

Traditional Invention of Indigenous Community: Towards Sustainable Cultural Tourism

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ABSTRACT: This study analyzes the transformation of the Seren Taun an agrarian ritual of the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam indigenous community in Sukabumi into a model for sustainable cultural tourism. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, the research identifies the tradition as a medium for transmitting multidimensional values, including mutual cooperation (*silih asah-asuh-asih*), hybrid Sundanese-Islamic religiosity, ecological philosophy (*tri tangtu di buana*), and cultural aesthetics. Its reinvention occurs through techno-cultural hybridization, polycentric collaboration, and a circular cultural economy. The analysis produces a sustainable three-pillar model: Cultural Innovation, Stakeholder Collaboration, and a Sustainable Economy. This study offers a practical glocalization framework for indigenous communities and a theoretical contribution to tourism anthropology via the "cultural service ecosystem" concept. Findings demonstrate that participatory tradition creation fosters a symbiotic relationship between cultural preservation, local economic empowerment, and ecological conservation.

KEYWORDS: Tradition Invention, Seren Taun, Kasepuhan Gelar Alam, Sustainable Cultural Tourism, Glocalization, Cultural Circular Economy

INTRODUCTION

The Kasepuhan Gelar Alam indigenous community in South Banten has preserved the Seren Taun tradition for centuries as a form of gratitude for the harvest and the maintenance of ecological harmony (Ratnasari & Agustin, 2020). However, in the past decade, this tradition has transformed from a purely agrarian ritual into a cultural attraction drawing thousands of tourists (Rachman & Tekol, 2020). This change has raised complex dilemmas between preserving traditional values and commercialization pressures, a phenomenon commonly found in indigenous communities in the era of globalization (Fauzan, 2025).

This study specifically aims to: 1) understand the meaning and implementation of the Seren Taun tradition, 2) uncover the philosophical values embedded in the Seren Taun tradition, 3) analyze the invention of the Seren Taun tradition, and 4) formulate a model of the invention of the Seren Taun tradition: toward sustainable cultural tourism. These objectives emerged from initial findings that the adaptation process in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam exhibits unique patterns compared to other indigenous communities (Sutiyo, 2025), where technology integration strengthens the transmission of traditional values to younger generations.

The urgency of this research lies in three critical aspects. First, there is a lack of studies on the adaptation strategies of the Sundanese indigenous community in facing market penetration (Wijaya, 2025). Second, there is an urgent need for a cultural tourism model that respects the rights of indigenous communities while providing economic benefits (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2021). Third, the serious threat of ecological degradation due to the massive development of tourism in indigenous areas (Baloch et al., 2023). UNESCO findings indicate that 43% of indigenous traditions in Southeast Asia have experienced a distortion of meaning due to uncontrolled commercialization (Phannolath, 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in the "cultural glocalization" approach developed through a new theoretical framework. Unlike previous studies that tend to view the invention of traditions as a threat (Johnstone & Boyle, 2025), this study identifies opportunities for creative adaptation through: 1) the concept of "technocultural hybridization" (Großmann, 2021), where digital technology serves as a preservation tool, 2) the "cultural circular economy" model, which transforms traditions into a source of income without sacrificing their sacred value, and 3) the "intergenerational value transmission" mechanism through a dialogic approach.

Preliminary studies reveal that the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community has developed a unique cultural filter system. They selectively adopt modern elements (such as audio systems and digital documentation) while maintaining the core ritual structure

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(Susanti & Wahyuni, 2020). This adaptation pattern offers a new perspective in the academic debate on sustainable tourism, particularly in answering how to create a mutualistic symbiosis between cultural preservation and economic development.

This research is expected to provide practical contributions in the form of: 1) guidelines for cultural innovation for other indigenous communities, 2) policy recommendations for sustainable cultural tourism, and 3) a more holistic model for evaluating cultural innovation. Theoretically, the research findings will enrich the discourse on tourism anthropology and sustainable development studies, particularly in the context of indigenous communities in the Global South (MUNSI, 2024).

