

## Food Taboos and Cultural Resilience: A Study on the Role of Rice Prohibition in Maintaining Food Security and Ecological Sustainability

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**Abstract:** This research explores the role of food taboos in Kampung Adat Cireundeu, focusing on the community's prohibition against rice consumption and its significance in maintaining cultural identity and food security. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants and direct observations of the community's food practices. Historical and secondary data were also reviewed. The study found that the food taboos in Cireundeu are deeply connected to the community's historical resistance to colonisation and their religious beliefs in *Sunda Wiwitan*. These taboos serve as a cultural safeguard and a strategy for ensuring food resilience by relying on cassava as a staple crop. The findings suggest that indigenous knowledge systems and food taboos can play a critical role in promoting sustainable food security and cultural preservation. This has implications for policy development in areas of food sovereignty and ecological sustainability. This research offers a novel perspective on the intersection of historical, cultural, and ecological factors in shaping food practices, contributing to the broader understanding of how food taboos function within indigenous communities to maintain resilience against modern challenges.

**Keywords:** Cireundeu Community; cultural resilience; ecological sustainability; food security; food taboos.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran pantangan makanan di Kampung Adat Cireundeu, dengan fokus pada larangan konsumsi nasi dan signifikansinya dalam menjaga identitas budaya dan ketahanan pangan komunitas. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan informan kunci dan observasi langsung praktik makanan masyarakat. Data historis dan sekunder juga ditinjau. Studi ini menemukan bahwa pantangan makanan di Cireundeu sangat terkait dengan perlawanan sejarah komunitas terhadap kolonialisme dan kepercayaan agama *Sunda Wiwitan*. Pantangan ini berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai pelindung budaya tetapi juga sebagai strategi untuk memastikan ketahanan pangan dengan bergantung pada singkong sebagai tanaman pangan utama. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa sistem pengetahuan adat dan pantangan makanan dapat memainkan peran penting dalam mempromosikan ketahanan pangan berkelanjutan dan pelestarian budaya. Hal ini memiliki implikasi bagi pengembangan kebijakan dalam bidang kedaulatan pangan dan keberlanjutan ekologi. Penelitian ini menawarkan perspektif baru tentang persilangan antara faktor historis, budaya, dan ekologi dalam membentuk praktik makanan, berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang bagaimana pantangan makanan berfungsi dalam komunitas adat untuk mempertahankan ketahanan terhadap tantangan modern.

**Kata Kunci:** Kampung Cireundeu; ketahanan budaya; keberlanjutan ekologi; ketahanan pangan; pantangan makanan.

## 1. Introduction

The issue of global food security continues to be a major concern amidst the world's rapid population growth, urbanisation, and changing patterns of food production and distribution. According to the FAO report (2022), between 691 and 783 million people worldwide are hungry, with another 2.37 billion facing moderate or severe food insecurity. Despite advances in technology and economic globalisation, the challenges of malnutrition, including undernutrition, stunting in children, and obesity in adults, remain significant. The climate crisis, economic instability and unequal access to food exacerbate this situation, demonstrating the urgency to support small-scale food producers and strengthen sustainable food systems to achieve the goal of a world without hunger.

In Indonesia, food security remains a serious challenge, especially in some regions that have a high prevalence of inadequate food consumption. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023, the prevalence of inadequate food consumption in Indonesia nationally reached 8.53 per cent. However, some provinces such as Papua (35.63 per cent), Maluku (30.27 per cent) and North Maluku (29.56 per cent) show much higher figures, reflecting the significant inequality of food access in these regions (BPS, 2023). Factors such as limited infrastructure, dependence on food imports, and climate change contribute to food supply instability in many regions, especially in remote and eastern parts of Indonesia. This calls for further efforts to increase local production, diversify food and strengthen food security across the archipelago.

