



Contesting identity through the market: Tourism and indigenous movement in Kasepuhan Ciptagelar, West Java

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Abstract: This study identifies the interplay between the engagement of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar, an indigenous community inhabiting the state forest in West Java, and tourism development in the area. Practising local spirituality rooted in an indigenous belief, *tatali paranti karuhun*, while administratively accepting Islam, the people have been struggling to deal with the nearby majority Sundanese who practices Islam and the establishment of the national park covering their living space. The study considers whether a minority group living in an area endowed with both natural and cultural tourism resources consciously chooses tourism as a selected ground to deal with policies which neglect them in terms of religious practices and land policy. Employing the ethnographic method, the study reveals that contesting identity in tourism also means the readiness to accommodate various outside elements. However, the strategy has led the Halimun Salak National Park authority to declare the area as a “special status area” for cultural tourism inside the state park since 2017. The study findings show that after engaging with tourism, various rituals and art performances rooted in the old Sundanese spirituality, which is not officially recognized by the state, can be freely performed for the sake of tourists. In this case, the community is not passive in dealing with external forces but has also enabled its own silent productivity, including its varying consequences.

Keywords: Ciptagelar; cultural; identity; indigenous, Islam; tourism

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A. Introduction

Rich (1999) has described the last few decades as “the decades of failure”, marked by political change in the management of natural resources, resulting in the dispossession of indigenous communities from their lands. Such actions have triggered social movements to respond its various ecological and socio-cultural impacts. The basic demand of these movements is to gain more respect for collective rights to land and cultural identity (Gray, 1997; Moniaga, 2007). Moreover, Clay, cited in Gedicks (2001) and Shiva (1998) has noted that the 20th century, known as the age of development and witnessed more extinction of indigenous people than any other in history. Indigenous communities have been excluded from the public discussion, while outside forces have exploited their homelands. In Borneo, this was sadly highlighted by the voice of one of the indigenous people inhabiting Meratus Mountains, said “better you had brought me a bomb, so I could blow this place up” (Tsing, 2005). Moreover, the exclusion of the indigenous community is identified into four types of discrimination: limited access to their own environment; lack of legal justification to practice their local beliefs; loss of citizens’ rights; and loss of living space of living as their land has been claimed as state territory (Irianto, 2016).

One of the indigenous communities in Indonesia that has been facing a series of discriminatory actions is the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar. They are a traditional agrarian Sundanese group consisting of around 30,000 people inhabiting the area surrounding Mount Halimun-Salak National Park in Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, including 150 households inhabiting Ciptagelar, an enclave within state park boundaries. *Kasepuhan* is considered to be a part of *Sunda Wiwitan*, a common term for categorizing old Sundanese tradition. The term *wiwitan* is rooted in *awit* or *wiwit*, which can be interpreted as “the beginning”, meaning different from contemporary Sundanese practice, which is mostly Islam. The people living in Ciptagelar practice local beliefs, namely *tatali paranti karuhun*, or the religion of the ancestors while having Islam as their legal religion.

According to official figures, the population of *Sunda Wiwitan* followers is around 100,000 in West Java. However, this is small when it is compared to the total population of West Java, which is around 48,600,000, of whom 45.1 million (97%) are Muslim (BPS, 2020). Therefore, from the religious perspective, people living in Ciptagelar are often considered as “deviant” as they practice indigenous spirituality while accepting to be administratively Muslim. In terms of land issues, the government policy of establishing the 40,000 hectares of the Mount Halimun area as a national park in 1992 directly led to the people being categorized as illegal inhabitants on their own land. Moreover, the extension of the national park area to more than 113,000 hectares in 2003 meant that all the settlement area, community

forest and agricultural land in Kasepuhan Ciptagelar was within the state forest boundary (Widiyanto, 2019).

