

NEGOTIATING RITUAL SACREDNESS AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF KASEPUHAN SINAR RESMI COMMUNITY IN SUPPORTING CILETUH–PALABUHANRATU GLOBAL GEOPARK

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Abstract: The Ngaseuk ritual, central to the agricultural system of the Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi indigenous community in West Java, Indonesia, marks the beginning of upland rice cultivation. Rooted in sacred cosmology and customary authority, the ritual has increasingly intersected with tourism development since the community's designation as a cultural geosite within the Ciletuh–Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark, generating both opportunities and pressures in balancing tourism visibility with ritual purity. This study aims to analyze how the community negotiates ritual sacredness and maintains cultural integrity as Ngaseuk becomes integrated into community-based ethnotourism. A qualitative ethnographic approach was employed, incorporating participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data were processed through an analytical procedure involving thematic categorization, elimination of non-essential material, and systematic coding, with credibility enhanced through triangulation across informants, instruments, and situational contexts. The findings reveal that ritual resilience is maintained through the indigenous philosophy of Pancer Pangawinan, which emphasizes harmony and cosmic balance. This philosophy manifests through three key local values and practices: strict adherence to ceremonial protocols, selective cultural mediation for visitors, and the spatial division of sacred and profane zones. Rather than eroding ritual sanctity, controlled tourist participation strengthens cultural resilience when managed under community-based governance. The study contributes to debates on intangible heritage preservation and sustainable tourism development in indigenous contexts, highlighting ethnotourism as both a cultural safeguard and a developmental opportunity.

Keywords: ritual sacredness, intangible heritage, community-based governance, indigenous community and tourism, Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu Unesco Global Geopark

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INTRODUCTION

Rituals serve as symbolic manifestations of belief within cultural systems, articulated through religious, traditional, or formal actions imbued with symbolic meanings, ceremonial practices, and social procedures (Ersal, 2024; Eade, 2020). Within the field of cultural anthropology, rituals are recognized as cultural performances, traditional ceremonies, or voluntary practices constructed through symbolic frameworks, often functioning as rites of passage (Moufahim et al., 2019; Jafari, 2000). Beyond their external manifestations, rituals embody transcendental processes that guide individuals from the mundane into the sacred realm (Hollenback, 2010).

The values derived from rituals subsequently permeate the daily lives of communities. The indigenous community of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi, part of the “Kesatuan Adat Banten Kidul”, continues to uphold agricultural rituals that regard rice as the essence of life (Suryawan, 2025; Munawar et al., 2025). *Padi huma* (upland rice) is venerated through a series of rituals encompassing *Ngaseuk* (planting), harvesting, and post-harvest ceremonies. In the context of tourism, rituals often function as both cultural resources and attractions for destinations (Wu et al., 2022; Rachman & Tekol, 2020; Herrero-Prieto & Gomez-Vega, 2017; Shinde, 2021). Tourists are drawn to experience authentic cultural practices, whether by visiting heritage sites or engaging in ceremonies (Chen et al., 2024; Hazar et al., 2024). Indeed, tourism is frequently interpreted as a form of institutionalized ritual journey (Katsarou, 2025; Sukhrobjon, 2025).

Several studies indicate that in the context of tourism, rituals become arenas for negotiating authenticity, commodification, and community control (Moore et al., 2021; Rezaei, 2017). For example, Bai & Weng (2023) contend that cultural commodification can be analyzed through the theory of cultural layers, wherein artifacts, behavioral patterns, and core values are influenced, though not necessarily adversely, provided that communities can mediate adaptively. In Indonesia, rituals such as *Ngaben*, *Rambu Solo*, and *Yadnya Kasada* have historically served as tourist attractions with

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elements of commodification (Tobing, 2025). A similar dynamic is observable in the *Ngaseuk* ritual of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi, which now also functions as a cultural attraction supported by local government initiatives under the Ciletuh–Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark framework. Its designation as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage has further enhanced its visibility and increased tourist engagement.

Since 2017, Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi has been designated as a geosite within the UNESCO Global Geopark (showed in Figure 1), specifically representing the cultural pillar. The government has supported this designation through infrastructure development and funding for ceremonies, while the community consistently emphasizes that tourism must remain aligned with customary traditions. Inclusion in the geopark has increased tourist visits, as illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 1. The UNESCO Global Geopark Signboard at Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi, Sirnaresmi Village, Sukabumi Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia (Source: Researcher, 2023)

Nevertheless, tourism within customary contexts carries the potential to undermine the sacredness of rituals through excessive commodification (Moore et al., 2021; Rezaei, 2017). Santoso et al. (2024) note that incorporating tourism into customary rituals has shifted their meaning, threatening the cultural integrity of local traditions. Host communities frequently perceive tourism as a threat to cultural integrity (Wong, 2020), as commercialization can open ritual spaces that were previously exclusive (Chen et al., 2024). Lubis et al. (2024) further demonstrate how economic and political interests may introduce profane elements into rituals. Together, these findings highlight the risks of desacralization and reveal a critical gap in existing scholarship, namely limited understanding of how communities mobilize internal cultural governance to protect ritual sacredness when ceremonial practices intersect with tourism.

