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From culinary practices to rituals, cultural uses of local food plants in Banceuy Traditional Village, West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract. *Raihandhany R, Purnomo. 2026. From culinary practices to rituals, cultural uses of local food plants in Banceuy Traditional Village, West Java, Indonesia. Asian J Ethnobiol 9: y090106. https://doi.org/10.13057/asianjethnobiol/y090106.* Banceuy Traditional Village is one of the traditional villages located in West Java Province, Indonesia, which is inhabited by the Sunda Tribe. Banceuy indigenous people still preserve their local wisdom by performing traditional rituals. Some of these traditional rituals involve food plants in their implementation. This study aims to document the traditional rituals in the Banceuy Traditional Village. The method in this study used semi-structured interviews with 32 informants regarding food plant uses in several traditional rituals. The study results showed that many food plants were still involved in traditional ritual activities, namely, *Hajat Wawar* (5 species), *Hajat Safaran* (7), and *Ruwatan Bumi* (22). *Hajat Wawar* is carried out to ward off disaster, and food plants in this ritual are used as offerings during this ritual. *Hajat Safaran* is held every baby is born in *Safar* month to ask God for help to protect the baby. In this *Hajat Safaran*, most of the food plants that are served come from the boiled tuber. Then, *Ruwatan Bumi* aims to show gratitude towards God and prevent bad luck. In this ritual, the harvested crop plants from Banceuy indigenous people are collected and put together in a property called *dongdang*. Fabaceae, Alliaceae, and Solanaceae were the dominant food plant families involved in traditional rituals. *Capsicum annuum*, *Cocos nucifera*, and *Manihot esculenta* were commonly found food plant species used in several rituals in the Banceuy Traditional Village. The Banceuy indigenous people indeed continue to maintain their local wisdom through traditional rituals involving food plants, but these practices are increasingly at risk of fading due to modernization. Therefore, the urgent need to document and conserve both cultural heritage or local wisdom and plant diversity.

Keywords: Banceuy, ethnobotany, local wisdom, Sundanese, traditional rituals

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a high biodiversity, particularly plant diversity, and indigenous tribes scattered throughout the country with distinctive cultures (von Rintelen et al. 2017). One of the biggest tribes in Indonesia is the Sundanese, which is the second biggest after the Javanese. The Sundanese people in West Java (including Banten) are known to have some specific cultures in their daily lives. They manage their resources in an environment based on local wisdom or beliefs (Iskandar 2018). Plants are one of the most important food resources for humans. Ever since prehistoric times, edible food plants have been essential in human nourishment and civilization (Copeland and Hardy 2018). However, the role of plants in Sundanese culture goes beyond mere sustenance. Plants also play a significant role in their cultural practices and rituals, such as plants in traditional ceremonies and the belief in the spiritual significance of certain trees. Indeed, humans have acknowledged their dependence on plants primarily for food; therefore, other than for food, humans also rely on plants for building materials, clothing, and as essential components in medicine (Moallem al. 2017; Jima and Megersa 2018; Chhetri et al. 2019; Purushothaman et al. 2020; Bailly 2021).

The Sundanese people are prominent for their unique food culture called lalapan, which is freshly picked plants that they consume raw, which plays an important role in their daily food (Amrinanto et al. 2019). There may be various traditional utilization of plants for food. This study focused on Banceuy Traditional Village, which is located in Subang District, West Java. Banceuy indigenous people consider nature a part of themselves as this point of view was inherited from their ancestors; where they still implement several traditional rituals to prevent natural disasters caused by nature's anger and show gratitude towards God (Afif 2020). The ethnobotanical study in the Banceuy Traditional Village has been carried out by Gondokesumo et al. (2023) and Weking et al. (2023) about medicinal plants, while this paper researched food plants that elaborated on traditional rituals. Since the discourse about food and culture are inseparable, this study aims to document the traditional rituals in Banceuy Traditional Village, Subang District, West Java, which mainly involve the local food plants in their cultural activities.