In light of the challenges faced by Indonesia in achieving food security, it is essential to explore how local communities, especially indigenous groups, have developed unique strategies to ensure food resilience. One such community is the Cireundeu Traditional Village, which has adopted specific food practices that not only address their food needs but also preserve their cultural and spiritual values. By following traditional customs, including food taboos, the Cireundeu people have created a self-sustaining system that emphasizes the importance of local resources, ecological balance, and spiritual well-being. This case highlights how indigenous knowledge and practices can contribute to achieving food security at the community level while maintaining cultural integrity.

Kampung Adat Cireundeu in Cimahi, West Java, is a community that consistently maintains cultural values and traditions in their daily lives (Adiputra, 2021). Food security is a crucial element for the well-being of this community, as ensuring the availability of sufficient, varied and quality food is essential. In an effort to achieve food security, the Cireundeu community follows various traditions and rules, including the prohibition of eating rice, known as "taboo" (Putro, 2022). These traditions influence the way they produce, consume and distribute food, reflecting their spiritual and ecological values (Pals, 2012).

Previous research related to Kampung Adat Cireundeu has been extensive, with studies focusing on four key categories. First, the cultural and historical significance of kampung communities has been widely explored. Kampung, such as Cireundeu, are seen as historical forms of vernacular urbanism that play a critical role in accommodating cultural influences and addressing rural-urban migration (Achmadi & Josey, 2022). In Cireundeu, the preservation of cassava farming traditions, deeply rooted in local wisdom and heritage, highlights the community's efforts to maintain ecological balance and cultural continuity (Komariah, 2016).

Second, studies have also examined the contribution to the preservation of traditional Indonesian architecture. Similar to other urban kampung, such as Kampung Bustaman, Cireundeu's local culture, food processing traditions, and communal events demonstrate the potential for developing creative kampung that utilize traditional assets for community welfare (Yuliastuti & Sukmawati, 2020). The role of "green kampung" in promoting environmental sustainability through local resource management has also been a recurring theme in these studies (Andajani, Simangunsong, & Soesanti, 2024).

The third category includes research on the social and community aspects of life in kampung. Strong social cohesion and community resilience have been documented in urban kampung like Kampung Code, where social connections foster vibrant and safe neighbourhoods (Hutama, 2018).

Similar dynamics are present in Cireundeu, where the community's adherence to traditional practices strengthens social bonds and ensures the survival of cultural values across generations.

Fourth, the economic and tourism impacts of kampung communities have been explored, particularly in terms of kampung improvement programs. These efforts have led to better environmental quality, enhanced infrastructure, and increased family income, transforming kampungs from stigmatized slums into more livable areas and tourist destinations (Sasongko, Imaduddina, & Widodo, 2023). The conservation of heritage architecture, such as traditional houses, has also drawn interest in promoting cultural identity and attracting tourism. Despite this extensive body of research, there is still a need for more in-depth studies on the specific role of food taboos in Cireundeu, particularly how these traditions contribute to both cultural preservation and economic resilience.

Despite the breadth of research on Kampung Adat Cireundeu, several gaps remain unexplored. First, while there is substantial focus on the community's cultural preservation, the intricate relationship between food taboos and cultural identity has not been thoroughly examined. Specifically, the role of food taboos, such as the prohibition against consuming rice, in strengthening cultural identity and ecological sustainability has received little attention. Furthermore, studies that explore the impact of these taboos on the community's socio-economic resilience are lacking. Although much has been discussed regarding the preservation of traditional architecture and urban sustainability, the unique food practices of Cireundeu as a form of cultural and economic resistance have not been sufficiently addressed. This gap highlights the need for a more focused investigation into how food taboos in Cireundeu serve as both a cultural safeguard and an adaptive strategy in the face of modernisation. Thus, this research seeks to fill this gap by analysing the socio-cultural significance of food taboos and their role in maintaining both cultural heritage and food security within the Cireundeu community.

