

ECOTOURISM IN THE TRADITIONAL VILLAGE OF NAGARI SIJUNJUNG: A HIDDEN PARADISE IN THE LAND OF MINANG

*Lailatul Khasanah^{1,5}, Eka Asih Febriani², Azmi Fitrisia³, Erianjoni⁴, Samadi⁶

¹Sijunjung Regency Education Office-State Elementary School 22 Muaro, Indonesia

²Department of Social Science, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

³Department of History, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

⁴Departement of Sociology, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

⁵Department of Geography, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

⁶Department of Geography, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: d1lailatul@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: The traditional village of *nagari* Sijunjung in West Sumatra is one of the ecotourism destinations that combines natural beauty with the rich culture of Minangkabau. This study aims to identify the potential for ecotourism, cultural preservation, and the social and economic impacts on the local community. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The results of the study show that this area has high appeal as a cultural and environmental tourism destination. The authenticity of the *Rumah Gadang* architecture, the layout of the traditional village, and the preservation of Minangkabau traditions make this area a tourist destination that is not only visually appealing but also rich in educational and spiritual value.

Keywords: *Ecotourism, Traditional Village, Rumah Gadang, Minangkabau, Nagari Sijunjung, Local Culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that is responsible for environmental conservation, preservation of local culture, and empowerment of local communities. This concept has become increasingly relevant amid global challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and cultural homogenization due to modernization. In Indonesia, ecotourism has developed as a more sustainable and ethical alternative to mass tourism. Ecotourism has now become a significant economic sector because it offers tourists the opportunity to interact directly with the natural environment and local culture, while gaining an understanding and learning about the importance of biodiversity conservation and the sustainability of local culture [1]. Effective management is a key factor in promoting the development of the tourism sector, as the sustainability and success of a tourist destination are largely determined by the quality of the management system in place [2].

This widely accepted definition, put forth by the International Ecotourism Society, underscores its dual objectives of ecological preservation and community upliftment [3][4][5]. This form of tourism distinguishes itself from mass tourism by actively mitigating environmental degradation and cultural erosion, instead prioritizing educational experiences and active community participation [6]. It is also

characterized by its emphasis on environmental understanding and appreciation, ensuring that visitors gain a deeper connection to the natural world [7]. Moreover, ecotourism prioritizes the protection of natural resources and the socio-economic welfare of indigenous populations, positioning it as a more benign alternative to conventional tourism models [8]. This approach aligns with the broader principles of sustainable tourism, aiming to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [5]. This concept, often referred to as a green economy by organizations such as the United Nations Environmental Program, highlights ecotourism's role in providing employment while safeguarding natural resources [9]. Ecotourism is thus an alternative to mass tourism, which often creates conflicts between economic development and ecological preservation, by offering an integrated approach that benefits both the economy and the environment [10].

One concrete example of culture-based ecotourism development is the *nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Village located in Sijunjung Regency, West Sumatra [11]. Traditional village tourism is a form of cultural tourism that offers visitors a glimpse of traditional villages with rows of traditional houses (*Rumah Gadang*) lining the streets or throughout the village. The *nagari* Sijunjung traditional village is an area that reflects the life of the Minangkabau people in

ancient times. The traditional village not only offers a settlement of *Rumah Gadang* but also offers a variety of customs, traditions, and cultures that are still preserved and maintained to this day by the local community [12]. This area is a well-preserved Minangkabau cultural heritage, marked by the existence of neatly lined traditional houses, a matrilineal social system, and customs that are still practiced by the local community. Nicknamed “Minangkabau Time Corridor,” this area offers a tourist experience that is not only visually pleasing but also deeply educational and spiritual [12].

The communities in these traditional villages are rich in customs and culture that are still preserved in their daily lives. represent a rich tapestry of historical, cultural, artistic, scientific, and socio-economic values, serving as fundamental units of both tangible and intangible heritage [13]. These settlements embody a profound connection to their past, manifesting through distinctive architectural styles, traditional craftsmanship, and enduring folk art expressions [14]. These villages function as critical repositories of local heritage, preserving shared memories and identities that reflect centuries of architectural and cultural evolution [15]. Each of their traditional and cultural activities has certain symbols, including all the traditional and cultural activities of the Sijunjung community, from birth to death ceremonies. The traditional village of *nagari* Sijunjung is also part of the Silokek Geopark area, which is currently the focus of the Sijunjung government in the field of tourism.