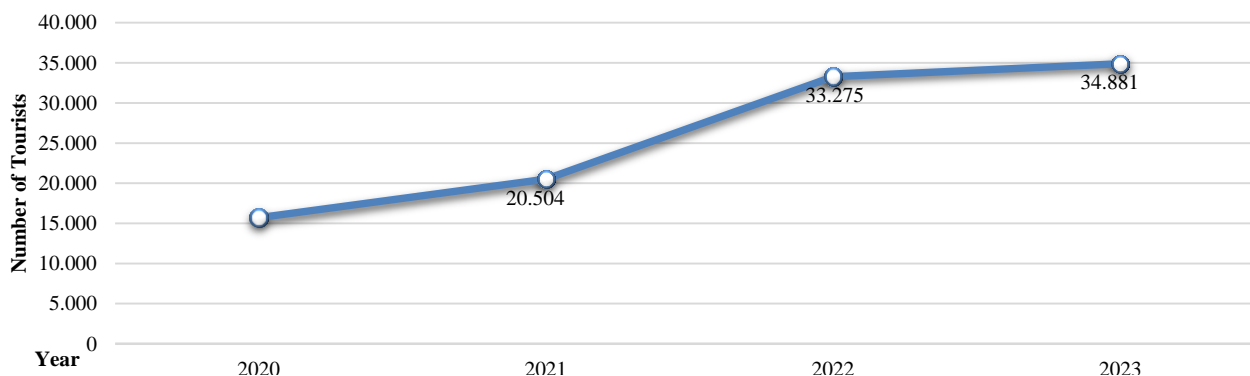


Figure 2. Number of Tourist Visits to Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi (2020-2023) (Source: Sukabumi Regency Tourism Agency, 2024)

To address these challenges, the Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi community has developed an ethnotourism approach—community-based tourism that prioritizes customary values, sustainability, and collective well-being (Guerrero-Moreno & Oliveira-Junior, 2024; Mukatova et al., 2022; Dangi & Jamal, 2016; Ahimsa-Putra, 2012). The literature increasingly identifies ethnotourism as an effective mechanism for mitigating cultural commodification (Wani et al., 2025), enabling communities to regulate access to ritual spaces (Munawar et al., 2025), and integrate tourism practices within local value systems (Hasim et al., 2023). When governed locally, tourism can enhance cultural transmission and strengthen identity without compromising sacredness (Mukatova et al., 2022). In Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi, this model is anchored in the principle of *tatali paranti karuhun* (ancestral teachings), ensuring that ritual adaptations remain consistent with customary law and that economic benefits align with the preservation of cosmic values (Astina et al., 2021).

Building on this framework, this study aims to analyze how the Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi community negotiates ritual sacredness and maintains cultural integrity as the *Ngaseuk* ritual becomes integrated into community-based ethnotourism within the UNESCO Global Geopark framework. The research focuses on: (1) the structure and meaning of the *Ngaseuk* ritual, (2) the elements of tourism attraction within the ritual, (3) the tourism services that emerge during the ritual, and (4) the community’s strategies to safeguard sacred values. This article emphasizes the contribution of ethnotourism practices to both cultural preservation and tourism development within the UNESCO Global Geopark while offering a novelty in the form of *ritual resilience*—the capacity of rituals to endure amid the pressures of tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted in Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi, located in Sirnaresmi Village, Cisolok District, Sukabumi Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia (Figure 3). Cisolok, one of eight sub-districts within the Ciletuh–Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark, is known for its cultural villages and Sundanese traditions. The geopark itself is geologically significant, containing rare metamorphic rocks, melange formations, and ophiolites formed by the collision of the Eurasian and Indian Ocean plates approximately 60 million years ago, while also hosting extensive conservation areas. This study employed a qualitative ethnographic design to explore the meanings, practices, and cultural adaptations of the *Ngaseuk* ritual within the framework of ethnotourism (Creswell, 2015; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The ethnographic approach was selected to capture the symbolic dimensions of the ritual and examine how ancestral teachings are sustained and negotiated in the presence of tourism.