This study presents an analysis of *asepuhan* resistance to external forces by focusing on tourism as the selected arena. Interestingly, the resistance is conducted without any violence, which represents the “harmonious ideology” of the group. In the past, indigenous communities in Indonesia were often referred to as “isolated communities” and tended to be perceived as “uncivilized” (Chakim, 2022; Koentjaraningrat, 1993). In fact, such groups have made a long-standing contact with the outside world, including market and colonial powers (Topatimasang, 2004). Before the arrival of colonial powers, customary practices, or *adat*, were considered to be social entities united by particular customs, rituals and practices of social life (Royer, Visser, Galudra, Pradhan & Noordwijk, 2015). Subsequently, through imposing landscapes on maps, the colonial government imposed various stereotypes on indigenous groups in order to gain control over them (Peluso & Vandergeest, 2001). After independence, economic growth became the main agenda and indigenous groups were designated as a challenge to capitalistic principles and an obstacle to such growth (Dove, 1985; Li, 2000).

This ethnographic study views that in terms of religious dynamics and the struggle to regain customary land, minority groups are not powerless and passive. The Dusun community in Sabah Malaysia has accepted Christianity and Islam as formal religions; however, they maintain their local spirituality *momolianism* as the central identity of the group (Widiyanto & Agra, 2019). Mutaqin (2014) identifies another *Sunda Wiwitan* group in Kuningan, which has employed two different tactics in dealing with state policies: “front stage” and “backstage”.¹ However, according to Adams (1997), with regard to Torajan’s² engagement with tourism in South Sulawesi, identity can be effectively negotiated through tourism, but it can also have various negative impacts on local identity.

In the nearby province, Central Java, the Aboge (*Alif Rebo Wage*) community in Banyumas consciously presents its locality by preserving *panginyongan*³ as a counter-discourse to the Javanese mainstream culture (Muttakin & Noor, 2022;

¹ Front stage refers to the pretense of converting to the formal religion, while back stage means people practice their local beliefs.

² Toraja is an ethnic group that lives in the mountains of the northern part of South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

³ Panginyongan is a Javanese sub culture referring to the Banyumas people living in the western part of Central Java.

Widyaningsih, 2017). In a similar vein, this study focuses on the further step in the “front stage” strategy selected by *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar to open up opportunities for cultural revivalism and fulfil the demand to establish a tourism agenda. Moreover, revivalism is taking place based on evidence that in the last few years *Kasepuhan* has been successfully increasing its ability to express their cultural identity through tourism. Therefore, different to other studies that tend to view tourism in terms of its negative influences on local culture, the importance of this research centers on how tourism provides an opportunity for indigenous groups to strengthen their cultural identity and access to customary land.

B. Methods

The aim of this study is to analyze the interplay between the efforts of *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar to strengthen their cultural identity rooted in a local belief, *tatali paranti karuhun* and tourism development in the area. The ethnographic research was conducted in *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar, Cisolak District, Sukabumi Regency, West Java and the area of Halimun-Salak National Park since 2017 and regularly updated in recent years. *Kasepuhan* was chosen for its strong engagement with tourism, not only to achieve regular economic benefits from the industry, but in relation to its cultural aims. The ethnographic method is one of the best ways to understand phenomena from the people’s point of view through a fieldwork process involving participant observation and in-depth interviews, completed by secondary data analysis (Spradley, 1975). Therefore, an intimate association with informants is necessary to interpret significant symbols, emotions, understanding and statements of the underlying regularities of human experience. The informants were thus selected based on their involvement in cultural practices related to the history of their group and also their connection with tourism activities. They included *Abah Ugi*, the cultural leader; the *baris kolot*, or the group elder; members of the community; people from the nearby villages; local government; national park staff; and visitors to Ciptagelar. In addition, secondary data were gathered from various sources, including local manuscripts, previous research, local governments, the national park authority, and libraries, including that of Leiden University.

Observation was made of various rituals and art performances; interaction took place between local people and outsiders, and also among local people themselves; and in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain people’s perspectives of their cultural life. The findings from a series of observations and in-depth interviews were cross-checked to identify common understanding of the collective memory of past cultural practices and how these have changed over time. The final stage was

cross-analysis of the similarities and differences between local people and the outsider's perspective on the cultural practices to establish patterns in the engagement between *Kasepuhan* and tourism by identifying several key themes from the primary data in particular. The process was completed by compilation of the secondary data, which provided the history of *Kasepuhan* and the external forces influencing their cultural and religious practices. As the informants' memories might not be uniform, the findings were narrowed down to generate a new thematic structure until the differences could be identified. Finally, all the data were interpreted to establish the framework and motives related to the transformation of cultural practices and its connection to tourism development in *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar*.

