

Practice of the Ngalaksa Tradition as a Means of Sociocultural Education in Rancakalong, Sumedang, West Java

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Abstract. The Ngalaksa tradition in Rancakalong District is a manifestation of the cultural identity of agricultural communities that functions as a ceremony of gratitude for harvests as well as a mechanism for strengthening social solidarity. This study aims to reveal the philosophical meaning, historical background, ritual structure, as well as the sociocultural and religious values contained in the tradition. The method used is a qualitative approach with field studies through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, and documentation and literature studies. The research results show that Ngalaksa was born from historical reflection on past food crisis trauma and functions as a spiritual preventive instrument to maintain harmony between humans, nature, and God. Socioculturally, this tradition maintains mechanical solidarity through mechanisms of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), deliberation (*badanten*), and inclusivity of cross-generational participation. Modern adaptations such as the use of technology and formalization of organization strengthen Ngalaksa's cultural resilience amidst globalization. The research conclusion emphasizes the importance of integrating this local wisdom into formal education and digital documentation for sustainable local identity preservation.

Keywords: *Ngalaksa, Gratitude, Sociocultural, Local Wisdom, Social Solidarity.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Local culture is essentially a system of values, knowledge, and social practices passed down through generations and serves as the foundation of a community's identity. From a sociocultural perspective, cultural identity is not formed instantly, but rather through a long historical process influenced by social experiences, ecological conditions, and religious beliefs. In Rancakalong District, Sumedang Regency, one manifestation of cultural identity that remains preserved to this day is the Ngalaksa tradition. This tradition is not simply an annual customary ceremony, but rather a symbol of the identity of an agrarian society that places harmony between humans, nature, and God as the foundation of communal life.

As a community historically dependent on agriculture, the Rancakalong people have developed a social structure closely linked to the planting and harvesting cycle. In this regard, Ngalaksa serves as a collective ritual that represents gratitude for the earth's bounty and serves as a mechanism for strengthening social solidarity. The procession, which involves elements of prayer, symbols of food (especially rice as a source of life), and cross-generational participation, demonstrates that this tradition serves as a medium for transmitting values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and respect for ancestors. Thus, Ngalaksa can be understood as a living cultural identity, not simply a static historical relic.

Historically, the birth of this tradition is closely linked to the community's traumatic past experiences: a prolonged drought that led to famine and a food crisis. In agrarian societies, crop failure is not only an economic issue but also affects social and spiritual aspects. Drought causes rice fields to dry up, rice supplies to dwindle, and food security to be disrupted. This situation creates collective suffering that forces the community to deeply reflect on their relationship with nature and the Creator. From this emerges the realization that the balance of life is determined not only by human hard work, but also by the will and grace of God

Almighty. The Ngalaksa tradition then emerged as a form of prayer, spiritual endeavor, and shared commitment to continuously maintaining harmony in life.

The existence of the Ngalaksa tradition also reflects patterns of cultural adaptation to ecological crises. Within the framework of cultural anthropology, rituals often serve as social instruments to alleviate collective anxiety and build shared optimism. By performing thanksgiving rituals after a successful harvest, the community not only expresses joy but also reinforces the belief that the bitter experience of drought should not be repeated due to human negligence. In other words, Ngalaksa serves as both a historical reminder and a moral preventive mechanism.

The religious dimension is at the heart of all Ngalaksa activities. In Islamic teachings, gratitude is a spiritual obligation with ethical and social implications. Gratitude does not stop at mere words, but must be reflected in the proper and responsible use of blessings. Conversely, ungratefulness is understood as denying or misusing God's gifts, which, from a theological perspective, can have negative consequences, both spiritually and socially. Therefore, the Ngalaksa tradition serves as a means of cultural education to instill an awareness that abundant harvests are not solely the result of human ability, but rather a gift that must be preserved through humility, social solidarity, and concern for others.

In the context of socio-cultural management education, the Ngalaksa tradition holds strategic relevance as a source of learning based on local wisdom. It contains historical, ecological, social, and religious values that can be integrated into the educational process to shape students' character rooted in their own culture. Thus, the study of Ngalaksa is not only important as cultural documentation, but also as an effort to strengthen local identity amidst the currents of modernization and globalization that have the potential to erode traditional values.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Structural Functionalism Theory

Malinowski (1944) argued that every social institution, tradition, or ritual exists because it serves a specific function in maintaining individual and group stability. This theory views every element of culture as existing to fulfill basic human needs, both biological and psychological.

For Malinowski, in order to fulfill individual psychobiological needs and maintain the continuity of a social group, certain minimum conditions must be met by the individual members of that social group. These minimum conditions consist of seven basic needs: nutrition, reproduction, bodily comfort, safety, relaxation, movement, and growth. All activities undertaken by individuals are aimed at fulfilling these seven basic needs (Marzali, 2006).