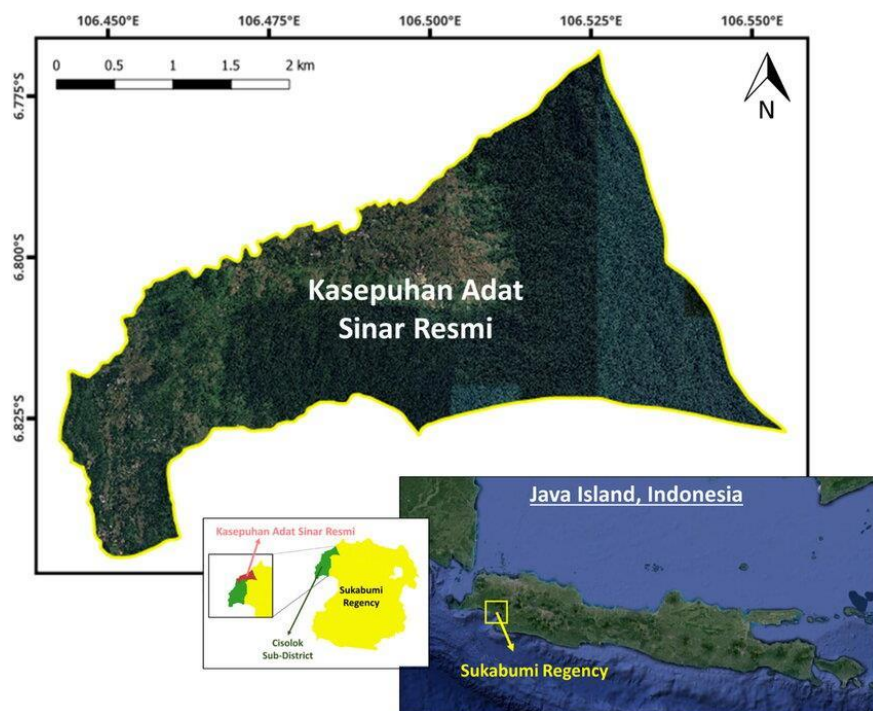


Figure 3. Map of Research Location (Source: Suryawan, 2025)

Data Collection

Data were gathered through:

1. Participant Observation – The researcher conducted intensive fieldwork from September 1–30, 2023, engaging in daily community activities, observing interactions between residents and tourists, and documenting ritual practices.
2. In-depth Interviews – Key informants included *Abah* (traditional leader), community elders, and selected tourists. Interviews focused on ritual meanings, sacred–profane boundaries, and strategies of cultural safeguarding. Characteristics of research informants are shown in Table 1.
3. Documentation – Photographs, field notes, and secondary sources, including previous research, complemented the primary data.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants

No.	Name Initials	Gender	Age (years)	Position
1.	AA	Male	53	Traditional leader of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi
2.	KO	Male	65	Community elder of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi
3.	KU	Male	72	Community elder of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi
4.	KY	Male	55	Community elder of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi
5.	VM	Male	42	Community elder of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi
6.	AJ	Male	45	Community elder of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi
7.	GA	Male	32	Tourist from Bogor, West Java, Indonesia
8.	SR	Female	23	Tourist from Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a multi-stage process: (1) systematic organization by thematic categories, (2) elimination of irrelevant data, and (3) thematic coding. Triangulation was applied by cross-checking information from different informants, instruments (observation, interview, documentation), and temporal contexts to ensure credibility. Data saturation was reached when no new insights emerged. Finally, validated data were consolidated into analytical units that served as the basis for the findings. In summary, the research stages—from study site → research approach → data collection → data analysis → research findings—can be illustrated in the following flowchart (Figure 4).

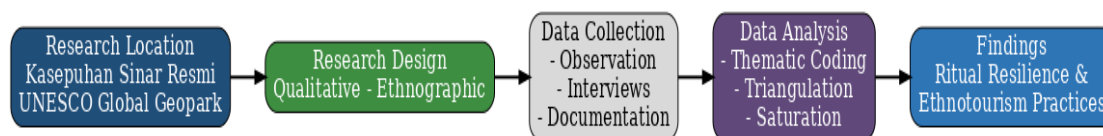


Figure 4. Research Methodology Flowchart: Location → Design → Data Collection → Analysis → Findings

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Structure and Meaning of the *Ngaseuk* Ritual

Ngaseuk, also known as *Nibakeun Sri ka Bumi* (bringing rice down to the earth), is a traditional ritual performed in the *huma* (upland rice field) and represents an essential cultural practice preserved by the Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi community. Technically, *Ngaseuk* involves creating small holes with an *aseukan* (a pointed wooden stick) into which rice seeds are inserted. However, its significance extends far beyond the technical execution, as it encompasses a series of rites conducted before, during, and after the planting process.

