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Seren Taun Tradition and Indigenous Food Security in the Kasepuhan Cisitu Community, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the Seren Taun traditional ceremony and indigenous customs in maintaining food security among the Kasepuhan Cisitu Indigenous Community in Lebak Regency, Banten, Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research explores how local wisdom, traditional agricultural practices, and communal values contribute to sustainable food resilience. The findings reveal that the Seren Taun ceremony is not merely a cultural celebration but also a social mechanism that reinforces agricultural sustainability, food storage systems, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and collective responsibility toward food sovereignty. The existence of leuit (traditional rice barns) functions as a symbol and instrument of long-term food security, enabling indigenous households to preserve rice stocks for years without dependence on external markets. Furthermore, the study highlights the integration of cultural values, environmental conservation, and community cooperation in strengthening local resilience against food crises. Government support through irrigation infrastructure is also identified as an important factor in sustaining indigenous agricultural productivity. This study demonstrates that indigenous knowledge systems can provide valuable insights for sustainable food security policies in contemporary society.

Keywords
Food Security
Indigenous Community
Kasepuhan Cisitu
Local Wisdom
Seren Taun

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Introduction

Food security remains one of the most important global challenges in the twenty-first century. Rapid population growth, environmental degradation, climate change, and economic instability continue to threaten the sustainability of food systems in many countries [1],[2]. In Indonesia, food security is not only related to agricultural production but also connected to cultural traditions, social structures, and local wisdom preserved by indigenous communities [3],[4].

One indigenous group that continues to preserve traditional food management practices is the Kasepuhan Cisitu Indigenous Community located in Cibeber District, Lebak Regency, Banten Province. Indigenous communities often maintain knowledge systems that support environmental sustainability and long-term community resilience [5],[6]. Rice is not merely an agricultural commodity but a sacred source of life that must be respected and protected through customary laws and rituals [7].

Among the most important traditions in the Kasepuhan Cisitu community is the Seren Taun ceremony. Seren Taun is an annual thanksgiving ritual conducted after the harvest season as an expression of gratitude for abundant agricultural production. The ceremony reflects the close relationship between humans, nature, and spiritual beliefs within indigenous culture [8],[9]. Beyond its ceremonial function, Seren Taun also plays a strategic role in strengthening food security through collective agricultural management and the preservation of local wisdom [10].

One important aspect of the Kasepuhan Cisitu food system is the existence of *leuit*, or traditional rice barns. Each household is traditionally required to own at least one or two *leuit* for storing harvested rice. Indigenous food storage systems represent forms of community-based food sovereignty that support resilience against economic and environmental uncertainty [2],[11]. This practice has enabled the community to maintain food availability and avoid food shortages for decades.

Traditional agricultural practices are also preserved through indigenous harvesting techniques such as *dietem*, which uses a traditional tool called *ani-ani*. These methods reflect the community's commitment to protecting rice plants and respecting natural cycles. Indigenous agricultural knowledge has been widely recognized as an important foundation for sustainable environmental management and ecological balance [12],[13].

Recent attention from local government institutions toward indigenous food systems further highlights the significance of Kasepuhan Cisitu in regional food resilience. Government recognition of indigenous knowledge and cultural sustainability has become increasingly important within educational and development discourse [14],[15]. The Banten Provincial Government has recognized the strategic role of indigenous communities in maintaining food

security and has proposed irrigation infrastructure support to strengthen agricultural productivity in customary areas.

Despite modernization and changing agricultural systems, the Kasepuhan Cisitu community continues to preserve its traditional values and local wisdom. Therefore, studying the Seren Taun tradition and indigenous food practices becomes important not only from a cultural perspective but also as a model for sustainable food security development [16],[17].

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative methods were chosen because the research focused on understanding cultural meanings, indigenous traditions, social practices, and local wisdom related to food security within the Kasepuhan Cisitu Indigenous Community.

The primary data sources were obtained from documented reports, indigenous community narratives, government statements, and news publications discussing the Seren Taun tradition, traditional agricultural practices, and food storage systems in Kasepuhan Cisitu. The study utilized textual analysis to interpret social and cultural meanings embedded within the traditions and practices of the community.