2. Social Solidarity Theory

Durkheim divided social solidarity into two main forms: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity (Dila, 2022). Mechanical solidarity emerged in simpler, more homogeneous, traditional societies, where members shared similarities in many aspects of life, such as values, norms, and occupations. This solidarity was forged through commonality, where violations of norms were perceived as a threat to social harmony. Meanwhile, organic solidarity developed in more complex and diversified societies, where relationships between individuals were built on the basis of occupational specialization and interdependence (Fathoni, 2024).

Durkheim saw traditional societies as bound by "mechanical solidarity," a cohesion that emerged from shared roles, values, and beliefs. Durkheim stated that in mechanical solidarity,

social bonds were built on similarity; individuals felt connected because they performed the same work and worshipped the same gods.

3. Local Wisdom

Local wisdom, or what is known as local wisdom, etymologically refers to "wisdom" that is "local." In depth, this concept encompasses a collection of ideas, values, and outlooks on life within a local community, imbued with wisdom and values of goodness that are deeply ingrained and adhered to by its members (Umarella, 2020).

In its function, local wisdom serves as a binding element within the cultural structure. Its existence is dynamic, with this wisdom continually redefined and developed by local actors through a continuous process of adaptation. As a cultural product, local wisdom manifests itself in various forms, from customs, social rules or norms, language, to belief systems and daily habits (Umarella, 2020).

In the modern era, local wisdom plays a crucial role as an instrument of cultural resilience in the face of globalization. This is because local wisdom contains pure values that are fundamental to the development of national character. Amidst the increasing flow of digital information and communication that risks eroding local identity, local wisdom serves as a bulwark to safeguard and preserve the nation's identity.

C. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study method in Rancakalong, Rancakalong District, Sumedang Regency, West Java. Through this method, data was obtained through direct observation of the Ngalaksa tradition to gain a systematic overview of the meaning, ritual structure, and social and religious values embodied in the ceremony as a form of community gratitude.

Data collection techniques included participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and literature review. Observations were conducted directly by observing the Ngalaksa procession to understand the ritual stages, the symbols used, and the social interactions that occurred. In-depth interviews were conducted with a traditional leader and community members involved in the Ngalaksa ceremony as primary sources to gather information on the history of drought and famine that underpinned the tradition, as well as the meaning of gratitude from a religious perspective. Documentation studies were used to obtain supporting written and visual data, while literature studies were conducted to strengthen the theoretical framework and conceptual analysis. The data obtained were also supported by a literature review of scientific articles, textbooks, and references relevant to cultural studies, agrarian rituals, and the concept of gratitude from an Islamic perspective. All collected information was then processed using qualitative descriptive data analysis techniques. The results of the 5W+1H questionnaire were sorted, systematically organized, and conclusions drawn.

The analysis focused on categorizing key elements within the Ngalaksa tradition, such as the historical background of the drought and famine that led to the tradition's birth, the structure and stages of the ritual, the symbols used, and the internalization of the value of gratitude to Allah SWT as an effort to avoid ungratefulness. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of Ngalaksa as a thanksgiving ceremony that represents the cultural identity of the Rancakalong community.

The data processing and analysis process was carried out in stages through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The collected data were categorized based on key themes, such as cultural identity, the history of the agrarian crisis, and religious values. The data was then presented in a systematic descriptive narrative to examine the

interrelationships between themes. Conclusions were drawn inductively, using triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the information. With this method, the research is expected to be able to produce a comprehensive understanding of the Ngalaksa tradition as a cultural heritage that is full of historical and religious meaning, as well as being relevant in socio-cultural management studies.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ngalaksa tradition in Rancakalong is a collective expression of gratitude among agrarian communities, integrating spiritual, historical, and social values as a form of respect for the blessings of Allah SWT. This expression of gratitude is manifested through the process of making and sharing laksa, accompanied by communal prayer. This helps the community avoid ungratefulness and reinforces the belief that the harvest is a divine blessing for which we should all be grateful (Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025). Historical reflection and past trauma are the primary triggers for this tradition, where collective memories of the prolonged famine and starvation that plagued the Rancakalong region in the past encourage the community to use Ngalaksa as a means of reconstructing these bitter experiences (Haq, 2022).

