

Ngarot in Jambak Village as a Cultural Tourism Attraction

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Abstract

The Ngarot Traditional Ceremony in Jambak Village is an agrarian tradition that embodies rich cultural values and holds significant potential as a cultural tourism attraction. This study aims to analyze the Ngarot Ceremony as a cultural tourism attraction and to examine the traditional values that support its development within the context of sustainable tourism. The research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, utilizing observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation techniques to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. The results indicate that the Ngarot Ceremony possesses strong appeal as a cultural tourism attraction through elements such as ritual processions, cultural symbolism, visual aesthetics, and active community participation. In addition, this tradition contains social values such as mutual cooperation, solidarity, respect for ancestors, and the strengthening of local identity, all of which serve as authentic attractions for tourists. Ngarot functions not only as a cultural practice but also as a medium for transmitting traditional values and knowledge to younger generations. From a tourism perspective, Ngarot has the potential to be developed as a community-based cultural tourism attraction that can provide economic benefits without diminishing its sacred meaning and philosophical values. This study contributes to understanding the relationship between agrarian traditions and the development of cultural tourism based on local wisdom. In conclusion, the Ngarot Ceremony in Jambak Village is an authentic cultural tourism attraction with strong potential for sustainable development while preserving its cultural integrity and values.

Keywords: Ngarot, cultural tourism attraction, local tradition, tourism potential, sustainable tourism

A. INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism is one of the sectors that continues to grow in both academic studies and tourism practices in Indonesia. This is in line with the view of (Richards, 2001:3), who states that cultural tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments in the global tourism industry. The diversity of local traditions in each region represents significant potential for creating tourism attractions based on local wisdom, as local culture and traditional heritage serve as primary resources in the development of tourist destinations (Smith, 2009:45). In this context, culture is not only positioned as heritage that needs to be preserved, but also as a strategic resource that can provide economic benefits to local communities (UNWTO, 2020). Therefore, the development of cultural tourism must be carried out carefully while maintaining authentic values, as the success of cultural tourism largely depends on preserving the authenticity of cultural expressions (Timothy, 2003:7).

One form of local tradition with such potential is the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony, which is practiced in the Indramayu region, including Jambak Village. Ngarot is an agrarian ritual performed as an expression of gratitude for agricultural yields as well as a hope for blessings in the upcoming planting season, as explained that agrarian rituals represent expressions of gratitude and prayers for successful harvests (Koentjaraningrat, 2009: 354). This tradition involves active community participation as part of a collective practice passed down through generations (Koentjaraningrat, 2009: 144). The involvement of younger generations in the Ngarot procession also highlights the role of ritual as a space for identity formation and social integration (Turner & Abrahams, 2017:95). In addition, Ngarot presents aesthetic

elements through artistic performances, processions, and culturally meaningful symbols, as rituals fundamentally constitute symbolic systems that shape cultural experiences (Geertz, 1973:90).

In this study, Geertz's symbolic anthropology and Turner's ritual process theory are used as analytical frameworks to understand how ritual symbols, youth participation, and collective processions function in shaping social solidarity, cultural identity, and communal meanings within the Ngarot Ceremony.

In academic discourse, traditions such as Ngarot are understood not only as ritual practices but also as representations of community cultural identity. Ngarot is an agrarian tradition carried out as an expression of gratitude for harvest outcomes and the continuity of community life (Pramesti, 2021). Various studies indicate that traditional ceremonies function socially as mediums for value transmission and the formation of solidarity, as Ngarot plays a role in instilling values of mutual cooperation, respect for ancestors, and social awareness (Ramayuda et al., 2025). This tradition also actively involves younger generations and continues sustainably as part of cultural transmission (Nurmawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, Ngarot is not only a symbol of local cultural identity but also holds potential as a tourism attraction that supports the economic sustainability of the community (Suhaeb & Farhah, 2024). In practice, the sequence of Ngarot ceremonies contains a system of symbols rich in meaning and inseparable from one another (Hidayat, 2016).