In this increasingly sophisticated era, tourism is one of the main industries in generating income for a region. The tourism sector is a very important asset in enhancing development. The tourism industry can increase a country's income, especially from the large number of tourists visiting the country. In addition to being profitable, tourism also benefits tourism support facilities such as restaurants, transportation, recreational facilities, and others. Tourism development certainly cannot be carried out by the government alone, but requires assistance from relevant stakeholders. Tourism development is carried out in an integrated and planned manner with coordination between cross-sectoral fields in tourism in order to achieve maximum success [16].

In the current era, tourism has become one of the mainstay industries in generating foreign exchange for the country. Tourism is indeed promising as an “export” darling, due to several positive impacts. Data on global tourism development shows that during the oil crisis of the 1970s and the global recession in the early 1980s, tourism continued to grow, both in terms of the number of international tourists and foreign exchange earnings from the tourism

sector.

According to Law No. 10/2009 on tourism, tourism and travel are defined as: (1) Travel is a journey undertaken by an individual or group of individuals to visit a specific place for the purpose of recreation, personal development, or to learn about the tourist attractions visited for a temporary period of time, (2) Tourism refers to various tourism activities supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, the government, and local governments, and (3) A destination is a specific area chosen by a visitor to stay for a certain period of time. The development of a tourist destination requires a comprehensive evaluation of the level of accessibility and quality of supporting infrastructure in order to increase the attractiveness of the area [17]. The development of tourism in a region is highly dependent on the ability to identify tourism potential and assets that have the most prominent competitive advantages [18].

Jorong Padang Ranah and Tanah Bato have their own uniqueness, namely 77 traditional houses (*Rumah Gadang*) that are still inhabited by the local community, lined up on the left and right sides of the road. All of the *Rumah Gadang* face the road. *Jorong* Padang Ranah and Tanah Bato also have key supporting components of the *nagari*, namely roads, the *nagari* mosque, the *balai adat* (traditional meeting hall), the *pandam pakuburan* (cemetery), rice fields, *tapian mandi* (bathing places), and places for traditional ceremonies.

Rumah Gadang in the *nagari* Sijunjung community are not only places of residence and for carrying out activities together by members of the same clan. Some of these activities include discussing community issues, appointing village chiefs, performing traditional ceremonies, and caring for sick family members. Life in the *Rumah Gadang* is referred to as *babiliak ketek* (small room), *babiliak gadang* (large room). This function makes the *Rumah Gadang* a symbol of the existence of the clan family, or in general, the light of the *nagari* [19]. The development of sustainable regional tourism requires the mapping of tourist routes that can integrate various natural potentials into a single, interconnected integrated area.

Reflections of the life of the Minangkabau people in ancient times can be seen in the traditional village of *nagari Sijunjung*. Every traditional and cultural activity has certain symbols, including all traditional and cultural activities of the Sijunjung community, from the birth process to death ceremonies [20]. The uniqueness of the *nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Village lies in the harmony between the beautiful natural landscape and living cultural values. Surrounded by rivers, forests, and hills, this traditional village is an ideal place to

develop sustainable ecotourism. In addition, the active involvement of the community in preserving and promoting local

culture makes this area a model for community empowerment through tourism. Therefore, it is important to further examine the ecotourism potential of the *nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Village, including how cultural preservation is carried out and the social and economic impacts it has. This research is expected to contribute to the development of sustainable ecotourism based on local wisdom.



Fig 1. Statue of *Bundo Kanduang* and *Rumah Gadang* in the Traditional Village Area of Nagari Sijunjung

2. METHODS

The method used by the author in this study is qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative descriptive research is a methodology employed when a straightforward account of phenomena is desired, utilizing an eclectic but coherent combination of sampling, data collection, analysis, and representation techniques [21]. It offers a pragmatic and flexible framework suitable for various research contexts, especially when resource constraints are a factor or when the primary goal is to gain firsthand knowledge of specific topics [22]. This method is used to examine a scientific object in which the researcher acts as a key instrument. Thus, the research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. This type of research aims to obtain in-depth data. The information gathering technique used was purposive sampling, which is the selection of informants based on several

characteristics. This technique was used because it was considered that the people or informants in the research were the most knowledgeable about the object and the important things needed. Therefore, there were several sources that the author determined, namely the Head of *orong* Padang Ranah *nagari* Sijunjung, community leaders, *niniak mamak*, traditional village tourism managers, visitors, and the community. In this qualitative research, the technique used involves several stages, namely data summarization, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data summarization, or more commonly known as data reduction, is the activity of sorting out the main points in the research that It is important to find the theme and pattern. After summarizing the data, the next step is to present the data. In qualitative research, the data presented can be in the form of descriptions or brief explanations. In addition, flowcharts explaining the categories can also be used to present the data.

