



The Role of Traditional Elders in the Rancakalong Tourism Village in Preserving the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony

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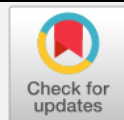
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ABSTRACT

The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is a significant cultural practice in Rancakalong, Sumedang, West Java, serving as a vital medium for preserving intangible cultural heritage. While prior studies have explored the broader significance of such ceremonies, limited research has examined the specific roles and challenges faced by traditional elders in safeguarding these traditions amid modernization and globalization. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the multifaceted roles of traditional elders in the Rancakalong Tourism Village in preserving the intangible cultural heritage embodied within the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study method, data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings highlight the critical roles of traditional elders as ceremonial leaders, guardians of cultural values, and, most importantly, key knowledge transmitters who bridge the past and present, ensuring the authentic transmission of traditions to younger generations. This study reveals that the elders' efforts extend beyond ceremonial continuity; they also serve as a form of resistance against the homogenizing forces of modernization, playing a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity and local wisdom. The study concludes that supporting and empowering traditional elders is essential not only for preserving the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony but also for ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage amid evolving socio-cultural landscapes. These findings have implications for policy development aimed at strengthening community-based cultural preservation initiatives and promoting sustainable tourism practices that respect and value indigenous knowledge systems.

Keywords: Cultural Preservation; Indigenous Knowledge; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony; Traditional Elders

1. Introduction

The people of Rancakalong Village, Sumedang Regency, practice the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony, which is closely linked to the fertility of agricultural land. This ceremony involves various processions, culminating in the making of laksa, a food similar to rice cake wrapped in “*congkok*” leaves.

The activities of the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony are also interpreted as a form of respect for the rice goddess, often referred to as Dewi Sri. In Sundanese tradition, she is also known as Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Sri (Isnendes, 2013). The community’s expression of gratitude for their harvest is a form of respect that has been routinely practiced since ancestral times (Raining, 2021). Preserving the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is crucial because it embodies the culture and identity of the region, particularly in Rancakalong District, Sumedang Regency.

However, despite its enduring significance, the Ngalaksa ceremony, like many intangible cultural heritages globally, faces contemporary challenges that threaten its continuity. The forces of globalization, modernization, and social change are increasingly impacting traditional practices, particularly in rural communities. The transmission of knowledge, traditionally reliant on the authority and active involvement of elders, is facing disruption as younger generations engage with new forms of cultural expression and lifestyles. This raises a crucial question: What is the role of traditional elders in preserving intangible cultural heritage amidst these contemporary challenges, and how can their efforts be supported to ensure the survival of traditions like the Ngalaksa ceremony?

The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is observed annually after the harvest season (Sahroni et al., 2023). The Rancakalong community comprises 47 farmer groups (known as *rurukan* in Sundanese) that organize their needs and market their agricultural products. However, in 2024, only five *rurukan* actively participated in the Ngalaksa ceremony: Rancakalong, Cibunar, Pasir Biru, Pemekaran, and Nagarawangi.

In mid-2024, the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony was officially recognized as part of Indonesia’s intangible cultural heritage (ICH). This designation is supported by the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 2017 concerning Cultural Advancement (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). As of 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology had identified 1,728 intangible cultural heritage elements across the provinces. On July 2, 2024, the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony was symbolically recognized as an ICH during the opening of the Ngalaksa event in July 2024. This recognition was marked by the presentation of a certificate by the Head of Sumedang Regency, Yudia Ramli, to the Head of Rancakalong Sub-district, Cecep Supriatna, and the Tarawangsa art performers during the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony in Rancakalong tourism village (Wijaya, 2024).

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) encompasses a wide range of practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills, as well as the associated tools, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces that communities, groups, and individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. Fan et al. state that ICH embodies diverse immaterial manifestations that reflect human creativity and wisdom throughout history (Fan et al., 2023). ICH includes various aspects of human life, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, celebratory events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craft skills (Nebot-

Gomez de Salazar et al., 2023). The importance of ICH lies in its role in preserving the cultural diversity and social identity of communities worldwide (Aikawa-Faure, 2022).