However, studies on the Ngarot Ceremony still tend to focus on cultural and symbolic aspects, while analyses that specifically link this tradition to the development of cultural tourism remain relatively limited, as studies on cultural tourism increasingly emphasize the importance of understanding local traditions not only as cultural expressions but also as potential tourism resources that can create meaningful visitor experiences (Richards, 2018). In fact, understanding the tourism potential of a local tradition is crucial in formulating sustainable and community-based development strategies (Richards, 2018). In this context, community-based tourism development becomes important as it emphasizes local participation and the sustainable use of cultural resources (UNWTO, 2020). This indicates the need for deeper analysis of how the Ngarot Ceremony can be positioned as a tourism attraction without diminishing its inherent traditional values, considering that tourism development may threaten cultural authenticity if not managed wisely (Di Giovine, 2009).

Moreover, limited studies have critically examined the socio-cultural tensions emerging from the transformation of sacred rituals into tourism commodities, particularly regarding issues of authenticity, community control, and the preservation of ritual meanings within local communities. In the context of cultural tourism development, traditional rituals often face complex tensions between economic commodification and the preservation of sacred cultural meanings. The transformation of rituals into tourism attractions may create opportunities for local economic development, yet it may also risk shifting cultural practices into commercial spectacles oriented toward visitor consumption rather than communal values (Cole, 2007; Shepherd, 2002). Therefore, understanding how local communities negotiate authenticity, sacredness, and tourism interests becomes essential in examining the sustainability of cultural tourism based on local traditions.

Based on the above discussion, the main problem addressed in this study is how the potential of the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony in Jambak Village can be understood as a cultural tourism attraction and what values support its development. In addition, this study seeks to examine the relationship between tradition preservation and tourism development within a local context.

This research employs a qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. This approach is chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of meanings, social practices, and cultural values embedded in the Ngarot Ceremony. The objective of this article is to analyze the potential of the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony in Jambak Village as

a cultural tourism attraction and to examine the traditional values that serve as the foundation for developing sustainable, culture-based tourism.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to examine the potential of the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony in Jambak Village as a cultural tourism attraction. This approach is chosen because it enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings, values, and social practices embedded within the community, as qualitative research focuses on understanding the meanings that individuals or groups assign to a social phenomenon (Creswell, 2014: 4). The descriptive design is used to provide a comprehensive depiction of the phenomenon under study within the context of everyday community life (Sandelowski, 2000). The research subjects consist of traditional leaders, village officials, artists, and community members directly involved in the ceremony. Informants are selected purposively based on criteria such as having knowledge of the Ngarot tradition, being involved in its implementation, and understanding the development of tourism in the local area, as purposive sampling emphasizes selecting informants who possess relevant experience and knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Sharp, 2003). In addition, key informants are chosen because they have specific knowledge and are willing to provide relevant information for the study (Bernard, 2011:166).

This study involved four informants consisting of one traditional leader, one village official, one local artist, and one community member actively involved in the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony. The informants ranged in age from 25 to 68 years and had participated in the tradition for approximately 5 to 15 years. These informants were selected because they possessed direct knowledge regarding the implementation of the ritual, cultural values, and the development of tourism activities in Jambak Village.

The research process begins with field observation to directly examine the sequence of the Ngarot Ceremony, as observation allows researchers to obtain data directly from the natural setting (Creswell, 2014: 189). Subsequently, semi-structured interviews are conducted to explore information related to cultural values, ritual meanings, and tourism potential, as this method provides flexibility for researchers to deeply explore informants' perspectives (Seidman, 2013:9). The data are further strengthened through documentation in the form of photographs, field notes, and other supporting documents, which serve as additional data sources to enrich and validate the research findings (Miles, 2014:275). The primary instrument in this study is the researcher, who acts as both the data collector and analyst, supported by interview guidelines and observation sheets as data collection tools (Moleong, 2018:168).