This ritual has been practiced for approximately six centuries, dating back to the establishment of *Kasepuhan* in 1368. All members of the indigenous community—particularly the *Abah* (customary leader) and *Incu Putu* (community members)—are expected to participate annually. *Ngaseuk* is viewed not merely as a means of fulfilling food requirements but as a medium for transmitting ancestral teachings. Within the customary hierarchy, the *huma* is regarded as more valuable than irrigated rice fields, which were introduced only in the early 20th century. Customary law mandates that every family must maintain a *huma*, regardless of its size, as encapsulated in the saying: *sanaos mung ukur sadaun tereup urang kedah ngahuma* (“even if only as wide as a *tereup* leaf (*Artocarpus elasticus*) one must still cultivate a *huma*”).

The practice of *Ngaseuk* reinforces the cultural identity, spirituality, and social order of the indigenous community. The timing of the ritual is determined by astronomical calculations, specifically the *Kidang* and *Kerti* constellations, which are believed to ensure a successful harvest. This decision is exclusively made by the *Abah* and *Rorokan* (*Abah*’s assistants). Additionally, each family is required to undergo a series of preparatory activities, including *sungkem* (seeking blessings) from parents, presenting traditional cakes (*ulen*, *dodol*, *wajit*, *matros*, *peuyeum*), or *ngembang* (offering flowers) at ancestral graves if parents have passed away. Following these preparations, families approach the *Abah* to seek blessings and protection for their *huma*. Four stages of preparation are conducted leading up to the main event: (1) *nyacar* (clearing the field) one month prior, (2) *ngahuru* (burning vegetation remains) two weeks before, (3) *ngaduruk* (reburning residues) one day after *ngahuru*, and (4) re-clearing weeds five days before *Ngaseuk*. The culmination of the event is *Ngaseuk Rurukan*, the planting at the *huma* of the *Abah*, which is always held on Friday, a day regarded as sacred. The day before, elders convene in a *carita Ngaseuk* forum to prepare ritual equipment, followed by *hamin Ngaseuk* that evening, consisting of prayers and expressions of gratitude at the *imah gede* (the *Abah*’s house). On the following day, the *Abah* and *Ambu* (his wife) assume symbolic positions in the *huma*, facing a bamboo altar (*paparakoan*) that contains the *pungpuhunan* (cosmic tree), sacred rice seeds (*co’o binih*), and symbolic leaves. Figure 5 illustrates the process of conducting the *Ngaseuk* ritual.



Figure 5. The *Ngaseuk* ritual in the *huma rurukan* (upland rice field of *Abah*): (A) The *paparakoan*, where *Abah* performs the *Ngaseuk* ritual, and (B) *Abah* offering prayers at the *paparakoan* (Source: Researcher, 2023)

The ritual commenced with the burning of incense and the chewing of *bangle* (*Zingiber cassumunar*) by the *Abah* and *Ambu*. Following the recitation of the *doa amit* (prayer of permission), the *Abah* symbolically sprinkled the chewed mixture

toward the four cardinal directions, embodying the principle of *Pancer Pangawinan* philosophy. The accompanying music of *angklung dogdog lojor* and *jangjawokan* prayers fostered a sacred atmosphere, marking a liminal moment in which all members of the *Kasepuhan* stood in spiritual equality.

Subsequently, the *Abah* planted the sacred rice seeds in a designated sequence, beginning at the center of the *paparakoan* and extending outward to the four directions. The *Ambu* presented five selected seeds wrapped in *tereup* leaves (*Artocarpus elasticus*). These seeds were mixed with corn, sesame, and *hiris*, symbolizing diversity, abundance, and ecological harmony. Once the *Abah* completed the planting, community members actively participated: men created planting holes using the *aseukan*, while women inserted the seeds. The ritual concluded with a communal meal in the field, featuring *nasi kabuli* cooked in the *imah gede*.

2. Tourism Appeal within the *Ngaseuk* Ritual

The *Ngaseuk* ritual in Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi represents a cultural event that seamlessly integrates spiritual, performative, and interactive dimensions within a cohesive ceremonial framework. Its appeal arises from the amalgamation of cultural elements—traditional rituals, customary attire, vernacular architecture, performing arts, local cuisine, and indigenous knowledge—with tourism components such as staged performances, interactive services, and visitor experiences. Together, these elements constitute the foundation of ethnotourism practices (Munawar et al., 2025).