Many plants are used for a range of ritualistic purposes. Plants are important in local Indonesian ethnicities, particularly those utilized in various ceremonies, including in Sundanese. The variety and identity of plants used in traditional rituals can differ widely, often carrying numerous

symbolic meanings (Iskandar and Iskandar 2017; Erawan et al. 2018). Rituals are crucial for gaining insights from local communities (Geng et al. 2017). As a part of traditional knowledge frequently transmitted orally across generations, these traditional rituals are deeply intertwined with social activities within the community. They will be transmitted to the next generations (Satrianegara et al. 2021). The role of plants in religion, including traditional activities, has been transmitted from one generation to generation to generation, mainly through their leaders and parents, who pass down this knowledge orally (Pandey and Pandey 2016). However, one of the challenges that indigenous communities face today is the potential loss of their traditional knowledge (Dapar et al. 2020).

Outside the West Java area or even Java Island, food plants involvement in traditional rituals has been implemented in many places across Indonesia. For example, a study by Sutrisno et al. (2020) has documented some food plants used in traditional rituals, such as in weddings, pregnancies, births, and funerals in Peureulak, East Aceh District. A recent study from Mukarromah et al. (2024) in Surakarta City, Central Java, showed that some food plants are involved in several traditional rituals such as wedding ceremonies, death ceremonies, Maulud (i.e., Born Day of Prophet Muhammad PBUH), *Mitoni* ceremony (i.e., 7 months), and *Tumpengan*. Sujarwo et al. (2019) also found that several food plant species are also used in religious offerings in Bali called such as Yadnya. A study by Sukenti et al. (2016) on Lombok Island discovered that the Sasak Tribe has a unique traditional ritual that involves food plants called *Rebak jangkih* that recook the rest of the food after the previous traditional rituals such as marriage, circumcision, or death and then eat together with all the villagers.

Documenting local knowledge on food plants and their roles in traditional rituals is critical due to the profound philosophical significance embedded within these practices. Rituals are defined as structured behaviors grounded in belief systems involving mystical forces or powers, independent of empirical or technical methods (Turner 2014). Such rituals serve to expel malevolent spirits, avert calamities, and maintain cosmic equilibrium across the three spatial realms (Fan 2016). Ethnobotanical research plays a vital role in safeguarding this indigenous plant-related knowledge, thereby contributing to the preservation of global cultural heritage (Yaseen et al. 2015). However, the traditional knowledge of medicinal plants is currently experiencing significant decline worldwide. This erosion is driven by external factors such as market forces, cultural assimilation, modernization, and globalization, alongside internal challenges including cultural restrictions on knowledge transmission and retention (Kodirekkala 2015, 2016). This ethnobotanical study is crucial for the dual conservation of both plant diversity and the intangible cultural heritage intertwined with it. By documenting and understanding traditional knowledge and practices, we not only protect valuable plant species from potential loss but also preserve the cultural identity, wisdom, and ecological relationships that sustain local communities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

The study was carried out in Banceuy Traditional Village, Subang District, West Java, Indonesia. The Banceuy Traditional Village has a population of 948, consisting of 470 males and 478 females. This village is at an altitude of 770 meters above sea level (masl) with a central coordinate of 6°43'30.1"S 107°42'18.7"E. Banceuy Traditional Village area spans approximately 157 hectares, comprising 47 hectares of forest, 78 hectares of rice fields, 20 hectares of gardens, and 12 hectares of residential area. Many of the Banceuy indigenous people's occupation is that of farmers, and they are prohibited from entering rice fields and plantations on fridays, according to their local wisdom. The Banceuy indigenous people are prohibited for entering the forest on fridays, as the day is reserved for Islamic religion obligations, the friday prayer. Additionally, any activities related to rice cultivation are avoided as a form of respect towards Dewi Sri, the Rice Goddess. The map of the the Banceuy Traditional Village is shown in Figure 1.

