



The traditional economic systems based on local wisdom of indigenous communities in Indonesia

Wazin¹, Mahfud²

¹² Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin State Islamic University Banten, Indonesia

* Correspondence: wazin@uinbanten.ac.id

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the traditional economic systems of indigenous communities in Indonesia, focusing on the roles of local wisdom and cultural practices in sustaining livelihoods. The research examines Banten, West Java, Central Java, and Bali indigenous communities to understand how their economic systems integrate sustainability and cultural preservation. The study employs a qualitative ethnographic research design. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation within the respective communities. Fieldwork focused on agricultural practices, economic distribution patterns, and the integration of cultural norms in economic activities. The findings reveal that the Kasepuhan communities in Banten and West Java practice sustainable rice farming under the guidance of traditional leaders, adhering to once-a-year planting to maintain soil fertility. In Bali, the Tri Hita Karana philosophy underpins the Subak irrigation system, ensuring harmony between agriculture, nature, and spirituality. The Samin community in Central Java demonstrates resilience through crop diversity and equitable resource distribution, prioritizing communal welfare and ecological balance. This study contributes original insights into the intersection of traditional knowledge and economic sustainability, addressing gaps in previous research that have often overlooked economic practices. It highlights Indigenous economic systems' adaptability and potential to inform sustainable development strategies.

Keywords: *Traditional Economy, Indigenous Society, Local Wisdom*

Introduction

Indonesia is characterized by its vast diversity of ethnic groups and cultural traditions, from Sabang to Merauke. Despite achieving independence over 75 years ago, economic development remains uneven across the country (Aragon, 2022). The benefits of modernity and advancements in science and technology have not reached all layers of society, whether due to limited access to progress, insufficient governmental attention, or a deliberate choice by certain communities, such as many Indigenous groups, to maintain a modest and traditional lifestyle. These Indigenous communities, dispersed across various regions in Indonesia, adhere firmly to the customs and traditions of their ancestors, including in their economic practices (Arsal et al., 2023). This study covers Indigenous Communities in Banten, West Java, Central Java, and Bali, exploring the traditional economic systems of selected Indigenous groups and their relevance to contemporary sustainability challenges (Held, 2019). Their adherence to tradition is not merely a cultural choice but also a strategic response to socio-economic challenges, as Indigenous knowledge systems often provide sustainable practices that have been tested over generations (Qodim, 2023).

Indigenous communities typically rely on agrarian livelihoods and maintain traditional economic systems. Production and distribution practices in such systems are deeply rooted in

longstanding cultural knowledge and norms preserved over generations (Aich et al., 2022). Local cultural values and wisdom form the foundation of their actions, particularly in economic activities (Gonçalves et al., 2021). These values manifest in collective practices, traditions, and belief systems that underpin their financial structures (Ioris, 2022). For example, in Banten, rice farming among Indigenous groups such as the Baduy and the Kasepuhan communities of Cisungsang, Cicarucub, and Citorek adheres to traditional customs and the guidance of customary (adat) leaders (Afrida et al., 2021). These leaders, believed to receive divine insight (wangsit), determine the appropriate times for planting rice (Lindawati et al., 2024). Typically, rice is cultivated once a year, following ancestral traditions. While adherence is voluntary, most members of these communities comply with these customs, fearing repercussions for breaking the rules and norms passed down by their forebears (Qodim, 2023). This dynamic reflects a broader trend where Indigenous communities utilize their traditional ecological knowledge to navigate modern economic pressures while maintaining cultural integrity (Sokoy, 2022).

Similar practices are observed in West Java among the Naga and Kasepuhan Ciptagelar communities. Their rice cultivation methods have been passed down as a cherished heritage. The agricultural and economic systems used by these communities remain traditional, reflecting the values and practices of their ancestors. Likewise, the indigenous communities in Pakraman villages in Bali practice economic systems inspired by Hindu teachings and Bali's local wisdom. Their traditional economic systems integrate spiritual and cultural values prioritizing community welfare over individual gain, demonstrating a holistic approach to economic development that contrasts sharply with more individualistic modern economic models (Colbourne et al., 2019).

Although numerous studies have been conducted on indigenous communities in Indonesia, the majority focus on religion, customs, and cultural aspects. Very few delve into the traditional economic systems of these communities. For instance, research on the Baduy people—a prominent indigenous group in Banten—largely centers on their simple way of life and close connection to nature. Studies on other Kasepuhan communities in South Lebak, Banten, such as Cisungsang, Citorek, Cicarucub, Guradog, and Sajira (Syahrulyati et al., 2022). There are no comprehensive discussions of their traditional economic systems. This gap in the literature is significant, as understanding these systems is crucial for appreciating how Indigenous communities sustain their livelihoods and cultural identities amidst external pressures (Hotte et al., 2018; Novrizka, 2023).