Previous studies have examined the role of traditional elders in preserving intangible cultural heritage. For example, Iskandar et al. found that customary institutions play a significant role in preserving ICH (Iskandar et al., 2023). These institutions serve as centers of cultural information and leaders in maintaining cultural values within the community. Their research concludes that customary institutions and indigenous peoples collaborate to preserve ICH, which represents the self-identity of the Cireundeu traditional village. Similar results are described by Asy'ari et al., who emphasize that community involvement, stakeholder roles, and poverty reduction are key considerations in developing community-based tourism in West Java Province (Asy'ari et al., 2021).

Other research has explored the dominant role of culture in supporting a region's cultural sector. For instance, Banjarnegara Regency has sought to realize its cultural vision through the Dieng Culture Festival, which has become one of Indonesia's three most popular cultural festivals. Kusumastuti & Priliantini, using qualitative research methods with a constructivist paradigm, provide an insightful overview of the cultural meanings embedded in the series of events within the festival (Kusumastuti & Priliantini, 2017). Their findings reveal that the festival communicates Javanese culture while incorporating elements of local wisdom specific to the Dieng community, influenced by regional beliefs. The Dieng Culture Festival successfully highlights the cultural significance of these traditions, boosting tourism in Banjarnegara Regency, as evidenced by the increase in visitors, economic activity during the festival, and the growth of local industries such as home-based businesses, souvenir shops, inns, and restaurants.

While these studies focus on the role of cultural festivals in promoting regional heritage and tourism, this research distinguishes itself by explicitly examining the role of traditional elders in preserving intangible cultural heritage within the context of the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony in Rancakalong Tourism Village, Sumedang Regency. Unlike the focus on large-scale cultural festivals as seen in previous studies, this study aims to explore how local traditional figures, such as elders, actively contribute to the safeguarding and transmitting of cultural practices, particularly in rural and community-based settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Preserving intangible cultural heritage through event activities is a multifaceted process that integrates both traditional and modern approaches (Shandidy, 2023). Events serve as dynamic platforms for showcasing and sustaining cultural practices (Shandidy, 2023). Cultural events, such as arts festivals and local celebrations, provide opportunities to display traditional and contemporary cultural expressions. These events reflect local culture and heritage, offering unique experiences that reinforce cultural identity (du Cros & Jolliffe, 2014).

The preservation of the intangible cultural heritage associated with the Ngalaksa event in Rancakalong tourism village involves the participation of various stakeholders. Community participation is essential, encompassing financial support, skills demonstration, and active involvement in the ceremony's execution (Priyanto et al., 2024). Specifically, the *rurukan* leaders and residents of the tourism village are heavily involved in the Ngalaksa event. This aligns with research by Kim, who highlights that the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, such as the Andong Nottari Balbigi tradition, is facilitated through community participation in event activities (Kim, 2022). Local engagement in performances fosters self-esteem and

satisfaction, leading to personal fulfillment. This participatory process enhances understanding and engagement within the community, creating a shared appreciation for heritage. Furthermore, it addresses potential conflicts among practitioners, promoting sustainable community growth and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage through collaborative experiences.

2.2. The Role of Traditional Elders in Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation

Drawing upon theoretical frameworks in folklore studies and sociocultural sustainability, this research recognizes the crucial role of traditional elders as “living libraries” of intangible cultural heritage (Plockey & Asuro, 2018). Elders, as repositories of traditional knowledge, embody the values, beliefs, and practices that underpin cultural identity. Their role extends beyond ceremonial leadership to include mentorship, storytelling, and the transmission of indigenous knowledge systems (Yang & Warburton, 2018). This aligns with the concept of “cultural custodianship,” where communities actively engage in safeguarding their heritage through intergenerational transfer and community-based initiatives (Radzuan et al., 2024). The intergenerational dialogue facilitated by elders not only promotes cultural continuity but also enhances the resilience and mental health of younger generations, fostering a sense of belonging and identity (Ansie & Mbamba, 2024; Wexler, 2011). Thus, the engagement of elders is vital for the preservation of cultural heritage and the well-being of indigenous communities (Gonzalez et al., 2023; Huang & Braun, 2025).