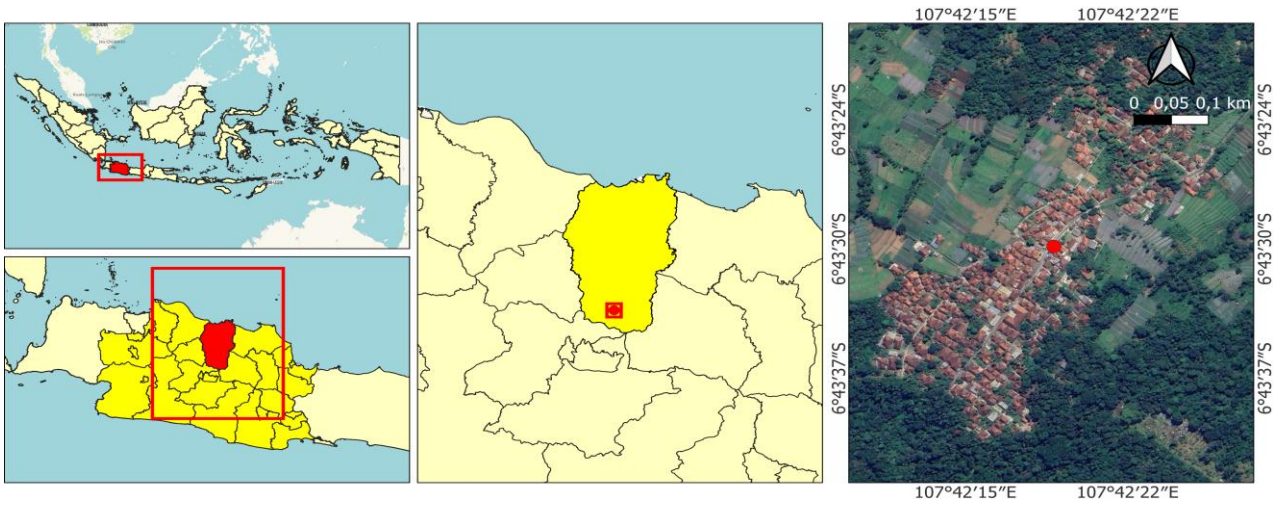

Figure 1. Map of Banceuy Traditional Village (6°43'30.1"S 107°42'18.7"E), Subang, West Java, Indonesia

Procedures

Data collection was conducted from May to July 2023 through semi-structured interviews. A total number of 32 informants were interviewed, including two key informants (one traditional ruler and one elder) who were purposefully selected because they had more comprehensive information on the village's cultural, historical, and philosophical value. At the same time, 30 other regular informants who were housewives were randomly selected because they prepared daily food for their families. The collected data concerned the utilization of food plant species in traditional ritual activities. We noted local plant names, scientific plant names, plant families, habits, locations, and used parts. First, we brought a permission letter from the university to the head of the traditional ruler to ask permission. The head of the traditional ruler permitted us, and we were accompanied by the Tourism Assistance Community of Banceuy Traditional Village (*POKDARWIS Banceuy*) while conducting interviews with informants.

Identification of specimens

These food plant specimens were identified using Flora of Java (Backer and van den Brink 1963, 1965, 1968). The accepted plant species names were validated through the Plants of the World Online (https://powo.science.kew.org/) website. After the interview, we conducted a guided fieldwork, asking informants to show the plant specimens around their yards, plantations, rice fields, or forests.

Data processing and analyses

The data was collected through interviews and then arranged in Microsoft Excel 2016. Each column is an attribute of local plant names, scientific plant names, plant families, habits, locations, and used parts

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic status of informants

A total number of 32 Banceuy indigenous people were interviewed to collect data on local food plant utilization for several rituals in the Banceuy Traditional Village. Then, 30 regular informants were housewives who assumed to know about food plants used in their daily lives as they serve and cook, as ritual utilization. At the same time, two key informants were the head of the traditional ruler and an elder of the farmer group who was assumed to have comprehensive knowledge about the culture in the Banceuy Traditional Village. The demographic of informants is displayed in Table 1.

Food plants in traditional rituals of Banceuy Traditional Village

This study revealed that various traditional rituals are still performed now, namely, *Hajat Wawar, Hajat Safaran*, and *Ruwatan Bumi*. Also, food plants for Banceuy indigenous people are involved in several traditional rituals. We recorded a total number of 31 plant species, which belong to 18 families. Fabaceae has the most species with five species, followed by Alliaceae and Solanaceae, both with four species. *Capsicum annuum* L., *Cocos nucifera* L., and *Manihot esculenta* Crantz are commonly found food plant species used in rituals in the Banceuy Traditional Village. *Capsicum annuum* and *C. nucifera* are utilized in the *Hajat Wawar* and *Ruwatan Bumi*, while *M. esculenta* is used in the *Hajat Safaran and Ruwatan Bumi*. A total number of 33 plant parts were utilized from 7 plant parts in these traditional held in Banceuy Traditional Village where fruits and tubers are the most used plant parts, respectively, consisting of 13 species dan 10 species and shown in Figure 2. However, detail on each plant parts on each food plant species will be shown in sub-chapters below.