3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The traditional village of *nagari* Sijunjung has 76 *Rumah Gadang*, which are cultural heritage sites of the Minangkabau people from the 16th and 17th centuries. Forty of these *Rumah Gadang* have been converted into homestays,

allowing tourists to stay with local families and experience Minangkabau traditional life firsthand. This includes a comprehensive assessment of ecological ramifications, socioeconomic impacts, and cultural implications to ensure a holistic understanding of ecotourism's role in advancing sustainable development objectives [23]. Successful tourism development, particularly in

ecotourism, necessitates a robust planning framework established by regional administrations that aligns with the area's resource potential and considers its carrying capacity [24]. The assessment of ecotourism potential often involves a scoring and weighting system that considers object attractiveness, infrastructure, market potential, security, community socioeconomic conditions, and environmental quality [25]. This systematic approach enables the identification of areas with high suitability for ecotourism, facilitating targeted interventions for sustainable growth [26]. This area is also known as the "Minangkabau Time Corridor" because its spatial layout and architecture still retain their authenticity. In addition to *Rumah Gadang*, there are surau (prayer rooms), mosques, traditional halls, traditional markets, and rice fields that form a complete cultural landscape. In 2025, *nagari* Sijunjung was ranked among the top 5 in the ASEAN Homestay Award, demonstrating international recognition of the quality of service and cultural uniqueness it offers.

UNESCO defines cultural tourism as tourism intended to meet the intellectual needs of the community by familiarizing them with the values, cultural heritage, and way of life of the people in the destination area. Based on the above definition, the *nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Village is categorized as an area with cultural tourism potential.

This village tourism area depicts the matrilineal life of the Minangkabau people. This area is able to depict the remnants of the Minangkabau kingdom system, where in one area there is a *Rumah Gadang* (traditional house) as a place of residence, behind the *Rumah Gadang* there is a *pandam pakuburan* (cemetery) for the burial of the community, and further behind there are rice fields or fields as a source of livelihood or economy for the community.

The community's life is still deeply rooted in customs that have been preserved since ancient times in the field of tourism, especially cultural tourism, in terms of physical aspects, customs, socio-culture, arts, and cuisine. The following are the cultural tourism attractions of the Sijunjung Traditional Village from several supporting aspects. The physical aspect supporting tourism in the Sijunjung Traditional Village is the beauty of the village, which features a row of neatly arranged traditional houses on both sides of the road, totaling 76 units. The type of traditional houses found here These are the *Gajah Maharam* and *Surambih Aceh* types of *Rumah Gadang*. Some have 2 *gonjong* and some have 4 *gonjong*. *Rumah Gadang* with 2 *gonjong* are owned by families who are not part of the nobility. However, they can also be used to carry out traditional ceremonies in addition to being used as residences. Houses with 2 *gonjong* symbolize

human beings who come from a father and mother. The grand house with four gables signifies the elements of the earth, namely water, fire, soil, and wind. This grand house with four gables is usually owned by descendants of *niniak mamak* with the title *Sako Datuak Pangulu Andiko*.

The unique architecture of this traditional house has its own functions and uses. The front yard is used to grow ornamental plants or medicinal plants that are useful for children and grandchildren as *paambek pambali*. The front yard also has *Pudiang Putih*, *Pudiang Hitam*, and *Pudiang Hitam* plants, which symbolize *syarak*, *adat*, and *undang*. Second, the *Rumah Gadang* consists of 4 parts. Starting from the right, there is a seating area for *Niniak Mamak*, the middle room for children and *Sumando*, and the farthest room for guests. Third, there is the *biliak* or bedroom. There are rules for the placement of the *biliak*, namely that the oldest woman occupies the *biliak* at the far left of the entrance stairs, and so on [27].

The floor of the *Rumah Gadang* in the *nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Village is used to store rice, known as *balobeh*. The kitchen area of the *Rumah Gadang* is where cooking takes place using a stone stove fueled by firewood. Finally, the backyard of the *Rumah Gadang* is planted with various *paambek pambali* plants so that the children and grandchildren do not have to buy them [28]. To add to its beauty, these traditional houses are usually decorated with beautiful carvings. There are four types of carvings used to enhance the beauty of the traditional houses in this traditional village. *Kaluak Paku* carvings, which are small, wave-shaped fern leaves, are very beautiful and have a very philosophical meaning regarding the role of men in Minangkabau as fathers to their children and as *mamak* to their relatives. *Palo Patah* fruit carvings show beauty or variety when the nutmeg fruit is split in two. The nutmeg fruit split in two symbolizes educating and sharing beauty or joy [29].