Current research on intangible cultural heritage preservation is increasingly abundant. A bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer examined the conceptual network for intangible cultural heritage. Setting a minimum co-occurrence of 7, the analysis yielded a threshold of 46 from 1,962 keywords in publications on intangible cultural heritage, limited to the period of 2020-2024.

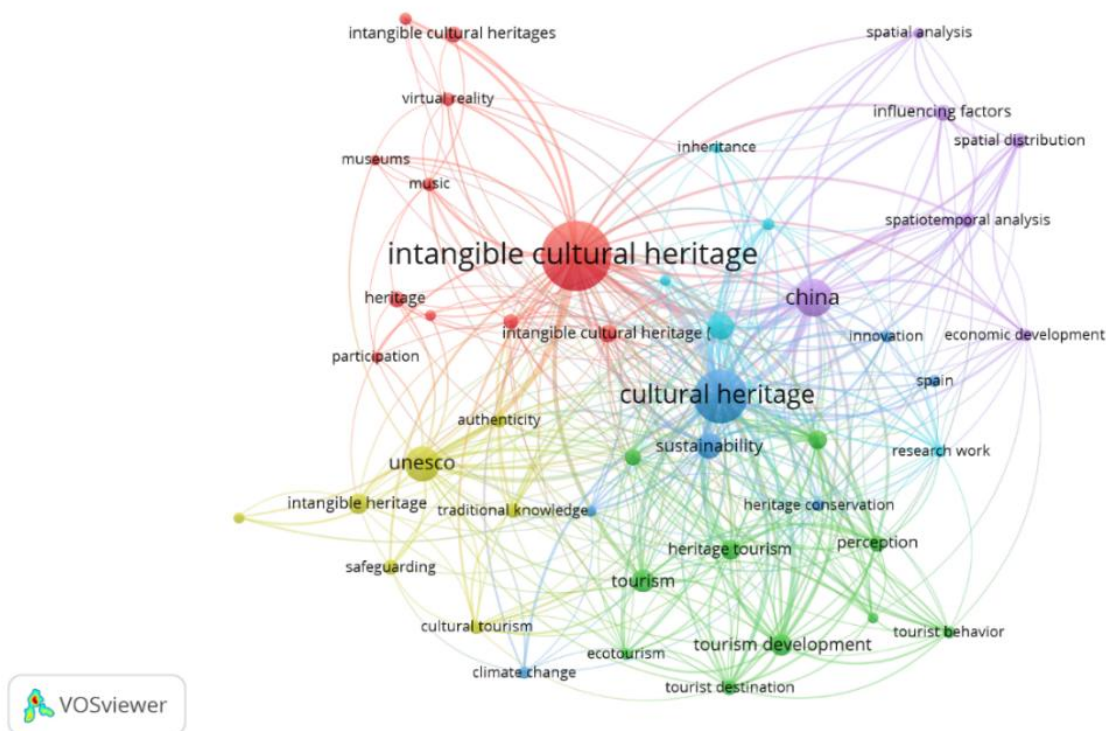


Figure 1. Bibliometric Analysis of Co-words in Intangible Cultural Heritage

Source: Processed by Researchers (2024)

The bibliometric map in **Figure 1** visualizes the co-occurrence of keywords in research related to intangible cultural heritage, revealing key thematic clusters within the field. The analysis identifies six distinct clusters, each represented by a different color, signifying specific research areas and their interconnections. The size of each node corresponds to the frequency with which a keyword appears in the literature, while the connecting lines indicate the strength of co-occurrence between keywords. A thicker line and larger font size denote a stronger relationship, suggesting that these terms frequently appear together in publications.

The bibliometric analysis reveals three key research clusters: the blue cluster, focused on cultural heritage's role in national development and modernization, particularly in China, highlighting its potential as a resource for sustainable development and innovation; the green cluster, emphasizing the increasing importance of tourism and heritage conservation, with a focus on sustainable tourism practices; and the yellow cluster, underscoring the significance of international organizations like UNESCO and global policies in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through established frameworks and initiatives.