This study identified that several traditional rituals, namely *Hajat Wawar, Hajat Safaran,* and *Ruwatan Bumi* are still actively practiced by the Banceuy indigenous community. Food plants play an integral role in these rituals. A total of 31 plant species which belong to 18 families were recorded. Fabaceae contributed the highest number consisting of five species, followed by Alliaceae and Solanaceae, each with four species. Commonly utilized food plants include *C. annuum, C. nucifera,* and *M. esculenta*. Specifically, *C. annuum* and *C. nucifera* are used in both the *Hajat Wawar* and *Ruwatan Bumi* rituals, while *M. esculenta* is incorporated in *Hajat Safaran* and *Ruwatan Bumi.* In total, 33 plant parts, derived from seven general plant parts categories were utilized in these traditional ceremonies. Fruits and tubers were the most frequently used, represented by 13 and 10 species respectively, as shown in Figure 2 while Figure 3 show some food plants that are involved in traditional rituals in Banceuy Traditional Village. Detailed associations between each plant species and the parts used are presented in the subsequent sub-sections.

Table 1. Demographics of informants in Banceuy Traditional Village, Subang, West Java, Indonesia

Informants characteristics	Total
Gender	
Male	2
Female	30
Age	
20-30	5
31-40	6
41-50	7
51-60	9
61-70	2
71-80	2
>80	1
Education	
Elementary	24
Junior high school	4
Vocational school	4
Occupation	
Farmers	10
Trader	3
Housewives	16
Labor	2
Traditional ruler	1

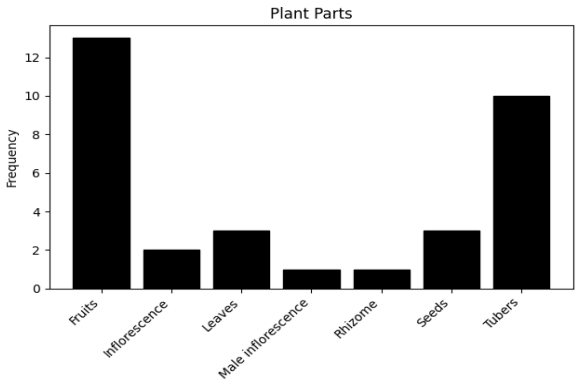

Figure 2. Plant parts in traditional rituals of Banceuy Traditional Village, Subang, West Java, Indonesia

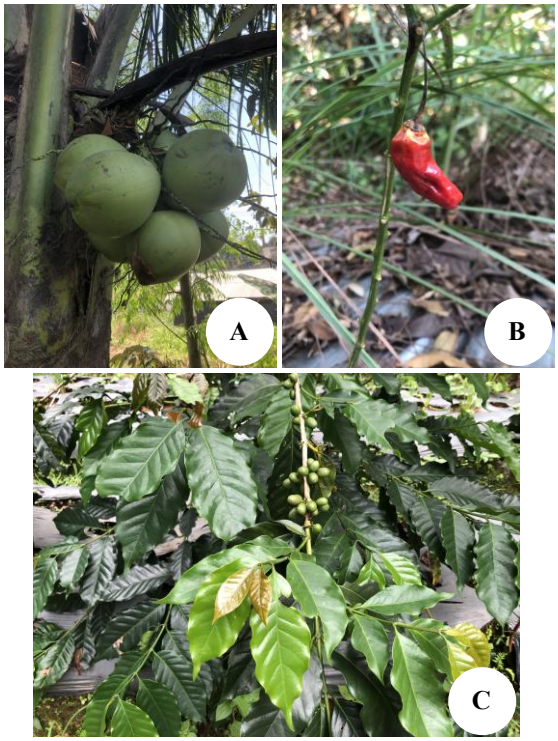

Figure 3. Food plants in traditional rituals of Banceuy Traditional Village, Subang, West Java, Indonesia. A. *Cocos nucifera,* B. *Capsicum annuum*, C. *Coffea arabica*

Figure 4. One of the traditional rituals in Banceuy Traditional Village, Subang, West Java, Indonesia, is *hajat mulud* Aki Leutik