Similarly, works on indigenous communities in West Java often overlook their economic aspects. Studies such as an exploration of the Ciptagelar community focus on belief systems, customs, and traditions, offering only brief insights into their economic conditions (Widianingsih et al., 2023). Other works, such as those examining the Naga community on local wisdom as a learning resource and mythology, prioritize cultural and political dimensions over economics (Gunara et al., 2022). The same pattern emerges in studies of Bali's Pakraman villages. Research such as an examination of customary law or Parwata and Wijaya's cultural tourism survey management in Pakraman villages explores sociocultural themes but neglects the communities' economic practices (Mohapatra & Mohapatra, 2021). This oversight can hinder the development of policies supporting these communities' financial sustainability while respecting their cultural heritage (Khasanah et al., 2022; Zamzuri et al., 2023).

This study addresses the following research questions: 1) What are the traditional economic systems of the Kasepuhan Cicarucub community in Banten and the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar community in West Java? 2) How does the traditional economic system of the Samin community in Blora, Central Java, work? 3) What characterizes the traditional economic systems of the Bali Aga community in Bali? By investigating these questions, this study seeks to fill the gap in the literature regarding the traditional economic systems of Indonesia's indigenous communities, offering a more comprehensive understanding of their cultural and economic practices. This understanding is essential not only for academic discourse but also for informing policies that can enhance the socio-economic well-being of these communities while preserving their unique cultural identities (David-Chavez et al., 2020; Jima, 2023).

The traditional economic systems of Indigenous communities in Indonesia have long been shaped by their adherence to ancestral customs and local wisdom. Various studies have explored the cultural, religious, and social aspects of Indigenous groups, but there remains a gap in literature

concerning their economic practices (Pearson et al., 2023). Indigenous communities, such as those in Banten, West Java, Central Java, and Bali, rely on subsistence agriculture, barter systems, and communal resource management as their primary economic models (Achmad et al., 2022). These practices, embedded in Indigenous knowledge, serve as sustainable strategies for resource utilization and socio-economic stability. However, academic discourse has often overlooked the interplay between tradition and economy, making further research necessary to understand these communities' financial sustainability while preserving cultural identity (Elegbede et al., 2023).

The economic systems of Indigenous communities in Banten, particularly among the Baduy and Kasepuhan groups, highlight the role of traditional laws (*adat*) in shaping financial transactions and agricultural cycles. The Baduy community adheres to strict traditional guidelines that prohibit the use of modern technology and external economic influences (Hasim et al., 2025). Similarly, the Kasepuhan communities of Cisungsang, Cicarucub, and Citorek regulate their economic activities based on divine insight (*wangsit*) received by their *adat* leaders. The adherence to rice farming as a once-a-year practice exemplifies their resistance to modern agricultural intensification, ensuring the preservation of both land fertility and socio-religious harmony (Wicaksono, 2024). This economic self-sufficiency fosters resilience against external economic pressures and highlights the significance of Indigenous ecological wisdom.

In West Java, the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar and Naga communities continue to uphold ancestral agricultural techniques passed down through generations. The Naga community, known for its deeply rooted agrarian lifestyle, emphasizes sustainability and communal labor-sharing as fundamental economic principles (Jagannath et al., 2024). Kasepuhan Ciptagelar follows a similar model, where rice farming follows a lunar calendar and ritualistic ceremonies mark each stage of the agricultural process (Widianingsih et al., 2023). Unlike contemporary capitalist economies driven by individualism, these Indigenous economic structures prioritize collective welfare, reinforcing traditional norms and social cohesion. However, modern economic encroachment threatens these systems, necessitating research into adaptive strategies that balance tradition with sustainable (Adebayo, 2025).

The Indigenous Samin community in Blora, Central Java, is another example of a society that has maintained its traditional economic structure despite modern pressures. The Samin people reject capitalist economic systems and state interventions, instead practicing a subsistence economy based on agriculture and bartering (Prabowo et al., 2023; Sahroniah et al., 2022). Their economic model aligns with their broader ideological resistance to external influences, reinforcing communal independence and environmental conservation. Studies on the Samin community primarily focus on their socio-political resistance rather than their economic strategies, leaving a significant gap in the literature regarding how they sustain themselves financially (Dwisvimiar, 2022; Susilawati et al., 2020; Tirtayasa, 2019). Understanding the economic resilience of the Samin people could provide insights into alternative economic systems that prioritize ecological and social balance.

In Bali, the traditional economic systems of the Bali Aga community integrate spiritual and cultural values into economic decision-making. Pakraman villages, guided by Hindu teachings, follow a communal land ownership system and uphold collective decision-making in agricultural and financial (Khasanah et al., 2022; Zamzuri et al., 2023). Unlike market-driven economies, these villages emphasize socio-religious harmony and shared prosperity over individual wealth accumulation (Mohapatra & Mohapatra, 2021). The Subak irrigation system, a UNESCO-recognized cultural heritage, is a prime example of Indigenous economic sustainability. However, globalization and tourism development pose challenges to these traditional structures, necessitating a critical examination of adaptive measures that protect local economic integrity while embracing selective modernization (David-Chavez et al., 2020; Jima, 2023).