Field observations reveal that the festivities commence on Thursday afternoon with a series of artistic performances at the *Kasepuhan* square, including *tari tani*, *angklung dogdog lojor*, *rengkong*, *ngagendek*, *putri tujuh*, *laes*, *debus*, and *wayang golek*, sequentially arranged under the guidance of *Aki Lengser* as the ritual host. The presence of government officials and tourists further enhances the event's appeal. These traditional performances align with Cohen's (1985) concept of diversionary attractions, as well as contemporary research on religious and cultural tourism experiences. For instance, Nautiyal's (2025) study on spirituality and culture as attractions in tourism destinations emphasizes that highly authentic spiritual-cultural practices significantly enhance visitor engagement. Similarly, research on the spiritual resilience of sacred sites indicates that performing arts and ritual symbols are crucial in shaping visitors' perceptions of authenticity and appeal (Aulet & Duda, 2020). Bock (2015) further underscores that such attractions foster interaction between host communities and tourists. The traditional arts performance, an attraction of the *Ngaseuk* ritual, is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Art performances in *Kasepuhan* square on the eve of the *Ngaseuk* ritual: (A) *Tari Tani*, (B) *Ngagendek*, (C) *Angklung Dogdog Lojor*, (D) *Rengkong*, (E) *Putri Tujuh*, and (F) *Laes* (Source: Researcher, 2023).

Direct interaction enhances host–guest relationships (Bian & Zhu, 2020; Lin & Fu, 2021). In the context of the *Ngaseuk* ritual, tourists have the opportunity to stay at the *imah gede* or local houses, enjoying accommodations in traditional stilted bamboo structures with *rumbia* thatched roofs, while tasting authentic cuisine such as pounded rice cooked in a *hawu* (wood-fired stove) without additives. During the *hamin Ngaseuk* event, all participants—including government officials, tourists, and community members—sit cross-legged together to share traditional food as an expression of gratitude for the smooth conduct of the ritual. This activity exemplifies the principles of community-based tourism, which promote the active participation of local residents and allow tourists to experience cultural authenticity (Prakoso et al., 2020; Kuntariningsih et al., 2023). The following day, tourists accompany community members on a two-kilometer journey from the *Kasepuhan* center to the *huma*. This journey, which traverses rice fields, hills, and small rivers, enhances the sacred atmosphere of the procession. At the site, participants witness the *Abah* performing the ritual, accompanied by *angklung dogdog lojor* music, and then engage in rice planting before concluding the event with a communal meal of *nasi kabuli* in the field. This moment reflects Victor Turner's

(1979) concept of *communitas*—a sense of togetherness and equality that arises from sacred experiences (Haggar, 2024). Figure 7 presents the map of the *Ngaseuk* ritual route, while Figure 8 illustrates the procession to the ritual site (*huma rurukan*).



Figure 7. Map of the *Ngaseuk* ritual route in Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi (Source: Google Earth Imagery © 2023; Map compiled by Researcher, 2023)



Figure 8. The indigenous community, government guests, and tourists walk to the *huma rurukan* along a narrow, steep path that stretches for about two kilometers (Source: Researcher, 2023)

The primary motivation for tourists participating in the *Ngaseuk* ritual is to learn about and experience traditional agricultural practices that have been preserved for over six centuries (GA/32 & SR/23, personal communication). The unique atmosphere of the indigenous village—characterized by stilted houses, *leuit* (rice barns), traditional attire (*iket* and *sinjang*), activities such as pounding rice in the *lisung*, cooking with the *hawu*, and sharing *nasi kabuli* in the *huma*—offers an authentic experience that fosters a deeper connection to local culture (Rattanapipat et al., 2021; Sugiarto et al., 2020). Such intimate interactions and communal feasts create a welcoming environment essential for tourist engagement, allowing visitors to feel integrated into the community (Habiba & Lina, 2023; Prakoso et al., 2020). Communal dining with traditional food, an attraction of the *Ngaseuk* ritual, is shown in Figure 9. This underscores the importance of social interactions between tourists and the local community, which not only provide enriching experiences but also contribute to sustainable economic and cultural development (Jain et al., 2024; Wibowo & Darsono, 2022). The success of community-based tourism development, as illustrated by the *Ngaseuk* ritual, relies on collaboration among local stakeholders and the preservation of traditional knowledge accumulated over centuries (Aji & Faniza, 2024).

These findings align with the existing literature on agritourism and homestays, which indicates that tourists are frequently motivated by cultural authenticity and direct engagement with local practices. For instance, the study “Farming and Tourism Enterprise: Experiential Authenticity” reveals that authentic farming experiences significantly shape tourists’ perceptions of authenticity in rural destinations (Domenico & Miller, 2012). Additionally, research conducted in Malaysia on homestays demonstrates that genuine narratives and participation in local life enhance both tourist satisfaction and their sense of place attachment (Mura, 2015). Similarly, the study by Li et al. (2021) on ethnic villages in Guizhou Province,

China, illustrates that tourist motivations encompass a desire to immerse themselves in local culture through daily activities and traditional culinary experiences, thereby fostering positive perceptions and attitudes toward rural tourism villages.