C. Results and Discussion

Kasepuhan under the Shadow of Giants

Tatali Paranti Karuhun: A Constant Target to Convert

In the early period of Indonesian independence, the rivalry between Islamic and secular groups was represented by the political race between Masyumi and PNI, followed by the emergence of the Indonesian Communist Party-PKI (Ricklefs, 2017). This ideological rivalry was continued until the final period of Sukarno's administration, which saw the establishment of a government board, *Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat (PAKEM)*, to protect the majority religions from the "negative" influence of non-religious beliefs, and also to control these. The ultimate indication of the state's control over local beliefs was the enactment of Law No. 1/PNPS/1969, which stated that only six religions would be legally recognized: Islam, Christian-Protestant, Catholic, Buddhism, Hinduism and Konghuchu (Ricklefs, 2017). This was the basic support for various types of discrimination against indigenous beliefs, including against the people in *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar*. Although a Constitutional Court decision in 2016 gave local beliefs equal rights with the official religions, they are in fact still viewed differently and have to struggle to gain more recognition.

During the leadership of the former cultural leader, Abah Anom, or before 2007, there were two main issues affecting the daily life of the *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar*: the extension of the national park boundaries and the relationship with the nearby Islamic community. Administratively, since the 1960s people in *Kasepuhan* have accepted Islam; however, they practice it in their own way. This means that Islam has been accepted as a formal religion, while *tatali paranti karuhun* is taken as the

main spiritual guidance in daily life⁴. This worldview is mainly based on the idea that there is an upper world where the gods exist, and a profane one where human beings live, which should always be connected in everyday life. The only figure who is able to connect these two different worlds is the *abahnya*⁵ as the cultural leader (Widiyanto, 2019). In daily life, this connection is represented by the obligation to conduct a ritual led by *abahnya* to obtain permission from the ancestors before starting, for example, any agricultural activity, building houses, performing marriages, or going to other places. According to Ki Absor, one of the elder group members, for the people religion is located in the heart, therefore it is not necessary to regularly pray five times a day, or to fast during Ramadhan. The most important aspect of the religion is considered to be “safety”, in Islam *salamat* (Subur, 2017). Safety means being safe in daily life by having a good paddy harvest, and the only way to achieve this is by following customary rules and following the *abahnya* as the cultural leader.

However, the people living in Ciptagelar cannot be associated with a single entity in terms of religious life; there are at least four different types of groups related to the dynamics between Islam and *tatali paranti karuhun*: a) The members who strongly hold *tatali paranti karuhun* as the main guideline or the *jiwa jero* (inner soul), and merely see Islam as an administrative matter. The numbers of this group are limited to those living in the *lembur jero* (inner village) of Ciptagelar. b) The members who practice both *tatali paranti karuhun* and Islam, interchangeably practicing *adat* and Islam. These include those who live in the villages surrounding the *lembur jero* and other neighbouring regencies, such as Lebak and Bogor. The numbers of this group are the majority; however, it is difficult to precisely estimate their number. c) Those who no longer hold *tatali paranti karuhun* or are totally converted to Islam, but still admit themselves as part of *Kasepuhan* and admit the *abahnya* as a cultural leader. These form a minority, but again actual numbers are unclear.

Those having roots in *Kasepuhan* culture but who have totally converted to Islam and no longer have any spiritual bond to *Kasepuhan*, including no longer admitting the *abahnya* as a cultural leader.

The position of *abahnya* is central in uniting these different types of *Kasepuhan* members. He acts as the umbrella for all of them, therefore their interaction do not

⁴ Besides *tatali paranti karuhun*, people use *agama karuhun* or *sela*, which are rooted in Islam, to describe their religious practices, while Sunda Wiwitan is commonly used by outsiders.

⁵ All people in *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar use “*abahnya*” to mention their cultural leader, it is a kind of respected name.

take place in conflicting ways. This means that all are accepted and respected, as long as the central cultural core, admitting the existence of the cultural leader, is still tightly held. Therefore, the dynamics and debates between the different groups are usually hidden and never come out into the public area.