The connections between these clusters demonstrate the interconnectedness of research areas within the field of intangible cultural heritage. For example, the link between the "intangible cultural heritage" cluster and the "tourism" cluster suggests research exploring the role of tourism in promoting and preserving intangible cultural heritage. These findings support the argument that the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, as embodied in the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony, is a multifaceted endeavor that requires a holistic approach, encompassing cultural, economic, social, and technological dimensions. Furthermore, the map reveals the importance of considering global trends and initiatives, such as cultural heritage digital storytelling programs, in understanding the evolving landscape of intangible cultural heritage research."

However, it is crucial to engage with global comparative studies to understand how traditional elders' roles in heritage preservation vary across cultural contexts. For instance, research on indigenous communities in the Amazon rainforest highlights the role of elders in transmitting ecological knowledge and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources (Alves et al., 2024). Similarly, studies on Aboriginal communities in Australia emphasize the importance of elders in maintaining cultural continuity through storytelling and the preservation of language (McCausland et al., 2025). These comparative perspectives provide valuable insights into the diverse ways in which traditional knowledge systems are maintained and transmitted, offering potential lessons for supporting the role of elders in the context of the Ngalaksa ceremony.

Furthermore, integrating sociological and economic perspectives on heritage sustainability is essential. The work of Bourdieu (1984) on cultural capital highlights how intangible heritage, embodied in the knowledge and practices of elders, can contribute to social and economic well-being. Similarly, studies on cultural economics emphasize the potential of intangible heritage to drive tourism, create livelihoods, and foster community development (Shoaib, 2024). By incorporating these perspectives, this research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted value of traditional elders' roles in preserving the Ngalaksa ceremony and its contribution to the broader socio-cultural fabric of Rancakalong Tourism Village.

3. Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. This approach was chosen to understand the phenomenon of traditional elders' participation in preserving the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony in Rancakalong tourism village. The qualitative approach allows

for an understanding of the social and cultural context from the participants' perspectives, including their experiences, meanings, and perceptions of the ceremony's implementation. This method is suitable for examining social, cultural, and traditional practices in their complexity and context (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

A descriptive research design is utilized. The primary focus of this design is to comprehensively capture the roles of traditional elders in preserving the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony and how these roles contribute to sustaining the intangible culture. The objective is to identify and understand the various roles traditional elders fulfill within the broader context and what factors contribute to their success in preserving the culture. The study was conducted from September to December, lasting approximately four months. The research site was Rancakalong Tourism Village, Rancakalong District, Sumedang Regency, West Java. This location was selected because it is the site of the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony, which is the central focus of this research. The village's unique character and local wisdom provide an ideal setting for studying how traditional ceremonies and tourism can be integrated sustainably.

This study involved participants consisting of community elders, Tarawangsa artists, and community leaders who provided detailed information about the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants had adequate and relevant knowledge to answer the research questions. Traditional elders were chosen based on specific criteria, such as age (over 60 years old and recognized by the community as cultural experts), their role in the community (e.g., ritual leaders, storytellers, or holders of specific knowledge about the Ngalaksa ceremony), and their length of residence in the village (at least 30 years to ensure a deep understanding of local traditions). This selection process aimed to capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives among the elders. Additionally, some community members who actively participated in the ceremony were also included to broaden the scope of the sample.

Data collection was conducted through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher attended the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony to observe the processes, stages, and interactions that took place. In-depth interviews were conducted with traditional elders, artists, and community members to understand their perspectives on the ceremony, the preservation process, and the challenges faced in maintaining the tradition. To reduce researcher bias in interpreting traditional narratives, all interviews were conducted in the local language (Sundanese) and recorded with the participants' consent. The interview results were then transcribed and translated into Indonesian. To ensure accuracy, a back-translation technique was used, where another translator independently translated the Indonesian transcripts back into Sundanese. These back-translated transcripts were then compared with the original Sundanese recordings to identify and correct any errors or misinterpretations.