Data collection techniques include participatory observation, interviews, and documentation study. Participatory observation is used to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena through the researcher's direct involvement in the field (Bernard, 2011:256). The collected data are then analyzed qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as qualitative data analysis proceeds through these three main flows of activity (Miles, 2014:12). The validity of the data is ensured through source and method triangulation by comparing information obtained from various informants and data collection techniques, as triangulation is an effort to enhance the credibility of research findings (Denzin, 2012). Through these procedures, the study is expected to produce valid findings with a high level of credibility within the context of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 301).

C. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The research findings indicate that the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony in Jambak Village has strong potential as a cultural tourism attraction, as rituals are one of the key elements in tourism activities that can attract visitors through their uniqueness and inherent meanings (Chen et al., 2024; Harrisa et al.,

2023). This potential is reflected in several main aspects identified in the field, namely ritual elements, aesthetics, community participation, and the socio-cultural values embedded in its implementation, all of which contribute to strengthening local identity and providing meaningful tourism experiences (Maharani et al., 2025; Sterchele, 2020). This demonstrates that the combination of ritual elements and social participation reinforces the position of Ngarot as a cultural tourism attraction rooted in experience and local uniqueness.

The Ngarot Ceremony is carried out in a structured manner through a series of processions involving traditional leaders, village youth, and the broader community, where the ritual structure is shaped by symbols, stages of the procession, and the collective emotional engagement of the community (Lu et al., 2024). Based on observations, the uniqueness of this tradition lies in the involvement of younger generations who wear traditional attire, participate in processions, and carry agrarian symbols representing the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, while also strengthening collective identity and community participation in sustaining the tradition (Ghalih & Dewayani, 2025; Mazlan et al., 2025). Thus, this aspect not only holds cultural value but is also relevant as a tourism attraction capable of drawing visitors through its authenticity and community engagement.

From Turner & Abrahams (2017), the involvement of village youth in the Ngarot procession can also be interpreted as a liminal phase in which participants temporarily enter a symbolic social space that strengthens collective solidarity and reinforces communal identity. Through participation in ritual activities, younger generations are symbolically integrated into the social and cultural structure of the community. Meanwhile, Geertz's symbolic anthropology helps explain that ritual attributes such as traditional clothing, floral headpieces, and agrarian symbols function not merely as decorative elements but as cultural symbols carrying shared meanings related to fertility, harmony, purity, and continuity within the agrarian life of the community (Geertz, 1973).

Figure 1. Procession of the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony in Jambak Village



Source : Field Documentation by Wangi Indriya, 2025.

The procession reflects collective participation and symbolic interaction among community members within the ritual space. The involvement of village youth and traditional leaders demonstrates the continuity of cultural values and the communal nature of the Ngarot Ceremony.

Furthermore, observations show that each stage of the Ngarot Ceremony is not merely ceremonial but also carries strong symbolic meaning. For example, the use of traditional attributes such as floral headpieces and traditional clothing reflects values of purity, beauty, and the readiness of the younger generation to enter certain social phases within the community. In this context, ritual attributes can represent identity and stages of social transition (Niessen & Eicher, 1998). This indicates that Ngarot functions not only as an agrarian ritual but also as a medium for reproducing cultural values transmitted

across generations (Bell, 2009; UNESCO, 2017). These findings reinforce that symbolic meaning within rituals is a crucial element in shaping cultural tourism appeal, as tourists do not merely observe but also interpret the cultural experiences presented.

Figure 2. Traditional Attire and Floral Head Decorations of Female Participants during the Ngarot Ceremony



Source: Field Documentation by Wangi Indriya, 2025.

The visual attributes worn by participants symbolize purity, beauty, harmony, and agrarian identity within the Ngarot tradition. These aesthetic elements also strengthen the cultural authenticity and visual appeal of the ceremony as a cultural tourism attraction.