Afif (2020) previously noted that Banceuy Traditional Village continues to uphold several traditional rituals as expressions of local wisdom and cultural heritage inherited from their ancestors. These rituals serve both as a form of gratitude for the blessings of the Almighty God and as a means of seeking protection from misfortune. Various food plant species are involved in these rituals, primarily used as offerings, known in Sundanese as *sesajén*. For the Sundanese people, *sesajén* functions as an act of *tasyakuran*, or giving thanks, conveyed through symbolic offerings. The term *sesajén* (also referred to as *sajén*) originates from the Sundanese word *ngajénan*, which means *ngahormat,* which means to honor or pay respect. Linguistically, *sajén* is derived from the combination of two Sundanese root words: *sa* (meaning 'one' or 'single') and *aji* (meaning 'teaching'), with the suffix *-an* implying transformation or manifestation, often associated with 'fire' or sacred energy. Thus, sajén can be interpreted as "a singular teaching offered through the worship of the Almighty God (Fadilah et al. 2021). One of the traditional rituals practiced in Banceuy Traditional Village is depicted in Figure 4.

Hajat Wawar

Hajat Wawar is a traditional ritual practiced in Banceuy Traditional Village, conducted as a form of *tolak bala*, a ceremonial act intended to ward off misfortune. The ritual is believed to protect villagers, along with their agricultural crops and livestock, from disturbances caused by both human and supernatural forces. It is customarily performed in an open area surrounding the village, with a minimum frequency of once every three months. In this ritual, five plant species from four botanical families were recorded. Several local food plant species are utilized, including *Allium cepa* L., *Allium sativum* L., and *C. annuum*, which are arranged on wooden skewers and inserted into a *C. nucifera*. The *Allium* species are typically sourced from household kitchens, as they are staple ingredients in daily cooking. Although the elders of Banceuy do not provide a specific rationale for the inclusion of *A. cepa* and *A. sativum*, these species are traditionally believed to repel malevolent spirits. In addition to these offerings, *Coffea arabica* L. is also poured as part of the ritual. Notably, *C. arabica* is a commodity crop cultivated by the Banceuy Farmer Group. All food plants involved in the *Hajat Wawar* ritual are not intended for consumption but are instead offered as *sesajén* (ritual offerings). A comprehensive list of food plant species used in the *Hajat Wawar* ritual is presented in Table 2, while a visual representation of the offerings is provided in Figure 5.

Hajat Safaran

As the name implies, *Hajat Safaran* is a ritual performed when a child is born during the month of Safar in the Hijriyah (Islamic) calendar. The purpose of this ritual is to seek divine protection for the newborn. It is obligatory for the parents to conduct this ceremony before the child reaches one year of age. If not performed within this time frame, the child is believed to be required to undertake the ritual themselves later in life. In *Hajat Safaran*, there are 7 food plant species in 7 plant families are recorded and must be served in this ritual are listed in Table 3 and Figure 6.

Various food plants, particularly tubers and seeds, are arranged on large serving trays made of either stainless steel called *nampan* or woven bamboo named *nyiru*. The ritual involves gathering family members and inviting community elders from Banceuy Traditional Village to lead prayers dedicated to the child. Unlike other ritual offerings, the food plants used in *Hajat Safaran* are intended for consumption.

Ruwatan Bumi

Ruwatan Bumi is considered the most significant and sacred ritual in Banceuy Traditional Village. Etymologically, *ruwatan* or *ngaruwat* is derived from a Sundanese word meaning "to gather." Contextually, it carries two interpretations: first, the gathering of agricultural harvests, and second, the gathering of people to celebrate the ritual. The term *bumi*, meaning “earth” in Indonesian, emphasizes the connection to land and nature. *Ruwatan Bumi* is held annually on the last Wednesday of the final week of the month of Rayagung, according to the Hijriyah (Islamic) calendar (Afif 2020). This ritual expresses the Banceuy indigenous people’s gratitude to God and serves as a spiritual safeguard against misfortune.

Food plants play a central role in *Ruwatan Bumi*, particularly during the ceremonial parade known as *Ngarak Dewi Sri*. In Sundanese belief, Dewi Sri is revered as the Goddess of fertility. This vibrant and festive procession includes the display of 22 food plant species from 12 plant families, based on field observations conducted during the ritual (Table 4). However, the exact number of species involved may vary depending on the year’s harvest.