In the last few decades, *adat* spirituality has continued to dominate the daily life of people in Ciptagelar; not many local people perform *shalat*, including in the Friday prayers. Interestingly, people also actively use Islamic words, such as *alhamdulillah* or *bismillah*. Many members believe that religious issues are not interesting to discuss because this could disturb the harmony of the group. During my fieldwork in Ciptagelar, I regularly meet Gafur, an *ojek* driver who usually takes me from the nearest city, Cisolok. He keeps questioning my motive to visit Ciptagelar, which seems strange to him. Gafur believes that visiting Ciptagelar, which takes around 2.5 hours by motorcycle from the coastal area, is not useful. Moreover, it is hard to cross the jungle in the hilly areas, and he emphasizes that the people there are still primitive and practice black magic. No-one performs *shalat* in Ciptagelar, and he advises that *adat* rules in Ciptagelar should never be broken. However, Gapur also recognizes that Seren Taun, a harvest festival conducted by the group, is a popular annual event attracting many visitors, both foreign and domestic. On my return once after visiting *Kasepuhan*, I bought a meal at a seafood stall in Pelabuhan Ratu, the capital of the regency. The seller, a woman wearing a veil, simply asked "Did you see any people practicing *shalat* there?", directly after I had told her that I had just visited Ciptagelar. This represents a common image to the people in Ciptagelar, who practice a different spirituality within the predominantly Islamic society.

The acceptance of Islam as a formal religion in Ciptagelar is the fruit of the dynamic relationship with the majority Islamic society and the state. However, at a practical level, Islam is the second option, demonstrated by when the community conducted the *ngembangkeun* ritual, a pilgrimage to the grave of Abah Anom on a hill called Pangapungan. This took place on a Friday, when Muslims should go to the mosque for weekly prayers; however, all those who gathered at the ritual missed the Jumat prayers, including Ki Amil, who is an Islamic representative within the community. The pilgrimage led by Abah Ugi, who replaced his father in 2007 as cultural leader, is intended to ask permission from the ancestors to start welcoming the harvest period and preparing the biggest festival, Seren Taun. Ki Amil consciously emphasizes that the *adat* agenda should be the first priority over anything else.

The acceptance of Islam is the frontstage strategy to deal with larger external forces and also to maintain the existence of the religion of the ancestors (Aly, 2015).

In the 1950s, the *Kasepuhan* were often attacked by the Islamic rebellion group DI/TII because it was considered the enemy of Islamic values. However, administrative acceptance of Islam might be connected to the enactment of PNPS Law No.1/1965, which considers only five world religions to be recognized by the state, and which was followed by TAP MPR NO IV/1978, which indicated that indigenous beliefs were not recognized religions. The other reason is their feeling of being under pressure that their belief is not a religion as defined by the state. In a similar vein, it is also connected to the basic nature of the *Kasepuhan* leadership, which is usually open to changes from the outside (Widiyanto, 2019). The political situation after the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) rebellion in 1965, which emphasized that people who did not have a religion could be deemed to be communist, was another important pressure (Webb, 1986).

In contemporary *Kasepuhan*, all members of the group have been obliged to be administratively Muslim. However, this does not mean that the pressure from outside Islamic groups has ended. The majority of such groups from surrounding areas tend to perceive that Islamic practices in *Kasepuhan* are combined with various elements of animism. Furthermore, it has made the people in *Lembur Jero Ciptagelar* permanent targets to be “purified”. The regular visits of *tabligh* groups from neighboring cities to purify them is strong evidence of this. The arrival of these groups started during the period of the previous leader, Abah Anom, before 2007. In a few cases, they did not first go to the cultural leader to obtain permission, but directly stayed in the *mushola*.⁶ These facts show that up to now, the local spirituality of *tatali paranti karuhun* in Ciptagelar exists under the shadow of the state and also of the majority groups.