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to comprehensively examine the process of inventing the Seren Taun tradition in the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam indigenous community, following Berger et al., (2023) recommendations for capturing emic perspectives. The research adopts Hobsbawm & Ranger, (2012) cultural invention framework, viewing traditions as dynamic entities evolving through social change. This research obtained ethical approval from the appropriate institutional review board and secured verbal community consent in accordance with local norms. Data collection employed three techniques: participatory observation of the Seren Taun process (Sugiarta et al., 2024), semi-structured interviews with traditional leaders, *rorokan*, youth bearers, practitioners, and academics (Longhurst & Johnston, 2023), and document analysis of texts and policies (Davie & Wyatt, 2021). Thematic analysis proceeded through open, axial, and selective coding stages (Batdi, 2023), with validity ensured via triangulation and member checking (Motulsky, 2021). Ethical protocols included free prior informed consent, respect for customs, and benefit sharing through knowledge restitution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Seren Taun Tradition as a Means of Preserving Sundanese Culture in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam

Seren Taun Kasepuhan Gelar Alam is an annual traditional ceremony that expresses community gratitude for the abundant harvest over the past year. Kasepuhan Gelar Alam, located in Cisolok District, Sukabumi, is one of the traditional communities that still preserves and maintains the values of their ancestors' traditions and culture. Their daily lives are deeply rooted in Sundanese culture, which is reflected in various aspects of their social life.

One tradition that continues to be upheld is the Seren Taun ceremony, a way to honor ancestors while also expressing gratitude for the abundant harvest. This event is also listed in the Karisma Event Nusantara (KEN) calendar. Various fascinating events are held during the Seren Taun Kasepuhan Gelar Alam ceremony, ranging from cultural performances to meaningful traditional rituals.

One of the highlights of the ceremony is the harvest procession. In this procession, hundreds of participants carry various harvest products, such as vegetables and dried rice, through a narrow path around the rice fields and residential areas, leading to the main event area. The procession also involves representatives from various traditional villages carrying harvest products. This event has a symbolic meaning as the gathering of agricultural products at Leuit si Jimat, the rice barn that serves as the center of the main procession. The enthusiasm of the community and visitors for this procession is very high, with even children participating in the activities.

After the harvest is brought to Leuit, the next procession is the *ngadiukeun* ceremony, which is the core of Seren Taun Kasepuhan Gelar Alam. This procession involves storing the harvest in Leuit si Panji, led by the traditional elder of Kasepuhan Gelar Alam, Abah Ugih. Sunda-language chants accompany the ceremony as a form of praise and respect for ancestors. In addition to witnessing the traditional procession, visitors can enjoy an exhibition of works by the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam community. The exhibition showcases various handicrafts, such as bamboo-woven bags, fabrics, and traditional attire. Some harvested crops are also displayed; visitors can purchase these products at varying prices.

Seren Taun Kasepuhan Gelar Alam lasts four days and is enlivened by various traditional Sundanese cultural performances. On the first night, visitors are entertained by *wayang golek* (puppet show), *jipeng* (traditional dance), *dogdog lojor* (traditional dance), and mask dance. The entertainment continues with a music orchestra on the second and third nights. Additionally, traditional elders and local officials witness the *Bubuh Ngagondang* art form. *Ngagondang* is an artistic performance depicting rural life and farming culture. The event also features angklung music and mesmerizing debus performances. These shows occur throughout the night on several stages spread out across the area, allowing visitors to choose entertainment according to their preferences.

Values in the Seren Taun Tradition of Kasepuhan Gelar Alam

The Seren Taun tradition carried out by the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam indigenous community in South Banten is a tangible manifestation of the value system deeply rooted in Sundanese society. According to recent research (Ratnasari & Agustin, 2020), this annual ritual not only expresses gratitude for the harvest but also transmits noble values encompassing various aspects of life.