The unique food practices of Kampung Adat Cireundeu present a compelling case for understanding the role of traditional taboos in food security. This research posits that the prohibition on rice consumption, as part of Cireundeu's cultural and spiritual values, serves not only as a cultural safeguard but also as an adaptive mechanism for ensuring sustainable food resilience. The underlying argument is that these food taboos (Freud, 2004; Triratnawati, 2019), deeply ingrained in their heritage, contribute to maintaining food independence, reducing reliance on external food sources, and strengthening the community's ability to adapt to modern challenges. Drawing on previous research, which indicates that food taboos often play a significant role in reinforcing social norms and maintaining cultural identity (Chakona & Shackleton, 2019; McNamara & Wood, 2019), this study hypothesises that Cireundeu's practices similarly enhance the community's food security by fostering a self-reliant food system based on local resources. By analysing the socio-cultural dimensions of these practices, the research aims to demonstrate that food taboos in Cireundeu not only preserve traditional values but also contribute to food resilience in the face of external pressures, such as modernisation and environmental changes.

## 2. Methods

The Methods section of this research outlines the steps taken to explore the practice of food taboos in Kampung Adat Cireundeu, with a specific focus on the avoidance of rice consumption and its significance for food security and cultural preservation. The unit of analysis in this study includes individuals and groups within the Cireundeu community who actively practice and uphold the rice taboo, as well as traditional leaders who play a key role in preserving these customs. These participants were selected based on their relevance and knowledge about the history and current practice of food taboos in the community.

A qualitative descriptive research design was chosen to capture the depth of cultural practices and their meanings. This approach was deemed suitable because it allows for a nuanced understanding of how the food taboo is integrated into daily life and how it impacts both individual and collective food security. The study employed a thematic analysis to interpret data collected through interviews and

observations, focusing on recurring patterns related to the enforcement and cultural significance of food taboos.

Data sources were both primary and secondary. Primary data came from in-depth interviews with key informants, such as community members, traditional leaders, and local historians, all of whom had extensive knowledge of the food practices in Kampung Cireundeu. Additionally, direct observation of daily activities, rituals, and food preparation processes was conducted to provide a comprehensive view of how the community adheres to its food taboos. Secondary data were drawn from historical documents, traditional literature, and other written records that provide context for the food practices in Cireundeu, particularly focusing on the community's historical shift from rice consumption to cassava-based foods.

Data collection followed a structured process. First, interviews were conducted to gather narratives about the origin, significance, and impact of the rice taboo. Open-ended questions allowed participants to share personal experiences and insights regarding how the taboo is maintained across generations. Observation was carried out during key events, such as communal meals and ceremonies, to witness the practical application of the food taboos. Lastly, a document review was performed to trace the evolution of the food customs since their formalisation in 1918, linking these traditions to broader socio-cultural and ecological factors.

The data analysis employed an inductive thematic approach to identify patterns and themes related to the practice of food taboos. Interviews and observational data were coded to highlight key themes such as cultural preservation, food security, and the health impacts of adhering to or breaking the taboo. By systematically analysing these data, the study aimed to uncover how food taboos in Kampung Adat Cireundeu not only preserve cultural identity but also contribute to resilience in the face of modernisation and external pressures.

### 3. Results

#### *About the Cirendeude community, West Java*

Cireundeude Traditional Village is located in Leuwigajah Village, South Cimahi District, West Java. The village is named "Cireundeude," derived from the *reundeude* tree (a local plant previously abundant in this area and used as a herbal medicine) (Masyitoh & Maesaroh, 2022). Kampung Adat Cireundeude covers approximately 64 hectares, of which 60 hectares are used for agriculture, and 4 hectares for settlements. Most of the inhabitants still practice *Sunda Wiwitan* (an indigenous belief system of the Sundanese people). They are consistent in maintaining their cultural and spiritual heritage, preserving the customs passed down from their ancestors.