Kasepuhan and Land Tenure Rights

The government’s decision to extend the Halimun Salak National Park area from 40,000 to 113,000 hectares in 2003 is the other main issue in *Kasepuhan*. The move was followed by a claim that people living in the park area were illegal inhabitants. However, the people in *Kasepuhan* do not resist this policy as long as it does not disturb their settlement, traditional forest area and agricultural lands, particularly paddy fields, as the core of their cultural patterns. The establishment of national parks is also considered to be part of the state’s consolidation during the New Order regime to accelerate its domination of natural resources (Moniaga, 2007). However, the new regime is only continuing policies enacted by the colonial powers, including

⁶ Mushalla is a small mosque built for the visitors.

in the Mount Halimun Salak areas. No new measures have been introduced, including the zoning system of the national park, which is closely related to the policy previously designed in the colonization period.

In the early 1700s the Dutch Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) started to introduce *Agrarische Wet*⁷ to change the Halimun forest area into a tea plantation zone and also rubber areas in the southern part. This continued during the period 1865 to 1942 through the designation of all areas above 1570 meters as protected areas for conservation purposes. This was the beginning of the land conflict between *Kasepuhan* and the state forest management under Dutch authority (Gamma et al., 2005). The policy is replicated by the Indonesian government by giving authority to the Forestry Department to control the areas. In a letter from the Agricultural Minister in 1978, the government declared forest areas in Mount Halimun, Mount Kendang, Mount Sanggabuana, Mount Nanggung and Ciampea covering almost 40,000 hectares to be under the control of the conservation board of BKSDA, with another 73,357 hectares managed by Perhutani⁸ for production forests⁹ (Gamma et al., 2005). This policy was effective until 1992, when in minister letter No.282/1992 the 40,000 hectare area was changed to be became part of Halimun National Park. The area was extended to 113,357 hectares in 2003 and became Halimun-Salak National Park, meaning all the areas of *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar's traditional settlements, rice barns and agricultural land fell within the state forest area.

Policies concerning the Halimun-Salak forest designed by both the Dutch and Indonesian governments share a common aspect: neglect of the existence of the *Kasepuhan* living in the area for hundred years. The history of *Kasepuhan* is related to a group of warriors from Pajajaran Kingdom, namely *baris pangawinan*, led by Demang Haur Tangtu. After Pajajaran was beaten by the Islamic powers in 1579, he was ordered by King Siliwangi to save a sacred flower, *hanjuang bodas*, and decided to move to the southern part of the Halimun area. This first movement was the beginning of the important and sacred ritual for the present *Kasepuhan*: *ngalalakon* or *ngumbara*. Until today, people believe that they are the descendants of Demang Haur Tangtu with his wife, Nini Tundarasa. The movement of *or ngalalakon* is the process of relocating the settlements, rice barns and agricultural lands, guided by the

⁷It is the Agrarian Law established by the Dutch.

⁸Perhutani is the Indonesian State Company under the Forestry Department.

⁹There are two types of forest in Indonesia; conservation forest and the production fores. Production forest means the trees is planted for log.

ancestors' spirit through the cultural leader. Moreover, it is also considered as the process to find a land, namely *uga lebak cawene*, a sacred and secret land offering prosperity according to the advice of the legendary Sundanese king, Siliwangi. According to Aki Karma, a member of the elder group, *ngalalakon* is the effort to find emptiness through beginning a new life in a new emptier area, which is locally term called *ngalasuwung*. Throughout the history of the group, this ritual has been conducted 19 times, up to the last movement in 2001 from Ciptarasa, outside the national park area, to the current Ciptagelar.

In fact, this traditional migration is considered the mechanism to adjust to ecological, political and demographic issues, including survival in the face of the dominant Islamic powers (Dong, 2020; Putri et al., 2017). At this point, the movement has become the main problem in terms of forest protection. When people in *Kasepuhan* perceive *ngalalakon* as a spiritual calling, the authorities contrarily emphasize their strategy of going deeper into and occupying forest areas. In these circumstances, indigenous identity, cultural distinctiveness, local beliefs and livelihood practices are often considered to be the problems (Li, 2000). In the last few years, *ngalalakon* has been seen as one of the central problems within the national park authority-*Kasepuhan* relationship, besides the *Kasepuhan* settlement within the national park area. Therefore, throughout the history of the colonial powers and the Indonesian government, *Kasepuhan* cultural practices have been dominated by the state and the majority Islamic groups.