The harvest is arranged in decorative structures resembling small houses, known as *dongdang*, which are carried around the village during the procession. A total of seven *dongdang* are typically featured in *Ruwatan Bumi*, corresponding to the seven neighborhood associations (*rukun warga*) in Banceuy Traditional Village. These *dongdang* are filled with food plants representing the community’s agricultural yield. After the ritual concludes, the contents of the *dongdang* are distributed among the villagers. A visual depiction of the *dongdang* is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 5. Offerings in *Hajat Wawar* ritual

Figure 6. Food plant species in *Hajat Safaran* ritual

Table 2. Food plant species in *Hajat Wawar* ritual

Family name	Species name	Local name	Plant parts	IUCN
Alliaceae	*Allium cepa* L.	*Bawang beureum*	Tubers	-
Alliaceae	*Allium sativum* L.	*Bawang bodas*	Tubers	-
Arecaceae	*Cocos nucifera* L.	*Kalapa*	Fruits	-
Rubiaceae	*Coffea arabica* L.	*Kopi arabika*	Seeds	EN
Solanaceae	*Capsicum annuum* L.	*Cabe*	Fruits	LC

Note: EN: Endangered, LC: Least Concern, -: Absent

Table 3. Food plant species in *Hajat Safaran* ritual

Family name	Species name	Local name	Plant parts	IUCN
Araceae	*Colocasia esculenta* (L.) Schott	Taleus	Tubers	LC
Cannaceae	*Canna indica* L.	Ganyol, ganyong	Tubers	-
Convolvulaceae	*Ipomoea batatas* (L.) Lam.	Hui, boled	Tubers	DD
Euphorbiaceae	*Manihot esculenta* Crantz	Sampeu	Tubers	-
Fabaceae	*Arachis hypogaea* L.	Suuk	Fruit-seeds	-
Marantaceae	*Maranta arundinacea* L.	Sagu	Tubers	-
Poaceae	*Zea mays* L.	Jagong	Fruit-seeds	LC

Note: DD: Data Deficient, LC: Least Concern, -: Absent

Table 4. Food plant species in *Ruwatan Bumi* ritual

Family name	Species name	Local name	Plant parts	IUCN
Alliaceae	*Allium fistulosum* L.	*Bawang daun*	Tubers	-
Alliaceae	*Allium tuberosum* Rottler ex Spreng.	*Bawang kucai*	Tubers	-
Arecaceae	*Arenga pinnata* (Wurmb) Merr.	*Aren*	Male inflorescence and leaves	LC
Arecaceae	*Cocos nucifera* L.	*Kalapa*	Fruit	-
Brassicaceae	*Brassica oleracea* L.	*Burkol*	Inflorescence	DD
Brassicaceae	*Brassica oleracea* L.	*Brokoli*	Inflorescence	DD
Brassicaceae	*Brassica rapa* L.	*Sosin*	Leaves	DD
Bromeliaceae	*Ananas comosus* (L.) Merr.	*Ganas*	Fruits	-
Convolvulaceae	*Ipomoea batatas* (L.) Lam.	*Hui, boled*	Tubers	DD
Fabaceae	*Pachyrhizus erosus* (L.) Urb.	*Bangkuang*	Tubers	-
Fabaceae	*Parkia speciosa* Hassk.	*Peuteuy*	Fruits	LC
Fabaceae	*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.	*Buncis*	Fruits	LC
Fabaceae	*Vigna unguiculata* (L.) Walp.	*Kacang panjang*	Fruits	-
Moraceae	*Artocarpus heterophyllus* Lam.	*Nangka*	Fruits	-
Myrtaceae	*Syzygium aqueum* (Burm.fil.) Alston	*Jambu*	Fruits	LC
Musaceae	*Musa* × *paradisiaca* L.	*Cau*	Fruits	LC
Rutaceae	*Citrus* × *aurantium* L.	*Jeruk*	Fruits	-
Solanaceae	*Capsicum annuum* L.	*Cabe*	Fruits	LC
Solanaceae	*Capsicum frutescens* L.	*Cengek*	Fruits	LC
Solanaceae	*Solanum lycopersicum* L.	*Tomat*	Tubers	-
Solanaceae	*Solanum melongena* L.	*Terong marukan*	Tubers	-
Zingiberaceae	*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe	*Jahe*	Leaves and rhizome	-

Note: DD: Data Deficient, LC: Least Concern, -: Absent

Figure 7. *Dongdang*, consisted of harvested fruits and vegetables

Discussion

Plant parts in traditional rituals of Banceuy Traditional Village and their benefit

The Banceuy indigenous people utilize various parts of food plants in their ritual practices. During the *Hajat Wawar* ritual, the food plants involved are not intended for consumption. In contrast, during the *Hajat Safaran* and *Ruwatan Bumi* ceremonies, several of the food plants presented are edible and distributed among community members. In the *Hajat Safaran* ritual, tuberous plant organs which are recognized as carbohydrate sources are the most frequently used. These include *Colocasia esculenta* (L.) Schott, *Canna indica* L., *Ipomoea batatas* (L.) Lam., *M. esculenta*, and *Maranta arundinacea* L.. Carbohydrates are a fundamental component of human nutrition, serving as the largest single source of dietary energy and playing a vital role as the body's primary energy source (Lafiandra et al. 2014).