Figure 9. The indigenous community, government guests, and tourists all enjoy *nasi kabuli* at the *huma rurukan* (Source: Researcher, 2023)

3. Tourism Services in the *Ngaseuk* Ritual

The *Ngaseuk* ritual in Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi serves not only as a sacred ceremony but also as a platform for the indigenous community to independently manage tourism services. Residents recognize the tourism potential of their village, warmly welcoming guests, providing assistance, and sharing indigenous knowledge. This practice enhances tourists' understanding and reflects the community's genuine involvement in the development of ethnotourism (Prevolsek et al., 2020). The community thus fulfills a dual role as both the attraction and the manager of tourist experiences (Hung et al., 2017).

In 2023, the *Ngaseuk* ritual occurred on Friday, 29 September, with guests arriving as early as Thursday, 28 September. Invitations were extended to various stakeholders, including the Directorate of Culture of the Ministry of Education and Culture, local government officials, and the general public. Information was disseminated three weeks in advance through the official Instagram account @ *kasepuhansinarresmi* and banners placed along the village access roads (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Public announcements of the *Ngaseuk* ritual: (A) via the official Instagram account of the *Kasepuhan*, @*kasepuhansinarresmi*, and (B) through banners along the road to the *Kasepuhan* (Source: Researcher, 2023)

Two dedicated staff members were assigned to welcome guests beginning Thursday morning. Accommodation arrangements were made according to status: officials and important figures were hosted in the *imah gede*, while other visitors stayed either in the *imah gede* or in the homes of local residents. From late afternoon until evening, the community organized traditional art performances in the village square and the courtyard of the *imah gede*, featuring local artists and attracting visitors from various regions. The *imah gede* served as the central guest facility, offering 11 well-appointed rooms, a spacious hall, and a terrace with views of the square and the Halimun Mountains. Local residences were designated as homestays, providing authentic living experiences in line with the principles of community-based tourism (Dangi & Jamal, 2016).

In addition to accommodations, food services play a vital role. All guests were treated to traditional cuisine prepared at the *imah gede*, complemented by snacks made from local agricultural products, including *dodol*, *ranginang*, glutinous rice crackers, cassava chips, as well as a selection of fruits, tea, and coffee. Tourist accommodation service at *imah gede* is shown in Figure 11. Meanwhile, Figure 12 illustrates catering services for tourists during the *Ngaseuk* ritual.

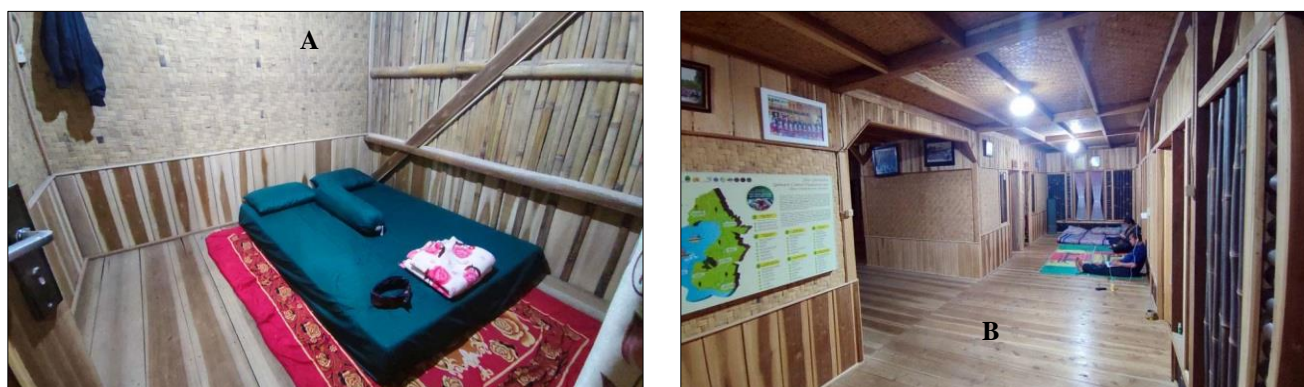


Figure 11. Tourist accommodation services at the *imah gede* of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi: (A) Tourist bedrooms, and (B) Spacious living room adjacent to the tourist bedrooms (Source: Researcher, 2023)