Data collection involved documentation techniques through reviewing narratives concerning traditional rice harvesting methods, the use of *leuit*, agricultural rituals, and government initiatives supporting indigenous food resilience. The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis procedures consisting of data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on several themes (Table 1).

Table 1. Theme of the Study

No	Theme	Short Description / Remark
1	The Cultural Meaning of Seren Taun	Examines Seren Taun as a traditional thanksgiving ceremony reflecting spiritual beliefs, gratitude for harvests, cultural identity, and intergenerational transmission of indigenous values.
2	The Role of *Leuit* in Food Security	Discusses the function of traditional rice barns (*leuit*) as long-term food storage systems that strengthen household food reserves and community food resilience.
3	Indigenous Agricultural Practices	Explores traditional farming and harvesting methods, including the use of *ani-ani*, ecological farming principles, and sustainable management of natural resources.
4	Community Participation and Collective Values	Analyzes the role of cooperation, social solidarity, collective responsibility, and communal participation in maintaining agricultural sustainability and food security.
5	Government Support for Indigenous Agricultural Sustainability	Highlights government initiatives, particularly irrigation infrastructure development and policy support, to strengthen indigenous agricultural productivity and sustainable food systems.

To ensure credibility, the study compared information from multiple documented sources discussing the same indigenous practices and social phenomena. The findings were interpreted within the framework of indigenous knowledge systems and sustainable food security perspectives.

Results and Discussion

A. The Cultural Meaning of Seren Taun in Indigenous Society

The Seren Taun ceremony serves as an annual thanksgiving ritual conducted after the harvest season by the Kasepuhan Cisitu Indigenous Community. The tradition symbolizes gratitude for agricultural abundance and reflects the spiritual relationship between humans and nature [8],[18].

Rice is perceived not only as food but also as a sacred element that sustains life and the continuity of the community. The ceremony strengthens social solidarity among community members. During Seren Taun, indigenous people gather collectively to celebrate the harvest, perform traditional rituals, and reinforce communal identity [14],[19]. This collective participation contributes to social cohesion and encourages cooperation in agricultural activities. The Seren Taun tradition also functions as a mechanism for transmitting indigenous knowledge from older generations to younger members of the community [6],[11]. Through rituals and cultural practices, traditional agricultural values, environmental ethics, and customary laws are continuously preserved. Such intergenerational transmission is essential for maintaining cultural sustainability in the face of modernization. Moreover, Seren Taun reflects an alternative perspective on development and prosperity. For the Kasepuhan Cisitu community, prosperity is measured not only by economic wealth but also by food sufficiency, communal harmony, and environmental balance. This worldview contrasts with modern agricultural systems that often prioritize commercialization and industrial productivity over sustainability.

B. The Role of *Leuit* in Maintaining Food Security

One of the most important findings of this study is the strategic role of leuit as a traditional food storage system. The *leuit* functions as a household rice barn used to preserve harvested rice for long-term consumption [2],[3]. Every married family is traditionally expected to own at least one or two *leuit* as a symbol of responsibility and food preparedness.

The existence of *leuit* significantly contributes to household food resilience. Unlike modern food systems that rely heavily on market distribution, the Kasepuhan Cisitu community stores rice independently for future needs [4],[15]. Some rice stocks are reportedly preserved for decades, demonstrating the effectiveness of traditional storage techniques. The *leuit* system reduces vulnerability to food shortages and economic instability. Community members rarely experience hunger because food reserves remain available throughout the year. The stored

rice is used not only for daily consumption but also for social and cultural ceremonies such as weddings, circumcisions, and customary events. In addition, the *leuit* represents collective identity and local wisdom. Architecturally, the rice barns symbolize harmony between humans and nature through the use of environmentally friendly materials such as bamboo and wood. Socially, the *leuit* reinforces values of discipline, responsibility, and future-oriented thinking. The findings demonstrate that indigenous food storage systems can become important references for modern food security policies in an era of climate uncertainty and food vulnerability [9],[13].

C. Indigenous Agricultural Practices and Environmental Sustainability

The Kasepuhan Cisitu community maintains traditional agricultural methods inherited across generations. One important practice is harvesting rice using the *ani-ani*, a traditional hand tool employed in the *dietem* harvesting method [4],[12].