Cireundeude Village consists of 200 families, with a population of 270 men and 256 women. The age distribution includes 21 adults, 283 teenagers aged 7-20 years, and 83 children under seven. The educational background of the residents is predominantly at the junior high school level, though there are also four college graduates, 65 high school graduates, and 24 primary school graduates. The main livelihoods of the community are agriculture and animal husbandry (54.24%), with a smaller portion working as civil servants (3.39%), construction workers (14.12%), and in the private sector (28.25%) (BPS Kota Cimahi, 2020). Most farmers in the village cultivate cassava, which is processed into *Rasi* (cassava rice). Tapioca flour derived from cassava is used to make traditional Cireundeude delicacies such as *opak* (a type of cracker) and *ranginang* (another type of cracker). In addition, many farmers raise sheep, which are typically sold during the Eid al-Adha celebration.

The people of Kampung Adat Cireundeude are deeply committed to their beliefs, culture, and customs. They live by the principle of *Ngindung Ka Waktu, Mibapa Ka Jaman* (which means "adapt to the times without losing one's roots"), reflecting their ability to preserve their traditional ways while embracing modern developments, such as technology, mobile phones, and electricity.

In addition, one of the key concepts in this traditional village is the division of its territory into three distinct areas, as shown in Table 1. This territorial division reflects a sustainable approach to natural resource management. *Leuweung Larangan*, a forest protected from deforestation, plays a critical

role in environmental preservation and water storage, helping to maintain the balance of the ecosystem. *Leuweung Tutupan* is designated for reforestation, where trees may be logged but must be replanted, showing the community's awareness of the importance of forest regeneration. Meanwhile, *Leuweung Baladahan* is used for gardening, where crops such as corn, peanuts, cassava, and tubers are cultivated to meet the community's food needs, in line with local ecological conditions.

Table 1. Territorial Division of Cireundeu Traditional Village

No	Place	Description
1	<i>Leuweung Larangan</i>	A forest that must not be cut down, as it serves as a water reservoir for the Cireundeu community.
2	<i>Leuweung Tutupan</i>	A forest used for reforestation; trees may be logged but must be replanted.
3	<i>Leuweung Baladahan</i>	A forested area for gardening, typically planted with crops such as corn, peanuts, cassava, and tubers.

Source: Direct observation, 2023

The territorial division in Kampung Adat Cireundeu reflects a sustainable approach to natural resource management. *Leuweung Larangan*, a forest protected from deforestation, plays a vital role in environmental preservation and water storage, helping to maintain the ecosystem's balance. *Leuweung Tutupan* is designated for reforestation, with strict replanting rules after logging, indicating a deep understanding of forest regeneration's importance. Meanwhile, *Leuweung Baladahan* is reserved for gardening, where crops such as corn, peanuts, cassava, and tubers are cultivated to meet the food needs of the indigenous community, in line with local ecological conditions.

This management strategy underscores ecological sustainability. While *Leuweung Larangan* remains protected for nature conservation, *Leuweung Tutupan* and *Leuweung Baladahan* allow for human activity that supports the community's economic and social needs, all while maintaining ecological balance. This territorial division illustrates the community's integration of cultural values and local wisdom in balancing environmental conservation with sustainable livelihoods.

#### *The staple food of the Cireundeu community*

*Rasi* (cassava rice), the staple food of the people of Cireundeu Village, is made from cassava through a meticulous traditional process. First, carefully selected cassava is thoroughly washed to remove dirt and soil residue. After that, the cassava is peeled, and the remaining parts are cut into pieces of the desired size. The cassava pieces are then boiled until tender, an important step to remove the natural bitterness of the cassava and ensure a soft texture. Once boiled, the cassava is drained and cooled. The cooled cassava is then crushed or ground to form a smooth dough, which is steamed in a special container until cooked and firm. The final result of this processing is *rasi*, which has a solid texture and savoury taste, ready to be consumed as a substitute for rice. During this process, the Cireundeu community maintains traditional techniques that have been passed down for generations to ensure the quality and authenticity of the *rasi* is maintained (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Rasi, the staple food of Cireundeu Village