The peak of service delivery occurred on the final day, when over 100 portions of *nasi kabuli* were distributed in the *huma* following the ritual. Each guest, including officials and members of the general public, received *nasi kabuli* to take home as a gesture of hospitality. Additionally, local guides accompanied tourists, providing explanations of the ceremony's stages and the associated cultural customs. All management was conducted by the community without the involvement of external operators, utilizing a straightforward registration system via Instagram or WhatsApp. This tourism service model illustrates the indigenous community's capacity to offer authentic, comfortable, and meaningful experiences, while also supporting the argument presented by Duissembayev & Mukatova (2020) that ethnotourism not only showcases cultural attractions but also enriches tourists emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. These findings align with international research such as Community-Centered Farm-Based Hospitality in Agriculture, which demonstrates that accommodation services, local culinary practices, and community engagement in agritourism enhance the sense of authenticity and well-being for both tourists and host communities (Knezevic et al., 2025). Equally pertinent is the study Authenticity, Interaction, Learning, and Location as Curators of Agritourism, which discovered that hands-on learning experiences and social interactions enhance tourists' perceptions of authenticity in agricultural destinations (Martinus et al., 2024).



Figure 12. Tourist catering services at the *imah gede* of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi: (A) Communal dining with the indigenous community and tourists featuring traditional menus, and (B) Buffet table for self-service during mealtimes. (Source: Researcher, 2023)

4. Indigenous Communities' Strategies in Protecting Sacred Values from Tourism Development

The Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi community is widely recognized as a moderate indigenous group that remains open to interaction with the outside world, including the adoption of modern technologies and other external elements integrated into daily life (Suryawan, 2025; Rini, 2025). Such innovations are accepted as long as they do not disrupt the cultural core—

particularly traditional agricultural systems, vernacular architecture, customary clothing, worldviews, and spiritual teachings (Munawar et al., 2025). This characteristic distinguishes Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi from other indigenous communities in West Java, such as Kampung Naga (Tasikmalaya), Kampung Dukuh (Garut), Kampung Kuta (Ciamis), and the Baduy of Kanekes Village, which tend to preserve traditions more rigidly and resist modern influences (Febrianty & Ryendra, 2024; Huda & Fauzani, 2024; Enjang, 2022; Iskandar & Iskandar, 2021; Arifiani et al., 2019). This openness is rooted in the community's life philosophy, known as *Pancer Pangawinan*, which emphasizes the integration of paired elements in a complementary relationship. The principle is reflected in one of their *pikukuh* (customary rules): “*kudu bisa ngigelan jaman tapi ulah kabawa ku jaman*”—“one must be able to adapt to the times without being swept away by them.” This teaching implies that the community is expected to keep pace with contemporary developments and technological change while continuing to uphold ancestral customs and traditions, shaping the social and cultural dynamics of *Kasepuhan* life across various domains.

Pancer Pangawinan serves as the ideological foundation guiding the Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi community in navigating daily life, including the management of tourism practices within their environment. This philosophical outlook stresses the importance of maintaining balance among all elements of life, ensuring that modernity does not replace tradition but interacts harmoniously with it (Sukmayadi et al., 2023; Hermanto et al., 2012). The principle resonates with the notion of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), which highlights the capacity of communities to create a “third space” where traditional and modern values intersect, giving rise to new practices that remain culturally significant. In this context, Wong (2020) emphasizes that tradition should not be regarded as a rigid legacy of the past but as an adaptive system open to reinterpretation. Thus, *Pancer Pangawinan* is not merely a philosophical doctrine but also an adaptive mechanism that enables the *Kasepuhan* community to safeguard the *pancer* (the core of life and safety) by cultivating *pangawinan* (harmony) between spiritual values and the realities of duality (*sakuren*) in their everyday lives. The philosophy of *Pancer Pangawinan* consists of three interrelated concepts: *pancer*, *pangawinan*, and *sakuren* (Kusdiwanggo, 2025). *Pancer* refers to a balanced state and quality of life that forms the foundation for salvation according to *Kasepuhan* values. *Pangawinan* denotes the process of uniting two elements to create a harmonious and balanced whole. *Sakuren* represents opposing yet complementary entities, which are prerequisites for achieving *pangawinan*. Together, these concepts shape the indigenous value system, guiding community responses to external influences while protecting and sustaining local culture.

a) *Pangawinan* as a Mechanism of Harmonization

In ethnotourism, *pangawinan* functions as a cultural mechanism for harmonizing tourism with customary protection. The *Ngaseuk* ritual is open to visitors but regulated by strict cultural control. Tourists may observe and document certain stages, while sacred aspects remain exclusive to the community. As traditional leader put it:

“*We carefully decide what can be shared with the public and what must remain restricted. If something should not be disclosed, we simply say no. For example, when a journalist from Jakarta asked to cover the nutu (rice pounding) ritual, we told them, ‘No, this cannot be recorded.’ And they understood.*” (AA/53).