The existing body of literature predominantly explores Indigenous communities from cultural, religious, and sociopolitical perspectives, often neglecting economic aspects. Research on the Baduy, Kasepuhan, Naga, Samin, and Bali Aga communities tends to focus on belief systems, customary practices, and identity preservation rather than the economic mechanisms that sustain these groups (Gunara et al., 2022). While some scholars acknowledge traditional economic models, comprehensive analyses of their financial structures remain scarce. This research aims to address this gap by providing a detailed investigation into Indigenous economic sustainability, identifying

adaptive strategies, and offering policy recommendations that balance tradition with economic resilience (Davi d-Chavez et al., 2020; Jima, 2023).

This study seeks to answer key questions about the economic systems of Indigenous communities in Banten, West Java, Central Java, and Bali. By examining the Kasepuhan Cicarucub and Ciptagelar communities, the Samin people of Blora, and the Bali Aga community, the research aims to uncover how traditional economic practices continue to function in contemporary settings. These insights will contribute to a broader understanding of Indigenous economies, their role in sustainable development, and the implications for policy-making aimed at preserving cultural heritage while fostering economic growth.

Method

This study employs a qualitative field research design using ethnographic and economic anthropology approaches. As defined by Spradley & Elizabeth, ethnography involves describing a culture to understand life from the perspective of its native people (Spradley & Elizabeth, 1997). Malinowski also emphasized that ethnography seeks to grasp the native point of view, their relationship with life, and their worldview (Malinowski, 2007). This method enables the researcher to systematically understand human cultures from the perspective of those who live it.

The study focuses on four indigenous communities: Kasepuhan Cicarucub in Banten, Kasepuhan Ciptagelar in West Java, the Samin community in Blora, Central Java, and the Bali Aga community in Bali. Data collection methods include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant observation is used to observe social phenomena in the daily lives of these communities, focusing specifically on their conceptions, behaviors, and attitudes related to their traditional economic systems (Abramson, 2021). This method ensures an immersive understanding of how their economic practices reflect cultural values and beliefs.

Interviews are conducted with key informants, including customary (adat) leaders, community elders, and other members of the indigenous communities. These interviews explore their perceptions of their economic systems, the influence of traditional ecological knowledge, and the role of cultural norms in shaping economic activities. The interview guide includes questions about agricultural practices, resource management, and integrating conventional values into economic decisions (Broad et al., 2022). The interview instrument underwent expert review to ensure validity, while reliability was tested through a pilot study conducted in a similar community.

Documentation involves collecting archival records, community manuscripts, and photographic evidence to support the observed and narrated data (Amiraslani & Dragovich, 2022). Data triangulation is employed by cross-verifying information obtained through observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure accuracy and consistency (Singh et al., 2021). Ethical approval for the study was obtained from an institutional ethics review board, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Participants' rights were protected by ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the option to withdraw at any time.

Data analysis follows a thematic approach, identifying patterns and insights related to the economic practices of the indigenous communities. Thematic coding was used to analyze transcripts and field notes, ensuring the findings aligned with the research questions (Janis, 2022). The analysis process also involves iterative discussions with cultural experts to validate interpretations and safeguard the artistic integrity of the findings. The ethnographic approach ensures a holistic understanding of the traditional economic systems in these diverse indigenous communities.

Results And Discussion

Traditional economic systems of the indigenous communities in *Kasepuhan Cicarucub* and *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar*

The indigenous communities of *Kasepuhan Cicarucub* in Banten and *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar* in West Java share a traditional economic system rooted in common cultural heritage and ancestral traditions. As part of the *Kasepuhan* Banten Kidul Indigenous Community Unity, which encompasses over 500 indigenous groups across Banten and West Java, their economic practices reflect a sustainable, community-centered approach to resource management (Pudjiastuti et al., 2021). These traditional

systems are characterized by collective governance, spiritual values, and adherence to customary laws (*adat*) that regulate economic activities. The integration of cultural heritage into economic structures has enabled these communities to maintain a resilient livelihood while preserving ecological balance and social cohesion. Their economic governance emphasizes equitable distribution, ensuring that resources are managed to sustain the entire community over the long term.

Agriculture, particularly rice cultivation, forms the backbone of the *Kasepuhan* economy. The communities adhere to customary regulations that restrict rice planting to once per year, a practice aimed at maintaining soil fertility and ensuring long-term agricultural productivity. The timing of cultivation is determined by traditional leaders through rituals and ancestral guidance (*wangsit*), underscoring the spiritual connection between the community and their environment (Hasim et al., 2025). Beyond rice, they cultivate vegetables and engage in fish farming to diversify their food sources and income. Economic distribution is based on principles of equity and sustainability, with rice considered sacred and only sold when there is surplus beyond household needs. Harvests are stored in communal rice barns (*leuit*) to ensure food security and reinforce social solidarity. These economic principles reflect the indigenous ecological knowledge that allows for long-term resource management without overexploitation (Rani et al., 2025).