The people of Cireundeu believe that by consuming *rasi*, they achieve both inner and outer freedom. Outer freedom reflects the high sense of mutual respect, *gotong royong* (communal cooperation), and togetherness fostered among the residents. The principle of giving to neighbours is practised diligently, and it is considered a moral duty to ensure no one goes without food. Meanwhile, inner freedom refers to the peace and spiritual fulfilment gained through adherence to customs and beliefs. By maintaining this tradition, people feel a deep connection to their ancestral heritage, considering *rasi* a symbol of their success in maintaining harmony with cultural and spiritual values. This inner freedom also embodies the belief that consuming *rasi* is not only about meeting physical needs but also about honouring the history and values that have shaped their community.

Following the *rasi* tradition is not just about fulfilling physical needs but about honouring our ancestors and maintaining harmony with our cultural values. It brings us inner peace and spiritual satisfaction, connecting us to the historical heritage that has shaped our community (Emen, Personal Communication, May 23, 2023).



Figure 2 The process of making rasi in Kampung Cireundeu

In addition, the process of processing cassava into *rasi* focuses not only on producing a staple food but also on removing the toxins contained in cassava. Local village-grown cassava, known as *karikil* (a local variety of cassava), contains high levels of cyanide acid. Therefore, the methods of peeling, washing, grinding, and sun drying are important steps to ensure food safety. As shown in Figure 2, the villagers engage in these steps, ensuring that every stage of the process is carefully followed to maintain the traditional quality and safety of *rasi*.

### *Food taboo of the Cireundeu community*

Food taboos in Cireundeu Village emerged as a response to the food crisis that occurred during the Dutch colonial era. In the 19th century, when the colonial government controlled the rice supply, the people of Cireundeu faced significant difficulties. The Cireundeu elders, in an effort to overcome dependence on rice and reduce the influence of the colonisers, proposed the idea of "*Yen urang reureuk ereun ngadahar sang beas*" (if we stop eating rice, we will be more self-reliant). This was intended as a form of resistance to colonisation. Rice was seen as a symbol of power and control, so abstaining from its consumption became a representation of independence and self-sufficiency. Consequently, cassava was adopted as an alternative staple food, which was more sustainable and less dependent on external rice supplies.

Food taboos in the Cireundeu community involve various rules and prohibitions that are strictly upheld as part of their tradition and cultural heritage. The use of the term "*pamali*" (prohibited or taboo) describes restrictions that are not absolute but act as guidelines to maintain balance and protect the younger generation. Children are taught from an early age not to eat rice, as it is considered a violation of customary norms. This is regarded as a way of honouring history and the values passed down since the colonial period.

The types of food that are considered taboo in Cireundeu fall into several categories. Primarily, rice from paddy fields is forbidden and should not be consumed by the community. This prohibition is rooted in the historical decision to stop eating rice as a form of resistance to Dutch colonisation. Apart from rice, other foods considered taboo include *pisang ambon* (Ambon bananas), pineapple, and onions, which are believed to cause negative effects such as vaginal discharge or a strong sweat odour, particularly for girls. Golden bananas, which symbolise ancestors, are also considered sacred and are only used in traditional ceremonies.

Pregnant women avoid pineapple-based spicy foods, as they are thought to cause complications such as miscarriage or diarrhoea. Breastfeeding mothers and children under five are also expected to avoid spicy foods and onions to prevent adverse effects on the baby's health, such as diarrhoea or an unpleasant odour in breast milk. As substitutes for the tabooed foods, the Cireundeu community consumes *tofu tempeh* (fermented soy products), as well as various sources of animal protein such as salted fish, fresh fish, eggs, chicken, and occasionally beef or lamb. Vegetables such as kale, beans, spinach, and jackfruit, along with fruits like bananas, jackfruit, oranges, watermelon, and papaya, are also consumed to fulfil their nutritional requirements for vitamins and minerals. Thus, food taboos in Cireundeu Village are not merely dietary restrictions but a profound reflection of cultural values, history, and self-sufficiency, all of which are cherished by the community. These practices reflect their efforts to preserve their ancestral heritage and cultural identity in the face of modern challenges.