In addition, fruits represent the most utilized plant organs across traditional ceremonies, particularly in the *Ruwatan Bumi* ritual. Following the ceremonial parade, fruits which have been harvested by the Banceuy indigenus people and arranged in *dongdang* are distributed to villagers. Fruits are critical for human health, providing key nutrients such as vitamin C (ascorbic acid), dietary fiber, minerals, and folic acid (Vincente et al. 2014).

Furthermore, members of the Fabaceae family are the most prominently featured in various traditional rituals. For instance, *Arachis hypogaea* L. is served during *Hajat Safaran*, while *Parkia speciosa* Hassk., *Phaseolus vulgaris* L., and *Vigna unguiculata* (L.) Walp. that belongs to Fabaceae family are arranged in *dongdang* during *Ruwatan Bumi* as sources of seeds. Fabaceae is known for its high protein content, along with other nutritional components such as fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and essential micronutrients (Gulewicz et al. 2013).

The practice of Ritual Tolak Bala across traditional villages in West Java

The *Ritual Tolak Bala,* which means a ritual to ward off misfortune is also practiced in several traditional villages across West Java. For instance, Ryandita et al. (2020) reported that Kuta Traditional Village, located in Ciamis District, conducts the *Babarit* ritual as a form of *tolak bala*, typically performed during natural disasters or extended dry seasons. In this ritual, the Kuta indigenous people use *C. nucifera* leaves as one of the plant components. Similarly, in Banceuy Traditional Village, *C. nucifera* is also incorporated into the *Ritual Tolak Bala*; however, there is a distinction in its use, while the Kuta community

utilizes the leaves, the Banceuy community exclusively uses the fruit.

Tahnia (2022) documented the practice of *Ritual Tolak Bala* in Cireundeu Traditional Village, Cimahi City, West Java. To protect themselves from black magic, the Cireundeu indigenous people use specific plants such as *C. esculenta*, *Moringa oleifera* Lam., and the ornamental species *Epiphyllum oxypetalum* (DC.) Haw., which are placed within their homes as protective elements. However, the selection and use of plant species in Cireundeu traditional village differs from those practiced in Banceuy Traditional Village.

Practice of traditional rituals in safar month from other traditional villages

Besides Banceuy Traditional Village, others traditional villages in West Java also perform traditional ritual in Safar Month. According to Ryandita et al. (2020), the people of Kuta Traditional Village, Ciamis District, perform the *Nyuguh* traditional ritual every year on the 25th Safar. This ritual is a profound expression of their gratitude. However, this ritual aims to show their gratitude. Some of the harvest (unfortunately, the list of species is not mentioned) and *C. nucifera* leaves are the plant species involved in *Nyuguh* traditional ritual. *Cocos nucifera* leaves are used to make ketupat, because when the *Nyuguh* ritual begins every Kuta Indigenous people are required to bring ketupat, which in the afternoon will be paraded along with the harvest. However, some of the harvest plant species may share the same species as well as in the Banceuy Traditional Village. Unfortunately, the paper does not explain any other species' usage on their 25th Safar.

Annual special day in other traditional villages

A day before *Ruwatan Bumi*, the Banceuy Indigenous People engage in communal preparations marked by distinct gender roles. Women, who hold a central role in culinary traditions, are responsible for preparing and cooking food, while men, who oversee craftsmanship, construct ceremonial gates (*héék*) and decorative pennants (*sawén*). Both *héék* and *sawén* are Sundanese terms. *Héék* is crafted from *Schizostachyum blumei* Nees, which is cut, shaped into the desired form, adorned with traditional motifs, and then covered with leaves of *Arenga pinnata* (Wurmb) Merr.. *Sawén* is similarly made using *A. pinnata* leaves, following a comparable process. The use of *A. pinnata* leaves is considered essential for the creation of both *héék* and *sawén*.