In addition to agriculture, some members of the *Kasepuhan* Cicarucub community participate in gold mining (*grand*) as a supplementary economic activity, although this introduces environmental risks and regulatory challenges. Handicrafts and small-scale trading also contribute to their economy, albeit limited by infrastructure and market access constraints (Deshmukh et al., 2024). Despite their resilience, these communities face challenges in balancing traditional economic models with modernization pressures. The younger generation's exposure to external economic systems influences their perceptions of traditional practices, while climate variability and market demands necessitate adaptations to their economic structures. Nevertheless, the *Kasepuhan* economic system provides valuable insights into sustainable development by integrating indigenous wisdom with economic resilience. Supporting these communities in navigating modernization while preserving their cultural heritage requires targeted interventions that respect and reinforce their unique identity (Kaur et al., 2025).

Traditional economic practices

Agriculture serves as the foundation of the traditional economic systems in *Kasepuhan* Cicarucub and *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar, with rice cultivation playing a central role in both sustenance and cultural identity. The agricultural practices in these communities are deeply rooted in ancestral customs and spiritual beliefs, ensuring long-term sustainability and collective welfare (Derbile et al., 2022). Rice farming is the primary livelihood, with specific varieties cultivated based on environmental suitability and cultural significance. Notable rice varieties include Sri Mahi, Black Sticky Rice, White Sticky Rice, and Jogja, each holding unique dietary and ritualistic importance. Sticky rice varieties, for example, are integral to ceremonial dishes, symbolizing spiritual and communal values. These agricultural practices reflect a harmonious balance between tradition, ecology, and social cohesion, ensuring that food production is aligned with cultural heritage and environmental stewardship (Del Soldato & Massari, 2024).

The cultivation cycle follows strict traditional guidelines, requiring rice to be planted only once annually, typically commencing in the Hijri month of Muharram. This regulation aims to preserve soil fertility, mitigate pest infestations, and maintain ecological balance. Traditional leaders (*ketua adat*) determine the precise timing of planting and harvesting through rituals and ancestral guidance (*wangsit*), ensuring synchronization across the community (Budiman & Oue, 2025). This collective approach to agriculture allows fields to regenerate naturally and supports long-term sustainability. Despite planting only once a year, the harvested rice can sustain the community's needs for up to three years, with any surplus stored in communal rice barns (*leuit*) as a safeguard against potential food shortages. While rice remains the primary focus, other crops such as corn, vegetables, and chilies are cultivated to diversify food sources and supplement household incomes. Additionally, fish farming in small ponds or streams further enhances food security and economic resilience, providing protein sources and an alternative livelihood option (Lakra & Krishnani, 2022).

The integration of diversified crops and fish farming not only strengthens the economic

structure of the community but also reinforces social solidarity through shared labor and communal resource management. The sale of rice is strictly regulated, with sales permitted only when surplus stocks exceed the community's collective needs. Rice is considered a sacred gift from nature, embodying sustenance and life, and violating these norms—such as selling rice without adequate reserves—is believed to bring misfortune, including poor harvests or pest infestations. This cultural belief system serves as an intrinsic regulatory mechanism, ensuring that agricultural production remains focused on subsistence rather than excessive commercialization. Rituals also play a crucial role in agricultural activities, marking key milestones in the planting and harvesting cycles (Fenetiruma & Kamakaula, 2023). Before planting, offerings are presented to traditional leaders, who conduct ceremonies seeking divine blessings for a prosperous yield. These rituals, often involving symbolic items such as incense and sacred plants (*panglai*), reinforce the interconnectedness between spiritual beliefs and economic practices (Maesaroh et al., 2025).

The agricultural system in *Kasepuhan* Cicarucub and *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar exemplifies how traditional knowledge, cultural values, and ecological sustainability can be harmoniously integrated into an economic model (Mualimah et al., 2025). By adhering to ancestral wisdom, limiting rice planting frequency, and maintaining strict communal regulations, these communities safeguard soil health, prevent resource depletion, and uphold food security. Their reliance on local resources and communal decision-making fosters resilience against external challenges such as climate change and market fluctuations, ensuring economic autonomy. Ultimately, the agricultural practices of these communities present a valuable model for sustainable development, demonstrating the importance of preserving cultural heritage while fostering long-term environmental and economic stability (Naheed & Shooshtarian, 2022).

Economic distribution

The economic distribution system in *Kasepuhan* Cicarucub and *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar is deeply rooted in sustainability, communal welfare, and ancestral customs. Prioritizing collective needs over individual profit, this system ensures social cohesion and financial stability. Rice, regarded as a sacred resource, is central to the economy and is strictly governed by traditional norms. Households must secure an adequate annual reserve before selling any surplus, typically from older harvests stored in communal barns (*leuit*) (Firmansyah et al., 2022). This practice prevents food insecurity and maintains rice quality for personal consumption. Selling rice unnecessarily is considered a violation of tradition and is believed to bring misfortune, reinforcing the community's commitment to sustainable resource management. Other agricultural products, such as vegetables, chilies, and fish, face fewer restrictions and can be freely traded, allowing households to generate supplemental income without disrupting traditional economic structures (Yusriadi & Cahaya, 2022).