### *The reason for the taboo of eating rice in the Cireundeu community*

Food taboos in Cireundeu Village, particularly the prohibition of eating rice, are driven by three main factors: historical circumstances, religious beliefs, and ecological conditions.

First, the historical context dates back to 1918, during the Dutch colonisation of Indonesia, which led to a food crisis in Cireundeu. At the time, rice paddies dried up, and rice supplies controlled by the colonial government became scarce. The village head, Aki Haji Ali, sought a solution and consulted a figure from the Sultanate of Cirebon, who offered this advice:

*"Teu nanaon teu boga huma ge asal boga pare. Teu nanaon teu boga pare ge asal boga beas. Teu nanaon teu boga beas ge asal bisa ngejo. Teu nanaon teu bisa ngejo ge asal bisa nyatu. Teu nanaon teu bisa nyatu ge asal bisa hirup."* (It does not matter if you don't have a rice field as long as you have rice grains. It does not matter if you don't have rice grains as long as you have rice. It does not matter if you don't have rice as long as you have cassava. It does not matter if you don't have cassava as long as you can live) (Cireundeu Village Record, 2023).

This statement implies that survival is possible regardless of external circumstances. In response, Aki Haji Ali decided to convert rice fields into cassava plantations, reducing the village's reliance on

rice. The Cireundeu community successfully processed cassava into *rasi* (cassava rice), a tradition that continues to this day. By substituting rice with cassava, the community gained food independence.

Second, religious beliefs, particularly those rooted in the teachings of *Sunda Wiwitan* (an indigenous spiritual belief of the Sundanese people), play a key role in maintaining the taboo. The ancestors of the Cireundeu community, who adhered to *Sunda Wiwitan*, mandated that their followers abstain from rice consumption. This belief promotes respect for nature, spiritual values, and the preservation of local culture. As one resident, Siti, explained:

I do not consume rice because I respect history and feel comfortable with this habit. Long ago, I was taught not to eat rice, and I am content with that decision. We believe that cassava has greater benefits than rice and keeps us full for longer. Although the food supply is abundant nowadays, I am worried that if one day rice is hard to come by, people may not be prepared. For us, consuming cassava is part of our tradition and heritage, and we hope this tradition will be maintained for the next 100 years (Siti, Personal Communication, May 21, 2023).

This statement reflects the community's deep connection to their tradition and their concern for food security in a changing world. The ecological rationale further reinforces the community's decision to rely on cassava. The Cireundeu people understand the potential future scarcity of rice due to environmental challenges and external dependence. By continuing their cassava-based diet, they not only maintain a sustainable food source but also preserve their cultural heritage, despite external influences and interactions.

Third, ecological factors also play a significant role in the Cireundeu community's food choices. The community recognises the potential future scarcity of rice and the environmental challenges that may disrupt its supply. They observe, with irony and sadness, how other communities are forced to rely on food aid, sometimes queuing for basic staples. For the Cireundeu people, their continued consumption of cassava is a proactive measure to maintain both their cultural traditions and their food independence. However, this tradition does face challenges, particularly from social interactions and marriages with outsiders who consume rice. Despite these pressures, the community remains deeply committed to preserving this practice.

The reasons behind the food taboos in Cireundeu reflect a deliberate effort to uphold cultural identity and ensure food self-sufficiency in the face of historical difficulties, spiritual beliefs, and environmental considerations.

#### *The impact of breaking food taboos*

There are three primary consequences when individuals violate food taboos in Cireundeu: personal hardship and disruption, physical and psychological health issues, and social and cultural repercussions.