Tourism: A New Ground for the Expression of Identity

The history of tourism development in Indonesia can be traced back to the period of the New Order, when tourism aimed to build national consciousness. Moreover, before the outbreak of Covid-19 tourism was expected to be the back backbone of socioeconomic progress across the country. However, the interplay between indigenous movements and tourism development has rarely been studied. Heffner (1999) provides the example of a hill society in Tengger in East Java which has developed a hybrid identity between the Tenggerese and the predominantly Muslim society in the Bromo tourism area. During the 1970s, the Ainu in Japan used tourism, including crafts aimed at tourists and cultural tourism, as the central process in the reconstruction of Hawaiian and Ainu identity (Friedman, 2000). It is connected to, different from those suspecting that placing identity on the market would have a de-authenticating effect, but it also a boost to the revivalism of the traditional way of life. After struggling for years and then engaging in the tourist boom, contemporary Hawaiians do not need to advertise their local culture nowadays (Friedman, 2000).

Moreover, Trupp (2011:142) describes an unequal relationship between visitors and host community by taking an example of 'human zoos' as 'exceptional in combining exhibition, performance, education and domination'. Trupp also emphasizes that although the era of colonial human zoos had ended in the 1940s, similar power relations in the context of modern 'ethnic tourism' still exist (Trupp, 2011). In Indonesia, Picard (1996) emphasizes "cultural tourism" in describing the further engagement between culture and tourism. Picard notes that Balinese culture is renowned for its dynamic resilience based on its ability to borrow external influences, including tourism, which suit them while maintaining their identity. In addition, Nordholt (2007) discusses the Balinese strategy of developing tourism as an important livelihood system, while locating tradition as the inner culture, and tourism as the outer. Similarly, indigenous tourism is offered as an alternative avenue for reclaiming their cultural-religious identity and land tenure (Carr et al., 2016). In another example, by considering Madidi National Park in Bolivia, Ruhanen and Whitford (2019) argue that preserving local culture and conservation should be the two central objectives of the ecotourism industry.

Neglected in terms of local belief practices and customary land rights, *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar has adopted tourism as a new platform for expressing its distinctive cultural identity. In this case, cultural practices and indigenous beliefs are something which are inseparable and represented through traditional paddy planting activities (Kusdiwanggo, 2016). Therefore, in the last few years these authentic customary practices have been considered as important cultural capital and also a valuable resource for engaging tourism. According to Van Vollenhoven's definition, as cited in Beckmann and Benda-Beckmann (2011:171), *adat* law is "the totality of the rules of conduct for natives and foreign oriental that has, on the one hand, sanctions and on the other, are not codified". *Kasepuhan* social rules are internally applied to community members and enacted in daily life, such as regarding dressing style, settlements, forests, agricultural land management, and how to show respect to the leader. As a communal society, forest areas, agricultural land and paddy fields are considered communal resources (Abdullah, 2012). Rice is seen as a sacred being, often viewed as the source of life; it is planted with total respect and it is forbidden to sell it. In Lembur Jero, rice should be cooked using a *tungku*, a traditional stove and firewood. Similar to the national park forest zoning, the traditional forest area is divided into three categories: (a) *leuweung tutupan*, which is forbidden to be exploited; (b) *leuweung titipan*, which can be used depending on the permit from the *abah*; and (c) *leuweung bukaan*, which can be used for human activities without any extension.

Different from the state law, these traditional laws are not enforced with strong direct punishment; those who break the law will not be given any direct punishment (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2022). It is believed that punishment will be suffered by becoming ill, having a long period of nightmares, crop failure, or worst, sudden death. The only way to avoid punishment from the ancestors is by going to the leader, admitting the mistake and asking for an apology. In *Kasepuhan*, the cultural leader is the central figure who represents the whole society, or in other words, the cultural leader is the *adat* law itself. This social rule is transformed from generation to generation through fairy tales, local myths and rituals. Cultural practices cannot be separated from other sociocultural activities, including cultural performances, which today are considered as tourist attractions (Buzinde et al., 2020; Fang, 2020). In essence, the various rituals and cultural performances are symbols of Sundanese identity and the *adat* establishment itself. Adams's (1996) study of Sherpa identity formation in the Himalayas can be used to view the construction of *Kasepuhan* identity based on the inside roots and the demand to symbolically impress outsiders. Moreover, this struggle for authenticity is channelled by negotiation between self-identification and the possibilities offered by the capitalist market. Ciptagelar today is being seen by others and acts as the symbol of the authenticity of Sundanese culture for the young generation.