The preventive spiritual function is evident in the community's belief that regularly carrying out this tradition can ward off disaster and ward off the threat of future famine, while simultaneously strengthening harmony between humans, nature, and God (Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025; Sahroni, 2023). The symbolism of the Ngalaksa tradition emphasizes customary elements crucial to maintaining the ritual's validity as a socio-cultural expression of gratitude. The importance of congkok leaves as a laksa wrapper is paramount because it symbolizes the sanctity of local nature and a direct connection to the earth's produce. Without these leaves, the ceremony is considered incomplete (Haq, 2022). Traditional standards of validity require the absolute use of congkok leaves for the ritual to be "legitimate" and full of blessings. Substituting these leaves could undermine the meaning of respect for ancestors and Dewi Sri (Nyi Pohaci) (Yuningsih, 2005). Furthermore, laksa wrapped in congkok leaves represents soil fertility and predicts the following year's harvest, thus strengthening the cultural identity of the Rancakalong community amidst modernization (Sahroni, 2023; Saimah & Ribawati, 2025).

The spatial and temporal patterns of the Ngalaksa tradition reflect the Rancakalong community's dynamic adaptation to maintaining the inclusiveness of the thanksgiving ritual. The rotating location cycle among five villages (Rurukan Rancakalong, Cijere, Legok Picung, Cibunar, and Pasir Biru) ensures equitable participation across communities and strengthens overall social solidarity (Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025). The shift in frequency from every three years to an annual routine demonstrates a response to the need for more intensive maintenance of cultural identity in the contemporary era (Aliyudin, 2020). This pattern also serves as a temporal reminder of the agricultural cycle, where timing the event in conjunction with the harvest season deepens the philosophical meaning of gratitude and prevents agrarian crises (Haq, 2022).

The sociocultural management of the Ngalaksa tradition emphasizes the mechanism of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) as the primary foundation for community participation in the thanksgiving ceremony. This mechanism begins with a deliberation (*badanten*) involving community leaders and a committee to coordinate preparations, followed by the *bewara*, *ngahayu-hayu*, and *mera* stages, which equitably distribute tasks and materials (Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025). Inclusiveness is evident in the involvement of all levels of society, from young people to the elderly, allowing each individual to contribute according to their abilities and strengthening a sense of collective ownership (Haq, 2022). Education and the transmission of values by parents are central, with gratitude, mutual cooperation, and respect for ancestors

taught directly to the younger generation through ritual processions as a form of informal education (Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025; Saimah & Ribawati, 2025).

The adaptation of the Ngalaksa tradition in the modern era demonstrates the cultural resilience of the Rancakalong community, which maintains the essence of gratitude while integrating contemporary elements. The evolution of deliberations from a voluntary model among village representatives to a more formal structure involving the neighborhood unit (RT/RW) level increases efficiency and inclusiveness of planning (Aliyudin, 2020). The integration of technology, such as the use of electricity for lighting and sound amplification, and the increased number of participants, makes the event more attractive and serves as a cultural tourism attraction (Saimah & Ribawati, 2025; Agustina, 2024). This adaptation ensures that traditions remain relevant for the younger generation without eroding the core values of mutual cooperation and gratitude amidst the currents of globalization (Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025; Sahroni, 2023).

E. CONCLUSION

The Ngalaksa tradition in Rancakalong has been identified as a gratitude ceremony rich in philosophical meaning and symbolism. Collective expressions of gratitude, historical reflection on the trauma of drought, spiritual preventive functions, and the importance of the congkok leaf as an element of customary legitimacy are at the core of the socio-cultural practices of an agrarian community. The research findings align with the initial objective of uncovering local cultural identity, where past ecological crises are addressed through rituals that strengthen the harmony between humans, nature, and God, thus achieving a synthesis between historical background, religious values, and adaptive spatial-temporal patterns such as inter-village rotation cycles and annual changes in the frequency of rituals. The main advantage of this tradition lies in its ability to maintain Durkheimian mechanical solidarity through inclusive participation and local wisdom, which serve as a bulwark of cultural resilience amidst globalization. However, drawbacks include the potential decline in younger generation participation due to modernization and logistical challenges in location rotation. Possible further developments include integration into formal education programs to build character based on local wisdom, as well as digital documentation of symbolism for preservation and development as a sustainable cultural tourism asset.

The sociocultural management and modern adaptation of Ngalaksa conclude that this tradition has high relevance as an educational instrument and value transmission, effectively addressing the issue of cultural preservation amidst the currents of social change through the mechanism of mutual cooperation and the evolution of formal deliberations involving the RT/RW structure. The synthesis of the research objectives and results confirms that the inclusiveness of the role of all levels of society and the integration of technology such as electricity have strengthened the role of rituals as tourist attractions, thus addressing the issue of erosion of traditional values by increasing the scale of more attractive events. The main advantages are increased social solidarity and planning efficiency, supporting Malinowski's theory on the function of rituals in fulfilling psychological needs. While disadvantages include the risk of commercialization that can obscure spiritual meaning if not managed properly. Further development can be directed at training programs for youth to lead committees, collaboration with local governments for sustainable development agendas, and further research on the economic impact of technological adaptation in rituals.

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