First, personal difficulties and disorder. Breaking food taboos in Cireundeu Village can lead to significant personal challenges and upheaval. The Cireundeu community believes that consuming rice, which contravenes their customary rules, will result in suffering and difficulties. As Wawan, a Cireundeu resident, stated in an interview on 22 May 2023, those who consume rice face negative consequences, both in their personal lives and general well-being. Wawan elaborated that by adhering to tradition and upholding Cireundeu's cultural values, individuals can lead a prosperous life and avoid various hardships. In contrast, violations can bring about deprivation and illness, especially as rice, being high in sugar, can increase the risk of diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

Second, physical and psychological health impacts. Emen, a traditional leader, explained during an interview on 23 May 2023 that breaking food taboos can result in both physical health problems and emotional discomfort. Consuming rice not only poses physical health risks but can also lead to feelings of inferiority and psychological distress. Emen stressed that the violation of foods deemed sacred can create internal unrest, ultimately disrupting one's overall life and health.



Third, the social and cultural impact. Breaking food taboos in Cireundeu Village also has significant social and cultural consequences. While the Cireundeu people are open to external influences and modern technology, they maintain dietary habits distinct from those of surrounding communities. This is evidenced by blended families where one partner may consume both *rasi* (cassava rice) and rice. When individuals from outside the village marry locals, they often adopt the *rasi*-based diet of their spouse. This openness allows the Cireundeu community to coexist harmoniously with outsiders without denigrating their food choices or imposing their own dietary practices. Likewise, outsiders respect Cireundeu's eating customs as part of cultural diversity.

However, the social and cultural impacts of breaking food taboos also pose a threat to the sustainability of Cireundeu's traditions. When individuals from Kampung Cireundeu marry outsiders and adopt different dietary habits, there is potential for a gradual shift in the eating patterns of future generations. Although the Cireundeu community is open to external cultures, this cultural interaction and assimilation may dilute the tradition of eating *rasi* as the village's staple food.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of this research highlight the significant impact that food taboos, particularly the prohibition against rice consumption, have on the lives of the people in Cireundeu Village. These taboos, rooted in the colonial food crisis and the religious beliefs of *Sunda Wiwitan* (the indigenous spiritual belief of the Sundanese people), encompass personal, physical, psychological, social, and cultural dimensions. Violating these taboos is believed to cause suffering, health issues, and threaten the continuity of the community's cultural heritage. Despite the openness to external influences, the adherence to the tradition of eating *rasi* (cassava rice) remains a steadfast symbol of cultural identity and independence within the Cireundeu community.

The research shows that food taboos in Kampung Adat Cireundeu are not just dietary restrictions but integral to the community's cultural identity and spiritual practices. These taboos profoundly influence various aspects of life, from personal health to social cohesion. The prohibition of rice consumption, in particular, is a key marker of independence from external control, dating back to the Dutch colonial era, and remains a vital expression of the community's resistance to external pressures. Furthermore, the research found that these food taboos serve to preserve not only the community's cultural heritage but also its ecological sustainability.

The persistence of these food taboos can be attributed to the interplay between historical, religious, and ecological factors. Historically, the community's rejection of rice was a response to the food crisis during Dutch colonisation. The prohibition against rice, a symbol of colonial control, became a form of resistance and self-sufficiency for the Cireundeu people. Additionally, *Sunda Wiwitan* teachings, which emphasise harmony with nature and respect for cultural traditions, reinforce the community's continued commitment to their food taboos. Ecologically, the reliance on cassava—an easily cultivated and resilient crop—has ensured the community's food security, further solidifying the importance of these traditions in modern times.