In the last few decades, tourism has been viewed as the engine of economic growth and a development tool in the world's less developed countries (Curtin & Bird, 2022; Dolezal & Trupp, 2015; Honey, 1999). The combination of various natural and cultural resources has positioned Ciptagelar as a perfect place for escaping from the city, making it a hidden "Shangri-la". Activities such as bird watching, jungle trekking, off-road, camping, cycling or photography are usually performed in the forest areas, rivers and paddy fields surrounding the village. At the same time, cultural resources are drawn from indigenous beliefs through traditional ceremonies and architecture, rituals, , myths and local rules. No charges are made, but usually visitors will leave an amount of money for food and accommodation. Tourism activity is not merely a profit-oriented business, so it cannot be measured against the professional tourism development rooted in profit-making.

Henley and Davidson (2008) identify four roots of *adat* revivalism in Indonesia: international influences; democratization and decentralization in the post-New Order era; the oppression during New Order administration; and the positive historical role of *adat* since the beginning of Indonesian nationalism. The oppression in terms of religious life and national park policy has forced the *Kasepuhan* to find ways to survive, including their traditional agriculture on their customary land.

International influences also play a role in establishing *Kasepuhan's* cultural movement. In the 2000s, some members of *Kasepuhan* actively engaged with the indigenous people's federation in Indonesia, *Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN)*, to build a network for advocating religious issues and to gain legal recognition for customary land. Coincidentally, after the establishment of micro-hydroelectric power in the 2000s facilitated by a national NGO, the inflow of people significantly increased. This was the turning point and they are now intelligently using the opportunity to establish a new arena for expressing cultural identity.

The new era of Indonesian democratization in 1998 came as an opportunity, along with the demand to fulfil the global market for tourism. On this basis, the *Kasepuhan* started to abandon the confrontational and returned to the accommodative strategy by focusing on cultural tourism. They considered that the confrontational strategy was ineffective, so started to reduce their engagement with the AMAN network. The strategy led the community to openly begin conducting various rituals and ceremonies that were accessible to outsiders. Interestingly, the people refuse to categorize this as "tourism" nor to consider Ciptagelar as a tourism destination. "We are not promoting tourism; instead, we are maintaining our culture and tradition. But if people come as a tourist, they are welcome", one elite member emphasized during the Seren Taun harvest festival (see Figure 1).

In the last few years, the biggest harvest festival, Seren Taun, has become a popular tourist attraction, attended by both domestic and foreign visitors. Its promotion can be easily found on the internet, social media, and from government offices, including the national park website. Interestingly, within the uncertain relationship with the national park authority, the people built two traditional guest houses that can be used by national park officers when they visit Ciptagelar. This is the ultimate evidence of the accommodative strategy in using tourism as its medium. In a similar vein, *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar* also serves as a perfect arena to fulfil a "root syndrome" for the young Sundanese living in the cities. Recently, I met some young Sundanese from Jakarta, who came to form new ties with "the original Sundanese" represented by the *Kasepuhan*. They wore traditional Sundanese clothes and carefully listened to a story from local people about the history of the legendary Sundanese king, *Siliwangi*.

The trajectory of tourism in Ciptagelar started in the 2000s during the era of the former leader, Abah Anom. He was recognized as a spiritual advisor and had a wide range of networks, so many guests visited the area to meet the *abah*. After completing the *ngalalakon* from the Ciptarasa area to the current Ciptagelar in 2001, the harvest festival was opened up to the public. This directly triggered the rise in

the number of people coming to Ciptagelar, not only for spiritual purposes, but also to enjoy its natural and cultural attractiveness. The second period was marked by the effort of the new leader, Abah Ugi, to continue in 2007 to use tourism as a basis for maintaining better networks with other parties. Moreover, the new leader, who is familiar with modern electronic devices, even strategically employs tourism as an arena for exposing *Kasepuhan* identity to wider audiences through publicizing the harvest festival and daily activities.