From interviews with informants, it is understood that the community perceives Ngarot as an expression of gratitude for agricultural yields as well as a means of preserving local cultural values. Informants also emphasize that the involvement of younger generations in this tradition serves as a form of informal cultural education, where values such as mutual cooperation, togetherness, and respect for ancestors are instilled through direct practice. In this context, cultural preservation heavily depends on active community participation in transmitting these values across generations (Lenzerini, 2011). This highlights that Ngarot has an important social function in strengthening the collective identity of the Jambak Village community, which is built through shared ritual practices (Stephenson, 2014). From a tourism perspective, this community participation and engagement become a distinctive attraction that reinforces Ngarot as a form of community-based cultural tourism.

One traditional leader stated:

"Ngarot is not merely a celebration or entertainment. For us, it is a form of gratitude to our ancestors and a reminder for younger generations to preserve our traditions." (Interview with traditional leader, December 2025).

Another informant explained:

"We are happy that many visitors come to see Ngarot, but we are also worried that the ceremony could lose its sacred meaning if it becomes too commercial." (Interview with local community member, December 2025).

These statements indicate that the local community perceives Ngarot not only as a tourism attraction but also as a sacred cultural identity that must be preserved carefully amidst the pressures of tourism commercialization. The concerns expressed by informants also reflect the community's awareness regarding the potential erosion of ritual authenticity due to festivalization and economic interests.

Figure 3. Community and Visitor Participation during the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony



Source: Field Documentation by Wangi Indriya, 2025.

The active participation of local communities and visitors during the ceremony illustrates the growing public interest in Ngarot as a cultural tourism attraction. At the same time, community involvement remains an essential factor in maintaining the authenticity and sustainability of the tradition.

In addition, documentation results indicate increasing attention from external communities toward the Ngarot Ceremony. This is marked by the presence of visitors from outside the village and even from other regions who come to witness the procession. This phenomenon suggests that Ngarot not only functions as an internal community ritual but also holds external appeal as a cultural tourism attraction. Cultural tourism continues to grow alongside increasing tourist interest in authentic experiences based on local traditions (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Richards, 2018). This confirms that Ngarot has undergone a functional transformation into a tourism attraction without losing its cultural values.

A village official explained:

"The Ngarot Ceremony has become one of the cultural events that attracts visitors from outside the region and helps introduce Jambak Village more widely." (Interview with village official, December 2025). This statement indicates that the local government views Ngarot not only as a cultural heritage but also as a strategic cultural tourism asset capable of supporting local tourism development.

Analytically, these findings show that the main attraction of the Ngarot Ceremony lies in its authenticity and symbolic value. Authenticity is reflected in the preservation of ritual structures, traditional values, and direct community involvement in the ceremony. In cultural tourism, authenticity is a key element as it provides unique and meaningful experiences for tourists, where perceived authenticity plays a role in shaping tourist experiences and satisfaction with cultural destinations (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Meanwhile, the symbolic values embedded in each procession make Ngarot not

merely a spectacle but also a medium of cultural interpretation rich in meaning, as cultural performances represent symbols that can be interpreted by both participants and audiences within specific social contexts (Chhabra, 2021; Stephenson, 2014). Therefore, authenticity and symbolism are the primary factors that strengthen Ngarot's appeal as a unique and meaningful cultural tourism destination.

The aesthetic aspect also plays a significant role in enhancing tourism appeal. Visual elements such as traditional attire, processions, accompanying music, and collective community expressions create a strong aesthetic experience for visitors. Aesthetics in this context are not limited to visual aspects but also include emotional and cultural experiences perceived by tourists, shaped through sensory engagement and cultural interpretation of space and events (Kirillova et al., 2014). This further strengthens Ngarot's position as an experience-based tourism attraction, where tourism experiences are formed through interactions between visitors and the local cultural environment as well as direct involvement in the collective atmosphere created (Campos et al., 2018; Richards, 2018). Thus, this aesthetic dimension becomes an important element in enhancing Ngarot's tourism appeal without relying on excessive commodification.

A local artist stated:

"The artistic elements in Ngarot, such as traditional music, dance performances, and costumes, are important because they represent the identity and cultural expression of the community." (Interview with local artist, December 2025). This finding demonstrates that artistic performances within the Ngarot Ceremony function not only as entertainment but also as cultural representations that strengthen the visual and aesthetic appeal of the tradition.