The results of this study align with previous research on food taboos and their role in maintaining cultural identity. Studies by Khara et al. (2020) and Menon (2018) have similarly demonstrated that food taboos can strengthen social norms and reinforce cultural identity within communities. Furthermore, research in India, Africa, and Nigeria has shown that food taboos play a significant role in daily life and in the preservation of cultural values (Chakona & Shackleton, 2019; McNamara & Wood, 2019; Onuorah & Ayo, 2003). Within Indonesia, Javanese and Madurese communities also maintain food taboos, particularly for health and pregnancy purposes (Hastuti, 2018; Laksono & Wulandari, 2021). However, this research introduces a novel focus by linking the food taboos in Cireundeu to a historical context of colonialism and local religious beliefs. Unlike other studies that focus primarily on health or social norms, this research highlights how food taboos in Cireundeu are rooted in a unique blend of historical resistance and ecological sustainability, which has not been sufficiently explored in earlier studies.

The findings suggest that food taboos in Kampung Adat Cireundeu serve as more than just cultural artefacts; they are an essential part of the community's identity and resilience. The community maintains its independence from external influences by abstaining from rice, ensuring food security through local resources such as cassava. This tradition also reflects the teachings of *Sunda Wiwitan*, which promote a deep respect for nature and the importance of maintaining balance in both the spiritual and ecological realms. The community's adherence to these taboos in the face of modernisation demonstrates the enduring power of indigenous knowledge systems in preserving not only cultural heritage but also sustainable practices.

The implications of these findings are significant for understanding the role of food taboos in broader cultural and ecological contexts. The case of Cireundeu shows that food taboos can be tools for maintaining cultural resilience and ecological balance. The community's reliance on local food sources and their commitment to keeping practices traditional reflect a sustainable approach to food security, which could offer valuable lessons for other communities facing similar challenges. However, the potential weakening of these traditions through interactions with outside cultures, such as through mixed marriages, highlights the need for ongoing efforts to preserve these practices.

Based on these findings, several actions and policies can be recommended to preserve the cultural heritage of Kampung Adat Cireundeu and similar communities. First, educational programs that promote the value of local traditions, including food taboos, should be developed to raise awareness among younger generations about the importance of preserving cultural identity in the face of globalisation. Additionally, cultural promotion initiatives could help to safeguard these traditions by showcasing the ecological and spiritual wisdom inherent in them. This research also underscores the need for a broader dialogue between traditional communities and external entities, such as policymakers and development organisations, to ensure that cultural preservation is balanced with the need for modernisation. Recognising the role that indigenous knowledge plays in sustainable food practices could inform national policies on food security and cultural preservation, particularly in regions facing food insecurity and environmental challenges.

## 5. Conclusion

The primary findings of this research underscore the significant impact of food taboos, particularly the prohibition of rice consumption, on the cultural identity, social cohesion, and ecological sustainability of the Cireundeu community. These taboos, deeply rooted in historical resistance to Dutch colonisation and religious beliefs of *Sunda Wiwitan*, serve as a vital mechanism for maintaining the community's independence and resilience. The research reveals that food taboos in Cireundeu are more than mere dietary restrictions; they are a manifestation of the community's deep spiritual connection to their ancestors and environment, and an essential strategy for ensuring sustainable food security. The Cireundeu community's reliance on cassava as a staple food has allowed them to develop a self-sufficient food system that preserves both cultural values and ecological balance.

This research contributes to the existing literature by exploring the unique case of Kampung Adat Cireundeu and how its food taboos function as a form of cultural and ecological resilience. While previous studies have examined the role of food taboos in various communities, this research introduces a novel focus on the intersection of historical resistance, religious beliefs, and environmental sustainability. The findings highlight the importance of considering historical and cultural contexts when examining food practices, particularly in indigenous communities.

However, this study also acknowledges several limitations. The scope of the research was limited to qualitative data from interviews and observations within a relatively small community. Future research could explore the broader implications of food taboos in other indigenous communities, using a mixed-methods approach to include quantitative data on health and nutritional impacts. Additionally, further studies could examine how external influences, such as globalisation and tourism, may affect the sustainability of these practices over time.

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