While agriculture remains the primary livelihood, secondary occupations provide additional income. In Cicarucub, informal gold mining (*gurandil*) has emerged as a significant economic activity, offering financial benefits such as improved access to education, housing, and infrastructure. However, this practice poses environmental risks, health hazards, and legal challenges, reflecting a tension between economic necessity and sustainability. Handicraft production, including bamboo goods like books, fans, and sieves, also plays a role in the local economy, though on a small scale. These crafts preserve cultural heritage and traditional knowledge but lack the infrastructure and investment needed for commercial expansion. The limited economic diversification exposes the communities to external vulnerabilities, such as climate change and market fluctuations, highlighting the need for sustainable alternatives that align with traditional values.

Despite these challenges, the *Kasepuhan* economic system exemplifies a moral economy centered on shared well-being. Communal rice storage, collective agricultural practices, and adherence to ancestral rituals ensure food security and social resilience. However, addressing modern economic pressures requires structured support for sustainable secondary occupations. Expanding regulated handicraft production and promoting environmentally responsible mining could enhance financial stability while preserving cultural identity. By integrating traditional wisdom with sustainable economic development, *Kasepuhan* communities can maintain their ecological and social balance while adapting to contemporary challenges (Pudjiastuti et al., 2021).

Traditional economic systems of the indigenous communities in Bali

The Bali Aga communities uphold traditional economic systems shaped by the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which emphasizes harmony between humans, nature, and the divine (Prasada et al., 2024). This principle is evident in their agricultural practices, particularly the *Subak* irrigation system, which ensures equitable water distribution among farmers while maintaining ecological sustainability. Rice cultivation, along with crops like salak, plays a central role in both sustenance and religious ceremonies, reinforcing the integration of spiritual and material needs. Ritualistic offerings and ceremonies accompany agricultural activities, underscoring the sacred connection between economic life and cultural traditions (Yolusever, 2024). This balance ensures that economic activities do not disrupt the ecological harmony essential to their way of life.

Traditional crafts such as textiles, woodcarving, and basketry also contribute significantly to the Bali Aga economy. These crafts, deeply embedded in cultural heritage, serve ceremonial and economic functions. The double ikat weaving technique of Tenganan, for instance, symbolizes the meticulous craftsmanship passed down through generations (Pebryani & Vogel, 2024). As Bali has become a global tourist destination, these crafts have gained recognition in international markets, generating economic opportunities. However, tourism's expansion has introduced challenges, including the commodification of rituals and unequal distribution of tourism-related benefits. While some communities thrive from tourism, others, particularly those with limited infrastructure, remain economically marginalized. Moreover, the shift toward tourism-centric livelihoods risks diverting attention from agriculture and other traditional occupations.

Despite these challenges, the Bali Aga communities continue to uphold Tri Hita Karana as a guiding framework for economic adaptation. The recognition of the *Subak* system as a UNESCO World Heritage Site underscores efforts to preserve traditional agricultural methods (Yuda et al., 2024). Initiatives such as organic farming and eco-tourism seek to provide sustainable income sources while maintaining cultural and ecological integrity. However, external pressures such as globalization, climate change, and tourism-driven land-use changes pose ongoing threats. To ensure long-term resilience, it is essential to promote sustainable tourism, invest in agricultural preservation, and support traditional craft industries, allowing the Bali Aga communities to thrive without compromising their cultural heritage (Parameswara et al., 2023).

Economic contributions of tourism

Tourism has significantly influenced Bali's economy, reshaped traditional livelihoods and created new financial opportunities, particularly for the Bali Aga communities. The growing demand for authentic cultural experiences has transformed traditional crafts such as woodcarving, weaving, and stone carving into valuable economic assets. Artisans producing textiles from Tenganan and Balinese masks and sculptures have gained international recognition, generated income while preserving cultural heritage. The expansion of the craft economy has also created employment opportunities, as tourism-driven demand for souvenirs and decorative items supports artisans, traders, and suppliers (Sandhya et al., 2024). Additionally, collaborations with design institutions have modernized traditional crafts, making them more marketable without compromising their cultural significance.

Despite these benefits, tourism has also marginalized conventional sectors like agriculture and marine industries. The shift toward tourism-related employment, often driven by higher wages and perceived prestige, has led to labor shortages in farming and fishing. The *Subak* irrigation system, once a vital element of Balinese agriculture, now faces threats due to reduced labor and land conversion for tourism infrastructure. Similarly, younger generations in coastal communities increasingly abandon traditional fishing in favor of hospitality and retail jobs. This transition poses risks to food security and economic diversification, as reliance on tourism makes Bali more vulnerable to external disruptions such as economic downturns and global crises (Utama et al., 2024).