Documentation included photos, videos, and reports that complemented the data from interviews and observations. After data collection, qualitative analysis was conducted to identify themes related to the role of traditional elders in preserving the Ngalaksa ceremony. Data analysis involved a systematic coding process. Initial codes were derived from the research questions and then refined through open coding of interview transcripts and field notes. Subsequently, axial coding was used to identify relationships between codes and develop broader themes. To ensure reliability and reduce researcher bias, an independent coder coded a portion of the data, and discrepancies in coding were resolved through consensus. The analysis was conducted iteratively, with continuous review and verification of the data to ensure a deep understanding. Triangulation was achieved by comparing data from various sources

(interviews, observations, and documentation) to validate findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. This study aims to highlight the importance of local knowledge in preserving culture and to provide insights that can support the formulation of cultural preservation policies in the region.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony Activities



Figure 2. Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony

Source: Processed by Researchers (2024)

The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is a significant cultural practice in Rancakalong, Sumedang, West Java, contributing to the maintenance of cultural heritage and social cohesion. Rooted in gratitude for the harvest, the ceremony embodies the interaction between humans, nature, and the divine and serves as an important expression of local wisdom. It plays a crucial role in fostering community relations and has the potential to be developed into a cultural tourism attraction, thereby enhancing community welfare (Kartika et al., 2024).

According to local customs, the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony originated during a prolonged famine in the 15th century AD. At that time, the majority of the population were farmers, and the famine resulted in severe food shortages for the Rancakalong community. Following the famine, the community performed a series of prayers and offerings to express their gratitude and seek future blessings from the Creator (Aliyudin, 2020). The Ngalaksa activity has been carried out annually since then, establishing it as a lasting tradition.

Etymologically, “*ngalaksa*” is derived from the combination of the prefix “*nga*” and the word “*laksa*.” *Laksa* is a food made from flour, similar in taste to lontong, and wrapped in congkok leaves (Aliyudin, 2020). In the context of the tradition, Ngalaksa is a customary practice routinely performed by the local community as a symbol of gratitude for a successful rice harvest. As stated by one of the traditional heirs of Ngalaksa in an interview:

“...ngalaksa is also what we call “ngalaksanakeun” like we carry out an activity in gratitude.” (Interview on November 07, 2024, Informant AO).

The word *laksa* signifies achieving a goal. In the context of the traditional ritual, *ngalaksa* has multiple meanings. First, it refers to a community activity that processes rice flour into various food ingredients, such as white, long, transparent, and rope-like noodles. Second, the word *ngalaksa* is a figure of speech formed by adding the prefix “nga” to the word “laksa” in Sundanese and then adding the suffixes “na” and “keun” to create a word that means “to carry out” in Indonesian. People prepare *laksa* by combining leaves in large quantities, based on the amount of flour prepared. Local people believe that the quantity of *laksa* produced influences the success of the next rice harvest. Furthermore, the community believes that producing more *laksa* than in the previous year will result in a larger harvest in the future. The culmination of the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony occurs during the *laksa*-making process, which is a critical stage in the tradition.

Participation in the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is open to both local community members and outsiders (Kartika et al., 2024). Additionally, individuals and communities can contribute by donating food or drinks to support the ritual. This tradition helps maintain the customs of the Rancakalong community as an expression of gratitude to the Almighty for the harvest. The implementation of this tradition also preserves the customs inherited from previous generations. Furthermore, the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony embodies noble values that are essential for strengthening a country’s identity and character. The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is often accompanied by *tarawangsa* and *jentreng* music (Yulaeliah, 2012).



Figure 3. Tarawangsa in Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony

Source: Processed by Researchers (2024)

The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is typically held for seven days and seven nights each year. In 2022, it took place from August 22-27 at a tourist center dedicated to traditional

events in Rancakalong Village. In 2023, the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony was held from August 08 to August 12. In 2024, the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony was implemented on July 02-07, 2024. The ceremony consists of several stages, as conveyed by an informant in an interview on November 07, 2024: *bewara* (deliberation), *mera* (land division), *meuseul* (pounding rice), *ngawasuhan* (washing rice), *ngineb* (rice storage), *nipung* (pounding rice), *ngalaksa* (the procession of making *laksa*), and making *orok-orokan* (the process of forming *laksa* to resemble a baby) (Sahroni et al., 2023).