This technique reflects respect toward rice plants and prevents excessive exploitation of agricultural resources. The community also emphasizes natural agricultural cycles and avoids excessive commercialization of rice production. Rice harvests are primarily intended for household consumption and communal food reserves rather than market-oriented profit. This approach strengthens food sovereignty and minimizes dependency on external food supply systems. Environmental conservation is closely integrated into indigenous agricultural traditions. The community recognizes that maintaining forests, water sources, and agricultural ecosystems is essential for sustaining food production [2],[3]. This ecological awareness aligns with principles of sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship. The role of customary law is also significant in regulating agricultural behavior. Indigenous rules encourage responsible land use, protect communal resources, and preserve traditional ecological knowledge. Through customary mechanisms, the community successfully maintains agricultural continuity despite external pressures from modernization [6],[16]. Furthermore, government recognition of indigenous food systems has encouraged collaborative efforts to improve agricultural infrastructure. The proposed development of irrigation systems in Situmulya and Kujangsari villages indicates increasing awareness of the importance of supporting indigenous agricultural resilience. Improved irrigation infrastructure may enhance productivity while preserving traditional agricultural values. Overall, the agricultural practices of the Kasepuhan Cisitu community demonstrate that indigenous knowledge systems can contribute significantly to sustainable food security and environmental preservation.

D. Community Participation and Collective Values

Community participation and collective values are fundamental elements in maintaining food security within the Kasepuhan Cisitu Indigenous Community. Indigenous communities

often rely on social solidarity, cooperation, and collective responsibility to sustain communal welfare [14],[18]. The values of cooperation (*gotong royong*), togetherness, and communal responsibility strongly influence agricultural production, food distribution, and cultural preservation.

One important aspect of community participation is the collective involvement in agricultural activities, beginning from land preparation, planting, harvesting, and post-harvest storage. Community members work together during the harvest season and participate collectively in traditional ceremonies such as Seren Taun. This cooperation strengthens social cohesion and ensures that agricultural activities can be completed efficiently while preserving customary values. The Seren Taun ceremony itself represents an important communal space where indigenous identity and social relationships are reinforced [7],[10].

Collective responsibility is also reflected in the obligation for each household to own *leuit* as a family food reserve. This customary expectation encourages long-term food preparedness and prevents dependency on external food supplies [11],[15]. The existence of household food reserves contributes not only to family resilience but also to community stability during periods of economic uncertainty or agricultural disruption. Social solidarity within the community minimizes the risk of food insecurity. Indigenous social systems encourage mutual assistance among families facing agricultural difficulties or food shortages. Such collective values strengthen social resilience and reduce vulnerability to external economic pressures.

The preservation of collective traditions also contributes to cultural sustainability. In many modern societies, individualistic lifestyles and market-oriented agricultural systems often weaken communal relationships. However, the Kasepuhan Cisitu community continues to prioritize collective welfare, environmental harmony, and cultural continuity over excessive commercialization. This communal orientation provides an important example of how social cohesion can strengthen sustainable food systems. Overall, community participation and collective values function as social capital that supports agricultural sustainability, cultural preservation, and long-term food security within the indigenous community [4],[20].

E. Government Support for Indigenous Agricultural Sustainability

Government support plays an important role in strengthening indigenous agricultural sustainability and maintaining regional food security. Recent policy discussions increasingly recognize indigenous knowledge systems as valuable resources for sustainable development [2],[4]. In recent years, the local government of Banten Province has increasingly recognized the strategic contributions of indigenous communities, including the Kasepuhan Cisitu community, to sustainable agriculture and food resilience. Table 2 shows the major issues with the support.