The *Aka Cino Sagagang* carving depicts the persistence and dynamism of the Minangkabau people in fulfilling their daily needs. Finally, the *Saik Galamai* carving depicts the social system and community relations. In addition to its physical aspects, the appeal of this village area is its culture, namely the life that takes place in this traditional village, which is still rich in customs and traditions. Here are some of the traditional ceremonies that are still practiced and preserved from generation to generation.

Bakaua or *Bakaua Adat* is a routine activity in *nagari* Sijunjung as an expression of gratitude for the harvest, held once a year with a joint prayer. The *Bakaua Adat* event is one of the major traditional ceremonies, often referred to as *Alek Anak Nagari*, in which all levels of

Sijunjung society participate to enliven the event. *Mambantai Adat* is an annual event for the people of *nagari* Sijunjung, which involves the slaughtering or *mambantai* of buffaloes together at night in a slaughterhouse carried out by community organizations known as *Tobo Kongs*i. This activity is carried out before entering the fasting month. The traditional wedding procession also has unique characteristics that attract tourists because the wedding process must go through a series of traditional ceremonies. Some of these ceremonies are still held at the *Rumah Gadang*. The series of traditional wedding ceremonies is known as *Minang*, starting from *bisiak-bisiak di tapian*, *salisia ombun*, *manapuak bando*, *bakato*, *basiria*, *batando*, *akad*, and *baralek*.

*Tobo Kongs*i is a kind of community organization in *nagari* Sijunjung whose members consist only of men. In *nagari* Sijunjung, there are several *tobo kongs*i scattered throughout each *orong*. *Tobo Kongs*i is active in several fields, namely agriculture, social affairs, religion, and customs. *Tobo Kongs*i plays a major role in The holding of one of Sijunjung's traditional ceremonies, namely *Mambantai Adat*. *Batagak Gala* in this cultural tourism village uses the *Koto Piliang* system of governance. Specifically for the *Batagak Gala* or *Batagak Pangulu* traditional procession, *nagari* Sijunjung uses the *Koto Piliang* system of governance. In *nagari* Sijunjung, the replacement of the *Pangulu* can only be carried out when the previous *Pangulu* has passed away. The selection of *Pangulu* in *nagari* Sijunjung goes through several stages, namely *etongan sarumpun*, *etongan sakaum*, *etongan sakarek nagari*, *etongan nagari*, and *batagak gala*.

Furthermore, the social aspect of the community is also part of the supporting factors for cultural tourism in the village area. The people who live here must comply with the norms or regulations that apply in this traditional village area. There are several social norms that must be obeyed and cannot be violated, as follows. At wedding parties in this traditional village, it is not allowed to use organs or other modern music. If entertainment is desired, only traditional music is allowed. The community is not allowed to build brick houses next to *Rumah Gadang*.

Foreign tourists whose clothing does not comply with local community rules are not allowed to enter. For this reason, appropriate clothing is provided before tourists enter the *nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Village area. In making decisions, the village community still applies the principle of deliberation and consensus. Likewise, happy and sad news in the community is still shared using a mutual assistance system. In Minangkabau, women's honor is highly protected. Minangkabau has a

norm for protecting women, known as *Sumbang Duo Baleh*. Furthermore, if someone is caught doing something forbidden in this area, the issue will be brought before the *Niniak Mamak* and they will be subject to customary sanctions. Various traditional arts also enrich the cultural tourism attractions in this cultural heritage area. Some of the arts that are still regularly performed by the children of *Nagari* are as follows. First, there is *randai*, which is still regularly performed by the children of *nagari*. *Randai* is an art form of the children of *Nagari* that is closely related to the cultural identity of Minangkabau with its local wisdom. Second, there is the *Galombang Dance*, which is a dance that is often performed at various events. The *Galombang Dance* is used to welcome guests. Third, there is the *piriang dance*, which is commonly performed at traditional ceremonies and parties. In addition, the *piriang dance* also serves as entertainment, education, and a medium for social integration among the Minangkabau people. Next is the *Tanduak dance*, which contains historical significance related to an event called *adu kerbau* (buffalo fighting) between the Minangkabau tribe and the *Madang Kamulan* kingdom.