To ensure long-term sustainability, efforts are being made to integrate traditional livelihoods into the tourism framework. Eco-tourism initiatives, which incorporate agriculture and marine practices into visitor experiences, offer a way to balance economic growth with cultural and environmental preservation. These initiatives not only support local communities but also promote

Bali's rich heritage to a global audience. While tourism remains a driving force in Bali's economy, a more balanced approach—one that safeguards traditional industries while maximizing tourism's benefits—is essential for sustainable development (Sihombing et al., 2024).

Agricultural practices

The *Subak* system, a hallmark of Balinese agriculture, represents the seamless integration of traditional wisdom with sustainable economic practices. As a traditional irrigation and agricultural management system, *Subak* not only facilitates equitable water distribution but also reinforces the community's cultural and spiritual values. Its recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage site highlights its global significance as a model of sustainable agriculture. The *Subak* system is based on a cooperative water management approach that ensures efficient and fair water distribution among farmers. The irrigation network is intricately connected to temples, reflecting the spiritual dimensions of agriculture in Bali. Rituals and offerings performed at water temples are believed to secure blessings for abundant harvests, aligning farming activities with the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy and emphasizing harmony between humans, nature, and the divine (Wicaksono, 2024).

The *Subak* system fosters community responsibility through collective decision-making, where farmers collaboratively maintain irrigation channels and allocate water equitably, ensuring agricultural productivity and ecological balance. Beyond its practical function, *Subak* embodies Balinese cultural heritage, reinforcing values of cooperation, environmental respect, and spiritual harmony. Rice cultivated within this system holds deep cultural significance, playing a central role in ceremonies and daily rituals. Economically, *Subak* supports both subsistence farming and surplus production for local markets. However, tourism and urban development increasingly threaten its sustainability by diverting labor and resources from agriculture. Many younger generations prefer tourism-related jobs, causing labor shortages in farming, while the expansion of tourism infrastructure reduces arable land. This shift has created an economic imbalance, where tourism thrives at the expense of traditional livelihoods. Preserving the *Subak* system requires integrating sustainable tourism with agriculture, ensuring that modernization does not undermine the cultural and ecological heritage of Bali's agricultural traditions (Zen et al., 2024a).

Despite these challenges, some initiatives aim to integrate tourism with agricultural practices. Agri-tourism, for example, offers visitors an immersive experience of traditional farming methods, generating supplementary income for farmers while promoting cultural heritage. Efforts to preserve the *Subak* system focus on education, policy support, and community engagement. Local and international organizations collaborate to protect water resources, support sustainable farming practices, and promote eco-tourism initiatives that highlight the cultural and ecological value of the *Subak* system (Laksmi et al., 2023).

The *Subak* system exemplifies a sustainable agricultural model that balances economic, cultural, and ecological considerations (Zen et al., 2024b). While tourism has introduced challenges to its continuity, the system remains a cornerstone of Bali's agricultural identity and cultural heritage. To ensure its preservation, it is essential to align tourism development with traditional farming practices, fostering a more balanced and inclusive economic structure that respects Bali's unique legacy.

Traditional economic systems of the Samin tribe in Blora, Central Java

The *Samin* community, also known as *Sedulur Sikep*, practices an egalitarian and environmentally conscious traditional economic system rooted in self-sufficiency and local knowledge (Yulianto, 2022). Agriculture lies at the heart of the *Samin* community's traditional economic system, serving as a livelihood and a cornerstone of their cultural identity. Rooted in self-reliance and sustainability, *Samin* farming practices reflect a profound connection to the land and a reliance on traditional ecological knowledge to navigate environmental and resource challenges.

The *Samin* community prioritizes crop diversity and rotation as fundamental strategies for maintaining soil fertility and ensuring food security. Cultivating various crops—such as corn, vegetables, and secondary grains—reduces dependency on single-crop systems and mitigates the risks associated with pests, diseases, and climate variability. Crop rotation further enhances soil

health, preventing nutrient depletion and minimizing the need for external inputs such as synthetic fertilizers. Corn, in particular, is a staple crop for the *Samin* people due to its resilience to the limited irrigation and less fertile soils common in their farming regions. Unlike rice, which requires a consistent water supply, corn can thrive under rain-fed conditions, making it a practical choice for subsistence farming in areas with unreliable water access. Limited access to irrigation systems necessitates reliance on rain-fed agriculture. This constraint has shaped the *Samin* farmers' resource management strategies, enabling them to adapt effectively to seasonal changes. Farmers utilize traditional knowledge of weather patterns, soil conditions, and ecological indicators-such as the behavior of plants and animals-to determine optimal planting times and manage their fields. In addition, the *Samin* people cultivate mixed cropping systems, where complementary plants are grown together to optimize land use and enhance biodiversity. This approach helps suppress weeds, control pests naturally, and improve overall ecosystem health, contributing to the long-term sustainability of their agricultural practices.