Active community participation is a key element in sustaining this tradition. The involvement of various community elements from traditional leaders and village officials to younger generations demonstrates a strong sense of belonging toward the Ngarot tradition. In the context of community-based tourism development, such participation is a crucial factor determining the success and sustainability of a cultural tourism destination, as local community involvement plays a role in preserving the continuity and authenticity of cultural practices (Suansri, 2003; Tosun, 2006). Therefore, community participation not only sustains the tradition but also strengthens Ngarot as a community-based cultural tourism attraction. Without community involvement, traditions risk losing their meaning and becoming mere commercial performances, as tourism development without local participation may lead to the loss of cultural control by the community itself (Cole, 2007).

However, the study also identifies potential challenges in developing Ngarot as a cultural tourism attraction, particularly the risk of cultural commodification. Some informants expressed concerns that increasing tourist attention could shift the orientation of the tradition from sacred to more entertainment-oriented forms. This shift may alter the original meaning of the Ngarot Ceremony and reduce its cultural values, as cultural commodification often transforms traditional practices into market-oriented tourism products (Greenwood, 1977; Shepherd, 2002). This highlights that tourism development must be managed carefully to avoid diminishing the authenticity that constitutes the core appeal of cultural tourism.

In this context, the development of cultural tourism creates a continuous negotiation between economic interests and the preservation of ritual sacredness. Local actors attempt to maintain the authenticity of the Ngarot Ceremony by preserving traditional ritual structures, limiting excessive intervention from external tourism interests, and ensuring that cultural values remain central within the celebration. This finding demonstrates that authenticity is not static but continuously negotiated by the community in response to changing social and economic circumstances (Cole, 2007; Shepherd, 2002).

These findings reveal a dynamic relationship between cultural preservation and economic needs within the context of tourism. On one hand, tourism development can provide economic benefits to the community, such as increased income and business opportunities. On the other hand, without proper management, tourism may threaten the sustainability of the cultural values underlying the tradition. Therefore, management strategies are needed to balance economic interests with cultural preservation.

Thus, this study not only reinforces previous findings that local traditions can become tourism attractions when they possess uniqueness and cultural value but also provides new insights into the importance of maintaining a balance between authenticity and commodification. The Ngarot Ceremony in Jambak Village has significant potential as a sustainable cultural tourism attraction if developed through a community-based approach, preserving traditional values while considering social and cultural sustainability aspects.

Overall, this study confirms that the Ngarot Ceremony is not merely a local tradition but also a cultural asset with strategic value in tourism development. Therefore, preservation and development efforts must be carried out synergistically among the community, government, and other stakeholders to ensure that this tradition continues to thrive and provide benefits for future generations.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Ngarot Traditional Ceremony in Jambak Village has strong potential as a cultural tourism attraction based on local traditions, supported by ritual authenticity, rich symbolism, and active community participation. This appeal lies not only in its visual and aesthetic aspects but also in the social meanings and cultural values embedded in each stage of the procession. Thus, the research objectives to analyze the potential of cultural tourism and to examine the traditional values within the Ngarot Ceremony have been achieved.

The findings indicate that the sustainability of this tradition largely depends on the community's ability to maintain a balance between preserving sacred values and utilizing its economic potential through tourism. In this context, the Ngarot Ceremony functions not only as a cultural practice but also as a strategic resource that can be sustainably developed.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes that the development of the Ngarot Ceremony as a tourism attraction should be carried out through a community-based approach that positions local communities as the primary actors. This approach is essential to preserve the authenticity of the tradition and to avoid excessive cultural commodification. Therefore, synergy among the community, government, and other stakeholders is required in designing a sustainable cultural tourism management model based on local values.

This study has limitations in its scope, as it focuses on a single location and does not extensively examine economic aspects and tourist perceptions. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across different regions, analyze the economic impacts of cultural tourism, and formulate more applicable management strategies. Additionally, further studies may explore the use of digital technology in promoting cultural tourism as well as the role of younger generations in sustaining traditions amid the pressures of modernization.

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