The value of cooperation emerges as the core principle underlying all activities of the Seren Taun ritual in Gelar Alam. According to (Maulana et al., 2025), the concept of *silih asah*, *silih asuh*, *silih asih* (mutual sharpening, nurturing, and loving) is concretely implemented in the collaborative patterns of the community. This is evident in the *Ngajayak* procession, which involves

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all segments of society, from preparing materials, making ritual tools, to parading the harvest. Multigenerational participation at every stage demonstrates how this sense of togetherness is organically passed down.

The religious aspect of Seren Taun Gelar Alam reveals a unique characteristic: a harmonious synthesis between traditional Sundanese beliefs and modern religious values. Research by (Dewi & Maftuh, 2020) reveals that the prayers in the *Ngareremokeun* ritual blend elements of worship toward Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Asri (the Sunda mythological goddess of rice) with deeply rooted Islamic values. The procession of visiting ancestral graves and the collective recitation of the " prayer serve as tangible evidence of how traditional spirituality adapts to modern developments without losing its essence.

The ecological values embedded in this tradition deserve special attention. Silalahi & Purwanto, (2025) explain that the *Dadung* procession in Gelar Alam contains a profound philosophy about *tri tangtu di buana* (the three guardians of the universe), emphasizing the balance between human relationships and nature. The symbolic ritual of releasing pests is not interpreted as destruction but as an effort to balance the ecosystem. This value is increasingly relevant in the current era of climate change and environmental crises.

The aesthetic dimension of Seren Taun Gelar Alam showcases the richness of Sundanese culture visually and auditorily. From traditional costumes rich in meaning, ritual dances full of symbolism, and traditional music accompanying each procession, all create a profound aesthetic experience. Sun et al., (2022) note that the artistic aspects of this tradition serve not only as entertainment but also as an effective medium for values education.

The uniqueness of Seren Taun at Gelar Alam lies in its ability to adapt to changing times without losing its identity. This tradition has successfully integrated modern technology into ritual documentation, simplified some processes to suit the contemporary context, while maintaining the core values that define the community. According Nugroho & Kesyaano, (2025), this flexibility is the key to the tradition's survival amid the tide of globalization.

The values embedded in the Seren Taun Gelar Alam are strongly relevant to the challenges faced by modern society. The concept of gotong royong (cooperation) can serve as an alternative model for participatory development, ecological principles offer new perspectives on environmental conservation, and the social and cultural values embedded within it can form the foundation for strengthening national character. In this context, Seren Taun is not merely a legacy of the past but *a living tradition* that continues to engage with the evolving times.

The Invention of the Seren Taun Tradition of the Kasepuhan Gelar Alam Community in the 20th Century

The Seren Taun tradition in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam has evolved into a complex cultural phenomenon that combines spiritual, social, political, and economic dimensions in a dynamic ritual system (Komara & Meliyani, 2021). The preparatory process, which involves all segments of society, serves as a "school of life" for transmitting cultural values (Mitrova & Kocceva, 2024). This multigenerational involvement ensures the continuity of the tradition and creates a space for negotiation between traditional and modern values (Mohyeddin, 2024).

The symbolism of power is reflected in the central role of Abah Ugi as the Traditional Leader in the *ngadiukeun* procession. This exclusive ritual for leaders represents the renewal of political-spiritual legitimacy (Sedgmore, 2021), functioning as a mechanism for reproducing traditional authority that integrates sacred and profane dimensions (Schmidt, 2023). The presence of various stakeholders transforms the ceremony into a cultural diplomacy arena (Cabauatan, 2024). Contemporary adaptations demonstrate remarkable cultural resilience. The use of modern technology enriches the ritual's sacred value (Mbalisi et al., 2025), while new art forms like *Jipengdut* showcase creative cultural hybridization (Pawar, 2025), illustrating glocalization where global elements acquire local meaning (Pawar, 2025).