Finally, there is the traditional musical instrument *talempong*. In this traditional village, it is very easy to find this *talempong* musical instrument. To highlight the *talempong* as one of the treasures of Minangkabau music, *talempongs* are neatly displayed on the walls of *Rumah Gadang* (traditional houses). A group of people usually play the *talempong* at events, both at a specific location and in parades. In addition, various types of Minangkabau cuisine also pamper the taste buds of tourists in this Traditional Village, such as *randang pucuk ubi*, *randang balalang*, *randang dagiangm galamai*, *ompiang*, *wajik*, *karupuak jariah*, and various other specialties.

Tourist Visit Data and Economic Impact

The tourism sector represents a significant component of global economies. This industry not only generates substantial revenue and employment opportunities across diverse sectors such as hospitality, transportation, food services, and retail, but also serves as a crucial source of foreign exchange earnings for many nations [30]. [46] The sheer volume of global tourist movements underscores this influence, with worldwide visitor numbers projected to reach 1.9 billion by 2030, a substantial increase from 546 million in 2006 and 1.34 billion in 2016 [31]. This rapid expansion highlights tourism's growing role as a major driver of global economic activity, contributing significantly to both developed and developing economies [32][33][34]. This economic impetus is further evidenced

by tourism's contribution of 10% to global GDP and 7% to global trade, while supporting one in ten jobs worldwide. Based on data from the Sijunjung Regency Tourism Office: (1) Number of tourists in 2024: 12,500 people, (2) Average length of stay: 2–3 days, (3) Average expenditure per tourist: IDR 500,000–IDR 750,000, (4) Estimated total revenue from the tourism sector: ± IDR 6.25 billion This revenue comes from homestays, local cuisine, tour guide services, and handicraft sales. In addition, there are 15 growing home industries, such as *galamai* production, *songket* weaving, and other specialty foods. Homestay owners have experienced an increase in income of up to 30% compared to the previous year.

In an increasingly interconnected world marked by rapid globalization and technological advancement, the imperative to safeguard cultural heritage has become paramount [35]. This urgency stems from the dual pressures of cultural homogenization and the potential loss of unique identities that define communities worldwide [36]. The intricate tapestry of global cultures, encompassing tangible artifacts and intangible traditions, faces unprecedented threats from modernization, urbanization, and media influence, which erode traditional practices and languages [37-39]. The people of *nagari* Sijunjung

actively preserve and maintain their traditional customs, including: (1) *Bakaua Adat Festival*: An annual traditional ceremony to give thanks for the harvest, (2) *Mambantai Kerbau*: The tradition of slaughtering buffalo according to custom for major events, and (3) *Berkaul Nagari*: A traditional ritual for the safety and prosperity of the village. These traditional activities involve.

Ninik Mamak, Bundo Kanduang, youth, and the village government. During the 2024 *Bakaua Adat Festival*, there were 90 school contingents and 60 *Bundo Kanduang* contingents participating, demonstrating the community's enthusiasm for cultural preservation. In addition, the *Makan Bajamba* (traditional communal meal) activity has become a symbol of togetherness and social solidarity, as well as an attractive cultural attraction for tourists. Analysis From the data and observations, it can be concluded that: (1) Ecotourism in *nagari* Sijunjung has successfully integrated cultural preservation with local economic development, (2) Community participation is very high, both in traditional activities and tourism management, (3) National and international recognition shows that this culture-based ecotourism model is worth replicating in other regions.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the *nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Village is a clear example of the success of sustainable culture-based ecotourism development. The authenticity of the *Rumah Gadang* architecture, the layout of the traditional village, and the preservation of Minangkabau traditions make this area a tourist destination that is not only visually appealing but also rich in educational and spiritual value. The ecotourism potential of *nagari* Sijunjung has been recognized nationally and internationally, as evidenced by the village's inclusion in the top 5 of the ASEAN Homestay Award. The increasing number of tourist visits and the significant economic impact on the local

community show that ecotourism can be a driving force for village development without sacrificing cultural values. The active participation of the community in preserving traditions such as the *Bakaua Adat Festival*, *Mambantai Kerbau*, and *Makan Bajamba* is proof that cultural preservation can go hand in hand with tourism development. Traditional activities that involve various elements of society also strengthen social cohesion and local identity. Thus, the *nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Village is not only a “Hidden Paradise in the Land of Minang,” but also an inspiring model for ecotourism development in other regions seeking to elevate local potential in a sustainable and dignified manner.

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