4.2. The Role of Traditional Elders in the Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony

The Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is a collaborative effort by various stakeholders to maintain cultural practices. Preserving intangible cultural heritage through event activities involves the government, local communities, academics, and non-governmental organizations. As the primary actors, local communities are responsible for preserving and passing on cultural practices to future generations. Among these communities are the traditional elders, who serve as ceremonial leaders and cultural references for the local community. They connect the past and the present, keeping cultural values alive and relevant. Abah Oma, a traditional elder from Nagarawangi village with an important role in implementing Ngalaksa, explained:

“Traditional elders such as abah will usually sit and get various questions from the committee regarding the important elements needed for the implementation of the ngalaksa custom.” (Interview on November 07, 2024, Informant AO).

This statement highlights that traditional elders are crucial as an information center for verifying the elements needed to implement the custom. The communication of messages or information through productive resource persons is similar to the approach used by Iskandar et al., who identify traditional institutions as the focal point for preserving information in the Cirendeuh traditional village (Iskandar et al., 2023). Young people can learn about traditional ceremonies through traditional elders, including the symbolic meanings, rituals, and appropriate conduct during the events. Without the involvement of traditional elders, many elements of intangible cultural heritage are likely to be omitted or altered over time (Kesuma, 2017). In this context, traditional elders serve as bearers of these values and storytellers who connect older and younger members of society, fostering the traditions and firmly embedding them in the community's memory. However, the transmission of cultural knowledge is not without its challenges. Traditional elders in Rancakalong, like in many communities experiencing rapid social change, face difficulties arising from generational shifts, modernization, and declining participation in traditional practices. The allure of urban centers and modern lifestyles often leads younger generations away from their cultural roots, diminishing their interest in learning and inheriting traditional knowledge. This generational gap can create tensions and conflicts within the community, potentially undermining the authority of elders as cultural custodians.

Despite these challenges, the community recognizes the importance of preserving the Ngalaksa ceremony. Interviews with younger community members revealed a deep respect for their elders and a desire to continue the tradition. However, they also expressed concerns about their ability to fully grasp the complexities of the ceremony and the pressures of balancing traditional practices with modern life. This suggests that while the younger generation may not be passive recipients of cultural knowledge, their engagement is often limited by external factors and a lack of accessible avenues for learning.

To ensure the long-term survival of the Ngalaksa ceremony, several strategies could be implemented. First, creating more interactive and engaging platforms for cultural transmission, such as workshops, cultural camps, or digital documentation projects, could bridge the generational gap and make traditional knowledge more accessible to younger audiences. Second, integrating the Ngalaksa ceremony into local school curricula could foster a sense of cultural pride and ownership among younger generations. Third, collaborating with tourism boards to promote the Ngalaksa ceremony as a cultural tourism attraction could provide economic incentives for the community to preserve the tradition while offering opportunities for cultural exchange and revitalization.

Community elders also act as a bridge between the local community and external entities, such as the government. Similar to Ngalaksa, traditional elders in other events ensure effective communication between different stakeholders. Elders are often the first to discuss the event's approaches, assisting other stakeholders in appreciating the efforts made to preserve and celebrate different cultures. Elders can also link the community and the government in policy formulation, funding, and enhancing the public's well-being.