Socially, Seren Taun creates a temporary egalitarian space that transcends everyday hierarchies (Crowley, 2020), strengthening community cohesion—a phenomenon aligned with community theory (Moleka, 2024). Economically, this tradition has transformed from an agrarian ritual into a driver of the creative economy (Del Soldato & Massari, 2024), demonstrating the potential for sustainable economic development of cultural heritage without sacrificing spiritual values (Ye et al., 2024).

Table 1.1 Transformation of the Functions of Seren Taun

Dimension	Traditional Form	Contemporary Invention
Participation	Community exclusive	Multi-stakeholder inclusion
Technology	Traditional equipment	Digital integration
Representation	Sacred agricultural rituals	National tourism events
Social structure	Strict hierarchy	Fluid interaction space
Economic value	Symbolic exchange	Creative economic development
Education	Oral transmission	Structured multigenerational learning
Identity politics	Affirmation of local identity	Regional-national cultural diplomacy

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Model of Cultural Innovation for Sustainable Cultural Tourism Based on the Seren Taun Tradition

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of the Seren Taun tradition in Kasepuhan Gelar Alam, this study develops a model of sustainable cultural invention supported by the latest empirical evidence. This three-pillar model offers a holistic approach to integrating cultural preservation with sustainable development, as the latest international literature describes.

The first pillar, Cultural Innovation, is based on Ubertazzi, (2020) findings on the importance of flexibility in preserving intangible cultural heritage. Field studies show how integrating digital technology in Seren Taun—such as virtual documentation and modern audio systems—strengthens the transmission of traditional values to younger generations, as revealed in Nugroho & Kesyafano, (2025) research on cultural preservation in the digital era. This adaptation mechanism creates what Smith, (2025) call "technocultural hybridity," where technological innovation serves as a tool for preservation rather than a threat to cultural authenticity.

The second pillar, Stakeholder Collaboration, adopts the concept of polycentric governance developed by Morrison et al., (2023). Research data reveals that the success of Seren Taun in maintaining its relevance in the modern era is highly dependent on the unique collaboration between traditional leaders, local governments, academics, and creative industry practitioners. This collaboration pattern aligns with the findings of Wosu, (2023) on the effectiveness of community-based governance models in the context of sustainable cultural tourism. Noteworthy is the critical role of the younger generation as a "cultural bridge" connecting traditional values with contemporary aspirations.

The third pillar, Sustainable Economy, implements the "cultural heritage value chain" concept promoted by Otamendi-Irizar et al., (2024). Economic analysis shows that the Seren Taun tradition has evolved into a value system encompassing: 1) the production of traditional knowledge, 2) the transformation of this knowledge into cultural products 3) distribution through tourism channels, and 4) reinvestment of income for preservation. This cycle creates what Onofri & Boatto (2020) refers to as "cultural ecosystem services," which provide dual benefits—economic and ecological.

Implementing this model faces several critical challenges. Bortolotto, (2021) warn of the risk of cultural distortion due to excessive commercialization, while Thathong, (2014) identify the threat of fragmentation of traditional knowledge. To address these challenges, the model proposes a "dynamic preservation" approach emphasizing:

1. The establishment of cultural innovation laboratories at the community level
2. The development of a certification system for authentic cultural tourism
3. Structured intergenerational knowledge transmission programs

The findings of this research make a significant contribution to the global discourse on sustainable development by offering an adaptable framework for other indigenous communities. As emphasized in the UNESCO Creative Economy Report (2023), such models ensure the preservation of cultural heritage, create sustainable livelihoods, and strengthen cultural identity in the era of globalization.