Table 2. Government Support to the Community

No	Government Support Aspect	Description / Remark	Expected Impact on Indigenous Agricultural Sustainability
1	Irrigation Infrastructure Development	The Banten Provincial Government proposed constructing irrigation systems in Situmulya and Kujangsari Villages to support agricultural productivity.	Improves water availability, increases rice production, and strengthens long-term agricultural sustainability.
2	Recognition of Indigenous Communities	Local authorities acknowledged the strategic role of the Kasepuhan Cisitu community in maintaining regional food security through traditional agricultural systems.	Enhances institutional support and strengthens the legitimacy of indigenous agricultural practices.
3	Collaboration Between Government and Indigenous Leaders	Government officials and customary leaders engaged in discussions regarding agricultural needs and development priorities.	Encourages participatory decision-making and culturally sensitive development policies.
4	Support for Food Sovereignty	Government policies appreciate the traditional *leuit* system and community-based food reserves as models of local food resilience.	Strengthens household food security and reduces dependence on external food markets.
5	Sustainable Agricultural Development	Indigenous farming practices are considered compatible with environmental sustainability and ecological conservation principles.	Promotes environmentally friendly agriculture and protects natural resources for future generations.
6	Preservation of Local Wisdom and Culture	Government recognition contributes to safeguarding traditional ceremonies, customary laws, and indigenous agricultural knowledge.	Prevents cultural erosion and ensures intergenerational transmission of local wisdom.
7	Strengthening Rural Food Security Policies	Indigenous agricultural systems are increasingly viewed as important components of regional food security strategies.	Supports inclusive and sustainable food security planning at local and provincial levels.

One major issue identified by the indigenous community is the limited availability of permanent irrigation infrastructure. Although the Kasepuhan Cisitu community has successfully managed large-scale agricultural production across approximately 2,500 hectares of rice fields, agricultural productivity remains constrained by insufficient irrigation systems. Most irrigation channels are still managed independently by residents using traditional methods.

The Provincial Government of Banten has responded positively to indigenous agricultural challenges by prioritizing irrigation development in customary agricultural areas. Collaborative approaches between government institutions and indigenous communities are considered essential for sustainable development [3],[9]. Government officials emphasized that indigenous villages possess strong local wisdom and agricultural capabilities that can significantly contribute to regional food security. Therefore, infrastructure support is considered necessary to enhance agricultural productivity while preserving indigenous traditions.

The proposed construction of irrigation systems in Situmulya Village and Kujangsari Village demonstrates a collaborative effort between indigenous leaders and government institutions. Improved irrigation systems are expected to strengthen water management, increase agricultural efficiency, and ensure the sustainability of rice production in customary territories.

Government recognition also contributes to the preservation of indigenous culture and traditional ecological knowledge [5],[16]. The Kasepuhan Cisitu community has proven capable of maintaining household food sufficiency independently through traditional rice storage systems and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Local authorities have acknowledged that indigenous communities in Lebak Regency rarely experience food shortages because of their strong food sovereignty traditions.

In addition to infrastructure development, government recognition contributes to the preservation of indigenous culture and traditional ecological knowledge. Policy support for customary communities can help protect indigenous land rights, traditional agricultural systems, and local cultural heritage from external pressures associated with modernization and industrialization.

However, government intervention should remain sensitive to indigenous cultural values and community autonomy. Development programs must prioritize participatory approaches that involve indigenous leaders and respect customary regulations. Excessive modernization without cultural consideration may threaten traditional agricultural practices and weaken local wisdom systems. Collaboration between government institutions and indigenous communities can create a balanced approach to sustainable agricultural development by integrating infrastructure support with indigenous knowledge systems [11],[21].

Conclusion

The Seren Taun tradition and customary practices of the Kasepuhan Cisitu Indigenous Community play an essential role in maintaining sustainable food security. The findings indicate that indigenous traditions function not only as cultural expressions but also as practical mechanisms for preserving food availability, strengthening social solidarity, and protecting environmental sustainability. The *leuit* system serves as an effective traditional food storage mechanism that enables households to maintain long-term food reserves and reduce vulnerability to food shortages. Traditional agricultural practices, including the use of *ani-ani* harvesting methods and environmentally conscious farming systems, further strengthen community resilience and ecological balance. The study also highlights the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission in sustaining indigenous food systems. Cultural ceremonies such as Seren Taun preserve local wisdom and reinforce collective responsibility toward food sovereignty and environmental conservation.

Government support through irrigation infrastructure and recognition of indigenous agricultural systems can further strengthen the sustainability of local food resilience. Therefore, indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions should be integrated into broader food security policies and sustainable development strategies in Indonesia. In conclusion, the Kasepuhan Cisitu Indigenous Community provides an important example of how local wisdom, cultural values, and traditional agricultural systems can contribute to long-term food security and sustainable living in contemporary society.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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