Farming in the *Samin* community is an economic activity and a deeply cultural practice. Land is viewed as a sacred resource that must be nurtured and preserved, likened to a mother who provides sustenance. This reverence for land underpins their commitment to conservation, with farmers taking care to avoid overexploitation and maintain ecological balance.

Traditional ceremonies and rituals further reinforce this connection between farming and spirituality. For example, offerings and prayers ensure a bountiful harvest and express gratitude to the natural forces that sustain their livelihoods. These practices highlight the integration of ecological stewardship with cultural and spiritual values. While the *Samin* farming system is resilient, it faces land scarcity, climate variability, and economic pressures. The shift of younger generations toward urban employment has reduced the labor available for traditional farming, posing a threat to continuing these practices. The need for advanced irrigation infrastructure also limits the potential for expanding agricultural production.

Despite these challenges, the *Samin* community remains adaptive. They incorporate incremental changes, such as adopting drought-resistant crop varieties and participating in cooperative farming initiatives, to address modern pressures while retaining their traditional values.

The farming practices of the *Samin* community reflect a harmonious blend of traditional ecological knowledge, cultural values, and resource sustainability. Their reliance on crop diversity, rotation, and rain-fed systems showcases an adaptable and resilient approach to agriculture, well-suited to the environmental conditions of their region. By prioritizing ecological balance and cultural preservation, the *Samin* people provide a model for sustainable farming in resource-limited settings. However, continued infrastructure development and market access support could further strengthen their agricultural systems while preserving their cultural heritage.

The *Samin* community diversifies its economic activities to complement farming, which remains constrained by poor soil fertility and limited irrigation (Prabawani et al., 2024). Pottery production, small-scale batik industries, and seasonal migration (*boro*) form the backbone of supplementary income sources. Deeply rooted in traditional skills and local resources, these activities reflect the community's adaptability and resilience in environmental and economic challenges. Pottery-making is a significant craft among the *Samin* people, often conducted as a family enterprise. Utilizing locally sourced clay, artisans produce functional items such as pots, pans, water jugs, and decorative pieces (Dubey, 2022). The craft is passed down through generations, with children often learning the skills early.

Production processes are traditional and labor-intensive, involving clay preparation, shaping, drying, and firing. Women typically handle the shaping and initial drying, while men oversee firing and transporting finished goods. Most pottery products are sold within local markets, generating modest household income. While the craft holds cultural value and provides economic benefits, it remains limited in scale due to reliance on manual processes and a lack of access to larger markets. However, the potential for expansion exists if supported by modern tools, training, and improved market connectivity.

Small-scale batik production offers another income avenue. Unlike pottery, which is widespread, batik industries are less prevalent and usually concentrated in specific families with expertise in fabric dyeing and pattern-making. Using traditional tools and techniques, batik artisans create textiles valued for their intricate designs and cultural authenticity (Xiao, 2024). Batik

production caters to functional and ceremonial uses within the community, with some surplus sold in local markets. Like pottery, batik holds cultural significance but remains constrained by limited market access and production resources, restricting its impact on the broader economic stability of the community.

Boro, or seasonal migration, is a common practice among the *Samin* people, especially during periods of low agricultural activity (Datta et al., 2024). Individuals, predominantly men, migrate to nearby towns or cities to seek temporary employment in construction, transportation, or small-scale trading industries. This migration provides critical income to supplement household needs, particularly during the lean farming months. Migrants often return to their villages with savings reinvested in their primary livelihoods, such as farming or craft production. While *boro* addresses immediate economic needs, it reflects the structural challenges of limited local opportunities and highlights the reliance on external sources of income (Kaplinsky & Kraemer-Mbula, 2022).

Despite their resilience, the economic activities of the *Samin* community face challenges such as limited market access, reliance on manual labor, and fluctuating demand for traditional crafts. Seasonal migration, while beneficial in the short term, can strain community cohesion and disrupt traditional practices as younger generations increasingly explore urban opportunities.

Targeted support has significant potential to enhance these activities. For instance, the pottery and batik industries could benefit from improved tools, training in modern techniques, and access to regional or national markets. Similarly, creating local employment opportunities through cooperatives or community-led enterprises could reduce reliance on *boro* and strengthen the local economy (Bates, 2022).

The economic activities of the *Samin* community reflect a pragmatic blend of traditional skills and adaptive strategies (Arif et al., 2022). Pottery, batik production, and *boro* demonstrate their ability to sustain livelihoods despite environmental and economic constraints. However, strategic investments in skill development, infrastructure, and market access are essential to amplify the financial contributions of these activities, ensuring a more stable and self-reliant community.

The *Samin* tribe employs traditional profit-sharing systems such as *Maro*, *motels*, and *merit*, reflecting their communal values (Huda et al., 2022). These systems promote equitable resource distribution, aligning with their principle of sustainability and social harmony. Despite economic challenges, the *Samin* tribe maintains a strong connection to their land and cultural identity, resisting external pressures like industrialization and preserving ecological balance.