Figure 1

Foreign Tourist during the Seren Taun Harvest Festival



Since the 2010s, weekly visits can total 50 people, and the harvest festival in 2019 was attended by more than 1000 visitors, who stayed in Ciptagelar. Local and national politicians have also started to consider Kasepuhan Ciptagelar in terms of its political capital, and have regularly visited cultural events to connect themselves with the crowds. In a similar vein, through the intensive engagement with tourism, people in Ciptagelar had confidently started to declare that they have a different way of practicing Islam. Ki Absor, as a local figure, argues that people also need a normal life, and tourism provides the best way to achieve this without devastating forests and local beliefs inherited from the ancestors. This explains why tourism is seen as a promising choice, while continuing to refuse to declare Ciptagelar as a tourism area, but as an *adat* one.

On the one hand, tourism has motivated the community to produce strategies to adapt to external forces (Holder et al., 2022), as emphasized by Robertson (1995) with the term “glocalization”. On the other, it has also brought about various changes. Longchar (2014) argues that commercially-oriented tourism is one of the most popular instruments of globalization but potentially does not pay sufficient respect to life, culture and the environment. In addition, Cohen (2013) emphasizes that tourism, as a popular vehicle for globalization, has led to the elimination of barriers. It has also inevitably brought various changes to Ciptagelar. A local person, A (pseudonym) secretly criticized the leader for being too busy with his laptop, rather than building a close interaction with his people. Another young man, B, openly criticized visitors who were physically “too close” to Abah Ugi, even hugging him. For the local people, the *abah* is a respected figure who should be untouchable, but visitors break this rule. He also criticized travel agents who often sell cultural tours to Ciptagelar at high prices, but only give a small percentage to the local people. Finally, he strongly criticized his people who now appear to be money-oriented, considering every activity with the visitors in terms of the amount of money earned.

Nowadays, *Kasepuhan* uses an *in-out* strategy to maintain its distinctive identity. The *out* strategy is conducted by promoting cultural tourism to wide audiences, while the *in* strategy internally strengthens *Kasepuhan* identity through the conducting of various rituals to unite its members. Tourism, as a platform of cultural expression, reached its ultimate goal when the provincial government officially declared the area to be one of the major tourism areas in West Java. Moreover, since 2017 a representative of the national park authority has attended the harvest festival, and Ciptagelar has been deemed to be a “special” cultural tourism area in Halimun Salak National Park Area. It demonstrates a strong message: people are settling there legally. In terms of religious practices, having been considered as a valuable tourist attraction, various rituals rooted in local beliefs can be freely practiced, and moreover these facilitate the hegemony of the beliefs over the Islamic influences in the area. This means that tourism has provided a type of political opportunity for the indigenous community to express their cultural distinctiveness and also receive better recognition of its customary land, which is central to maintaining its culture.

D. Conclusion

Borrowing from James (2010), the foundation of this study is the effort of people from the ‘peripheries’, represented by the effort of *Kasepuhan* Ciptagelar to preserve their cultural identity. *Kasepuhan* has not been passive in dealing with external

forces, but has actively developed daily strategies to survive, including using tourism as a basis for this. In the last few decades, in terms of freedom *Kasepuhan* has been denied the possibility to practice its local beliefs and shut off from its ancestral land by the establishment of the national park. Accepting Islam as the formal religion, but limiting its values in daily life and favoring *tatali paranti karuhun*, is the accommodative strategy for dealing with the Islamic majority groups. Interestingly, nowadays *Kasepuhan* has arrived at the point of engaging with tourism to obtain greater recognition of its cultural practices. Consciously taking tourism as its avenue, *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar* has resisted colonial power, the modern state and the dominant role of the majority religious group throughout its history. In a similar vein, with the valuable natural and cultural resources that are needed to support tourism development in the area, various rituals rooted in *tatali paranti karuhun* can be freely performed. Moreover, in terms of land issues, people in *Kasepuhan* are no longer considered illegal settlers within the national park boundary. Therefore, this demonstrates the fact that *Kasepuhan Ciptagelar* is not powerless; conversely, it has achieved hidden productivity in dealing with the external forces through tourism.

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