This selective openness reflects what Shrestha et al., (2025) identify as community-driven strategies for creating authentic indigenous tourism experiences, where cultural layers are negotiated to balance visibility with protection. The internalization of sacred boundaries from early childhood ensures that *Kasepuhan* community distinguish between the profane and the sacred, thereby positioning tourism not as a threat but as an opportunity to reinforce local identity.

b) *Pancer* as a Principle of Tourism Governance

The principle of *pancer* (safety/salvation) serves as a cultural filter, ensuring that tourism conforms to ancestral values. The community retains full autonomy in tourism design and rejects external operators unless customary consent is granted (Polukhina, 2018). One interviewee explained:

“*Anyone who wishes to come here is welcome, provided they ask permission from the customary leader and follow the rules. If they do not comply, we are sorry, they cannot stay here*” (AJ/45).

Tourism practices must be *bersih* (clean) and free from *pamali* (taboo). For instance, rice and its derivatives are never commercialized, as rice is considered sacred. Meals are provided communally, with voluntary contributions accepted only for side dishes. Tourists must also adhere to customary protocols, including traditional dress (*iket* for men, *sinjang* for women) and the ritual of requesting permission from *Abah* with *tumpang sepaheun* (tobacco and a voluntary offering). Some interviewee revealed:

“*Tourism activities here must be clean and adhere to customary rules, meaning we strictly uphold our regulations. We are known for never selling rice and have no restaurants, as we believe it is pamali and equates to selling our life*” (VM/45).

“*One word, pamali, is enough to stop us from doing something, and we will never go against it*” (KU/72).

Pamali is a traditional teaching that advises against actions believed to bring misfortune. Within the *Kasepuhan* community, *pamali* serves as a system of social control that regulates and unites community behavior. These practices align with Hsu & Nilep's (2015) argument that authenticity in indigenous tourism depends on provider-controlled cultural standards rather than external commodification.

c) *Sakuren* as a Spatial Division of the Sacred and Profane

Sakuren establishes the division of spaces into *jero* (sacred, closed) and *luar* (profane, open). *Jero* includes the rice barn (*leuit*), rice storage (*pangdaringan*), sacred forests (*leweung tutupan*), ritual chambers, and esoteric knowledge, all of which remain inaccessible to outsiders. *Luar* encompasses areas such as *Kasepuhan* squares, homestays, traditional arts, vernacular architecture, ritual processions, and communal meals that may be shared with tourists under strict supervision.

In practice, *sakuren* creates both symbolic and practical boundaries between customary and touristic spaces, functioning in a mutually complementary way. As some interviewees stated:

“Not only outsiders (tourists) but we also have boundaries. For example, some may enter the forbidden forest while others may not. Similarly, certain rituals can only be attended by the customary leader and his assistants, while ordinary members cannot” (KY/55). “Although the Ngaseuk ritual is open to outsiders (tourists), they can only observe it from a distance. We will not explain the ritual to them, as it belongs to the *jero* (closed, sacred) realm” (KO/65).

This spatial regulation illustrates a form of cultural guardianship (Reddy & Sailesh, 2023), ensuring that while tourism activities occur, sacred boundaries remain intact. Even within *luar*, visitors must follow clear rules—keeping distance, avoiding video recordings, and respecting photographic restrictions. These practices embody a balance between openness and protection, enabling tourism to coexist with indigenous cosmology without eroding sacred values.

SYNTHESIS

Through the adaptive framework of *Pancer Pangawinan*, the Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi community effectively negotiates external pressures while safeguarding spiritual integrity. Their strategies demonstrate that tourism need not diminish ritual sanctity; instead, when mediated by community-based cultural control, it reinforces both authenticity and resilience. This aligns with global discussions on indigenous agency in tourism (Shrestha et al., 2025; Hsu & Nilep, 2015; Reddy & Sailesh, 2023) and underscores the role of localized philosophies in sustaining cultural continuity amidst modern transformations.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights how the Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi community safeguards the sanctity of the *Ngaseuk* ritual while engaging with tourism. Far from being mere commodification, ethnotourism serves as a form of cultural agency that allows the community to maintain authority over its traditions and present them selectively for sustainable preservation. The findings show that protection mechanisms are embedded in the philosophy of *Pancer Pangawinan*, consisting of three interrelated concepts. *Pancer* functions as a cultural filter that permits only “clean” tourism aligned with ancestral values. *Pangawinan* mediates between custom and tourism, enabling visitor participation without breaching sacred boundaries. *Sakuren* divides space into *jero* (sacred/closed) and *luar* (profane/open), maintaining a balance between the sacred and the profane.

By applying these principles, the Kasepuhan community demonstrates that tourism can reinforce cultural resilience and identity, while also contributing to sustainable geotourism within the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark.

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