In this way, preserving traditional knowledge, awareness of cultural values, strengthening environmental conservation, and fostering collaboration between cultural actors, government agencies, and the private sector are interconnected (Plaiphum and Tansuchat, 2023). Character education values taken at a ngalaksa ceremony, Tarawangsa in the Rancakalong community, are tolerance, democracy, courage, discipline, hard work, creativity, responsibility, religiosity, environmental care, social care, national spirit and patriotism.

In the context of efforts to accelerate and equalize development in rural areas, community empowerment can be achieved by optimizing local and human potential development in Sumedang. Promotion is an activity that provides information to the general public about something that is not yet known. Through promotions, it is hoped that people will know and intend to own the goods or visit the place being promoted. Promotions can be carried out directly or indirectly using conventional or digital methods.

Research findings show that in the implementation of the Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony there are differences in aspirations between traditional residents and the local government regarding the implementation time which is not in accordance with traditional calculations, but is adjusted to the annual agenda of Sumedang Regency. This needs to be discussed or discussed so that the authenticity of the object of cultural advancement is maintained. The lack of trusting relationships among local stakeholders reduces the collective capacity to implement community-based initiatives in cultural heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development, which indicates fractured social capital. The commodification of intangible cultural heritage tourism affects the structural relationships of social capital in destination communities.

4. Conclusion

In accordance with the mandate of Law No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture, that to advance Indonesian national culture, strategic steps are needed in the form of efforts to advance culture through protection, development, utilization and guidance to create an Indonesian society that is politically sovereign, economically independent and has a cultural personality—expressing the values of local wisdom of the community through the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony. Nagarawangi Village is a rural tourist destination with the concept of a traditional cultural center. The Ngalaksa tradition represents the interaction between humans, nature, and God, wrapped in a traditional ceremony. This cultural activity can positively impact both the community and the local government. It can be an event that can foster noble values in society, such as strengthening family relationships between communities.

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