Héék is typically installed at the entrance of every alley, while *sawén* is displayed along roadsides to mark *Ruwatan Bumi* as a significant ceremonial day in Banceuy Traditional Village (Figure 8). Similar ceremonial days are observed in other traditional villages throughout West Java. For example, the Cireundeu Traditional Village in Cimahi City holds *Upacara Tutup Taun Ngemban Taun 1 Sura* annually on the first day of *Sura* to express gratitude for agricultural blessings (Tahnia 2022). Likewise, Kuta Traditional Village in Ciamis District conducts the *Nyuguh* traditional ceremony every 25th of *Safar*, aiming to express gratitude and ward off misfortune (Ryandita et al. 2020).

Figure 8. A. Gates (*héék*), B. Pennants (*sawén*) in *Ruwatan Bumi* ritual

Plant conservation through traditional ritual practices

Ethnobotanical research provides a crucial lens through which the interconnections between plants, cultural belief systems, and conservation practices can be understood in the context of indigenous and local knowledge systems (Nolan and Turner 2011). Among the many cultural expressions of ecological stewardship, ritual practices of indigenous communities play a vital role in revealing the philosophical and spiritual values that underpin sustainable interactions with nature. These ritual-based worldviews not only reinforce communal identity but also serve as effective vehicles for promoting nature conservation (Geng et al. 2017).

Based on the research findings, the food plant species used in various traditional rituals by the Banceuy indigenous community exhibit conservation statuses under the IUCN categories of Least Concern (LC), Data Deficient (DD), and one species classified as Endangered (EN), namely *C. arabica*. Several other species have yet to be formally assessed. Despite the generally low threat levels, conservation efforts remain essential, as these plant species are not only integral to ritual practices but also serve as vital sources of daily nutrition. The Banceuy indigenous people contribute to conservation by cultivating these plants in forests, gardens, rice fields, and yards. Ethnobotanical studies contribute to identifying the conservation status of plant species such as those categorized as Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Critically Endangered (CR), or Data Deficient (DD), which can serve as a foundation for developing targeted conservation strategies aimed at preventing habitat loss and protecting ecologically significant species (Panigrahi et al. 2021).

However, this body of traditional ecological knowledge is increasingly at risk due to pressures from modernization, deforestation, environmental degradation, and cultural assimilation. The erosion of oral traditions accelerates the loss of both biodiversity in this contex is plant diversity and the cultural frameworks that sustain it. Therefore, preserving intact ecosystems becomes essential not only for maintaining plant diversity but also for safeguarding the cultural practices and wisdom that have co-evolved with these environments (Panigrahi et al. 2021). Thus, integrating traditional ecological knowledge into contemporary conservation strategies is not only a matter of preserving plant diversity, but also of

sustaining the cultural integrity and resilience of indigenous communities who have long served as stewards of their natural environments.

In conclusion, this ethnobotanical investigation into the cultural uses of food plants in the traditional rituals of Banceuy Traditional Village underscores the intricate linkage between biodiversity and intangible cultural heritage. Through meticulous documentation, this study recorded the use of 31 food plant species from 18 families involved in three key ritual practices: *Hajat Wawar*, *Hajat Safaran*, and *Ruwatan Bumi*. These ceremonies not only represent the Banceuy indigenous community's expressions of gratitude to the Almighty and efforts to avert misfortune but also demonstrate their deep-rooted ecological consciousness and reliance on locally available food plants for both symbolic and functional purposes.

The findings highlight the prominent use of specific plant parts, particularly tubers, fruits, and seeds which serve dual roles in sustaining nutritional needs and reinforcing cultural identity. Ritual food offerings such as *sesajén* reflect philosophical values embedded in Sundanese cosmology, emphasizing harmony with nature and communal spiritual resilience. Moreover, these practices foster intergenerational knowledge transmission and community cohesion through structured ceremonial traditions.

However, the sustainability of such knowledge is increasingly threatened by modernization, the erosion of oral traditions, and socio-economic changes. Therefore, the preservation and revitalization of ethnobotanical knowledge must be prioritized through inclusive documentation, education, and community-based conservation efforts. By illuminating the socio-cultural significance of food plants within ritual contexts, this study contributes to a broader understanding of biocultural diversity and reaffirms the importance of safeguarding traditional ecological knowledge for future generations.

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