"This is great. I appreciate how you have provided me with the formatted text. It addresses all key areas of the original details. I am so much satisfied with the work you have put forth. Thank you for providing me accurate capture of the entire detail."
(Interview on November 07, 2024, Informant AP)

The involvement of traditional elders in events like Ngalaksa serves the important purpose of passing on cultural traditions to the younger generation. Young people tend to be more influenced by modern culture, which can overshadow traditional elements (Lyu, 2024). Much like *ngalaksa* customs, traditional elders bear the responsibility of preserving culture and mentoring the new generation by acting as role models in alignment with tribal values and traditions. Religious elders ensure that proper information concerning the preservation of different cultures is passed from one generation to the next. Many undocumented facets of culture would be lost without their presence. Therefore, it is imperative for indigenous communities to not only embrace but also include older people as part of the culture to ensure that intangible cultural aspects are preserved. These older adults are responsible for actively practicing the traditions, addressing contemporary challenges, and instilling a sense of cultural identity. With the aid of religious elders, the Ngalaksa and other traditional ceremonies strengthen local cultures, ensuring their continued flourishing in a changing world. However, the sustainability of relying solely on oral transmission as the primary method of cultural preservation is questionable in the face of shifting societal structures and increasing migration to urban centers. While oral traditions remain invaluable, documenting traditional knowledge through digital archives, written materials, or audiovisual recordings could provide a more permanent and accessible repository of cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the role of institutions, such as local governments, tourism boards, and educational institutions, cannot be overlooked. Government policies that support cultural preservation, funding for cultural initiatives, and the integration of traditional knowledge into school curricula can significantly impact the sustainability of cultural practices like the Ngalaksa ceremony. Additionally, collaborating with tourism boards to develop sustainable cultural tourism initiatives can generate economic benefits for the community while raising awareness and appreciation for local heritage.

However, it is crucial to critically assess how governmental or economic interests intersect with cultural preservation efforts. While external support can be beneficial, it is essential to ensure that it does not lead to the commodification or exploitation of cultural practices. Striking a balance between preserving the authenticity and sacredness of traditions while adapting to the changing social and economic landscape is crucial for ensuring the long-term survival of the Ngalaksa ceremony and other intangible cultural heritages.

Comparative analysis with other cultural preservation models or similar ceremonies in different regions could provide valuable insights into successful strategies for navigating these challenges. For instance, examining how other communities have integrated digital documentation, formal education, or tourism into their cultural preservation efforts could offer guidance for the Rancakalong community.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the role of traditional elders in preserving the intangible cultural heritage of the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony in Rancakalong Tourism Village, Sumedang Regency. The research found that the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony values intangible cultural heritage and enhances social solidarity. Initially conducted to give thanks for the harvest, this ceremony functions as a cultural ritual reflecting the interrelationship between human beings, nature, and God, and it is a significant showcase that can be developed into a cultural tourism asset for the benefit of local communities. The participation of traditional elders is crucial in performing the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony. As traditional leaders and culture bearers, elders emphasize the importance of passing down information about the rituals, meaning, and rationale behind the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony to younger generations. Without their active engagement, many components of this cultural heritage are threatened by erosion or displacement by modernity. Furthermore, traditional elderly members link the local community and external third parties, including the government. Their principal responsibilities include advocating for policy interventions, securing funding for cultural activities, planning ceremonies, and facilitating communication among the various groups involved.

Amidst the changes experienced during modernization, traditional elders ensure that the society does not lose or forget these practices. The core finding of this study centres on the invaluable role that traditional elders play in preserving ceremonies such as Ngalaksa and other cultural practices. As keepers of traditional values, repositories of knowledge, and supervisors of ceremonies, they hold significant importance within the community. This study contributes to the broader discourse on intangible cultural heritage preservation by highlighting the critical role of traditional elders and the potential of cultural tourism to sustain these practices. The cultivation and preservation of cultural identity should be prioritized in any society, especially in the era of globalization, to foster a sense of belonging and continuity. To ensure the continuity of the Ngalaksa tradition and other intangible cultural heritage practices in Rancakalong Village, policymakers and community leaders could consider the following recommendations: prioritize establishing cultural centers and educational programs for youth, integrating the Ngalaksa ceremony into school curricula, supporting traditional elders as cultural custodians through funding and training, collaborating with tourism agencies for sustainable initiatives, and enacting protective policies. However, this study's focus on a specific ceremony and reliance on elder perspectives highlight limitations, suggesting further research comparing preservation practices across communities, exploring youth perspectives,

investigating digital preservation tools, and examining the impact of policies and tourism on cultural sustainability.

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7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest regarding this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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