The following is an image of the traditional seren taun tradition invention model for sustainable cultural tourism:

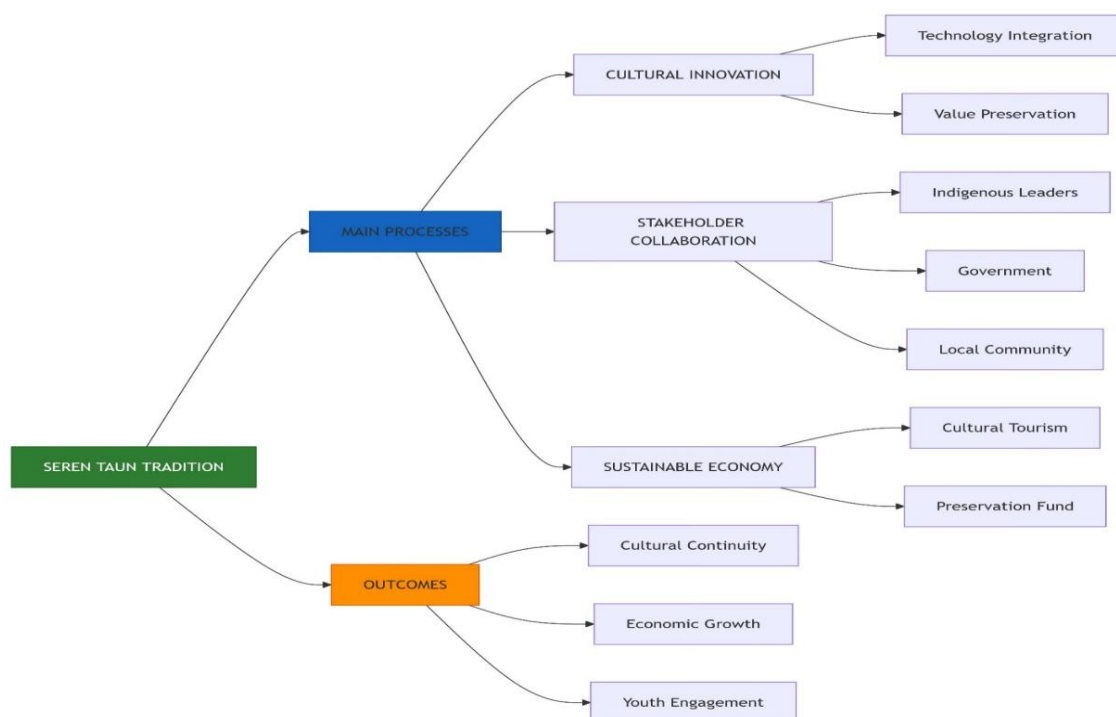


Figure 1.1: Model of the Traditional Invention of Seren Taun for Sustainable Cultural Tourism

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

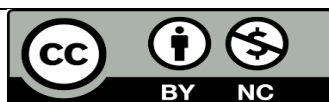
The Seren Taun tradition of Kasepuhan Gelar Alam exemplifies a dynamic cultural invention that successfully integrates spiritual heritage with contemporary relevance. This tradition demonstrates how ritual practices can evolve through strategic innovation—incorporating technology, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and economic adaptation—without sacrificing cultural authenticity. The three-pillar model comprising Cultural Innovation, Stakeholder Collaboration, and Sustainable Economy offers a replicable framework for transforming intangible cultural heritage into a sustainable tourism resource. This approach not only preserves ancestral values but also strengthens community resilience, providing a significant contribution to the global discourse on sustainable development and offering a viable pathway for other indigenous communities navigating globalization and modernity.

To enhance the sustainability of Seren Taun-based cultural tourism, several actions are recommended. First, a cultural innovation lab should be established to facilitate intergenerational dialogue and digital documentation of traditional knowledge. Second, a certification mechanism must be developed to protect cultural authenticity against excessive commercialization. Third, polycentric governance ought to be strengthened by formalizing roles for traditional institutions, local government, academics, and the private sector in planning and execution. Furthermore, educational programs and immersive experiences should be created to communicate the ecological, social, and spiritual values of Seren Taun to both tourists and younger generations. Finally, creative economic models that reinvest tourism revenue into cultural preservation and community well-being should be explored to ensure long-term sustainability.

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