The findings underscore the significance of traditional economic systems as sustainable alternatives to modern industrial practices. Each community demonstrates the role of cultural values in shaping economic behavior, offering insights into resource management, communal welfare, and environmental conservation. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the resilience of traditional economies amidst modernization and globalization. It also underscores the need for policies integrating cultural heritage with economic development to ensure sustainable livelihoods for indigenous communities (Ma et al., 2021).

Several prior studies provide a basis for comparison with this research, though they predominantly emphasize sociocultural and religious aspects rather than economic systems. These works highlight significant gaps in understanding the traditional economic practices of Indonesia's indigenous communities.

Studies on Baduy communities in Banten

Research on the Baduy communities has been conducted by several scholars, such as Habiyaemye and Korina on folklore, Kurniawan et al. on origins and marriage customs, and Kurniawan et al. on spatial arrangements (Kurniawan et al., 2025). These studies highlight the cultural and religious dimensions of the Baduy people's lives, particularly their integration with nature and adherence to ancestral rules (Habiyaemye & Korina, 2021). However, they still lack in-depth exploration of the economic practices that sustain their livelihoods (Kurniawan et al., 2025). For instance, Asteria et al. examined Baduy music as folklore (2024), while Idris analyzed development impacts, both of which focus more on intangible cultural aspects without addressing the practicalities of the community's economic systems (Idris, 2023).

Similar patterns emerge in studies on other *Kasepuhan* communities, such as Cisungsang,

Citorek, and Cicarucub (Dendi, 2023). While these works document aspects of culture, religion, and spatial governance, they provide limited insights into the agricultural or economic frameworks these communities employ. This gap becomes particularly apparent given the importance of rice cultivation and other sustainable practices in these communities, as highlighted by Krisnawati (Krisnawati et al., 2024).

Studies on West Java's *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar* and *Naga* communities similarly prioritize cultural dimensions over economic systems. For instance, Soeharyadi & Iskandar focus on Ciptagelar's traditions and belief systems (Soeharyadi & Iskandar, 2024), while Gunara explore the Naga community's local wisdom (Gunara et al., 2022). These works underscore the sociopolitical relevance of indigenous practices but fail to adequately address the intricate traditional economic systems and their adaptation to modern pressures.

Research on Bali's *Pakraman* villages, such as Mohapatra on customary law and Parwata and Wijaya on cultural tourism, reflects similar tendencies (Mohapatra & Mohapatra, 2021). Although these studies highlight the integration of Hindu teachings with local governance and tourism, they neglect detailed examination of traditional economic systems like agriculture and craft production. The *Subak* system, for instance, is a critical aspect of Bali's agricultural economy, yet most discussions are cursory, focusing on its cultural significance rather than its economic mechanisms.

Works like those of Savira suggest broader resilience patterns in indigenous knowledge systems across different regions. They emphasize the sustainability and ecological benefits of traditional practices (Savira et al., 2025). However, these studies remain general and need to provide localized insights into the specific economic structures or practices within communities like *Kasepuhan Cicarucub*, *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar*, or Bali Aga.

This study distinguishes itself by systematically investigating the economic systems of *Kasepuhan Cicarucub*, *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar*, the *Samin* community in Blora, and the Bali Aga communities. By focusing on production, distribution, and integrating cultural values within these systems, this research provides critical insights into how these communities sustain their livelihoods and adapt to socio-economic pressures. It addresses the gaps in prior research, offering a comprehensive understanding of traditional economic systems and their potential contributions to sustainable development models. This work enhances academic discourse and informs policies that aim to balance economic development with cultural preservation.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the traditional economic systems of Indonesia's indigenous communities-*Kasepuhan Cicarucub*, *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar*, Bali Aga, and the Samin Tribe-are built on a foundation of ecological sustainability, deep cultural values, and strong social cohesion, with agriculture serving as the economic backbone governed by local wisdom and spiritual principles. Among the *Kasepuhan* communities, the practice of annual rice planting, communal storage in *leuit*, and rituals that unite humans with nature and ancestors not only ensure food security for up to three years but also reinforce cultural identity and equitable resource distribution.

In Bali, the *Subak* system and the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy balance agricultural needs, spirituality, and environmental conservation, while engagement in tourism creates economic opportunities yet threatens the sustainability of traditional sectors if not carefully managed. The Samin community in Blora exemplifies pragmatic adaptation through crop diversification, pottery craftsmanship, and seasonal migration, despite being constrained by limited infrastructure and modernization pressures.

The primary challenges faced by all these communities-such as the shift of younger generations to modern sectors, climate change, and resource commercialization-demand inclusive policies that respect local autonomy, strengthen culture-based infrastructure, and integrate innovation with traditional wisdom. These economic systems are not merely remnants of the past but living models that offer solutions to global sustainability crises, emphasizing that resilient economic development must be rooted in ecosystem preservation, social justice, and cultural integrity, supported by policies that facilitate collaboration between indigenous knowledge and contemporary needs.

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