

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



# Cow Race Local Wisdom From Tradition, Recreation to Tourism Destination

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## ABSTRACT

**Background.** Cows have helped farmers pull tools to work the paddy fields for agriculture in Tanah Datar. The process of cultivating paddy fields becomes faster and the harvest becomes better. The improved harvest results are expressed by people riding cows in the harvested paddy fields as a form of happiness and this activity continues until it becomes a tourist destination. **Objectives.** The purpose of this research was to explore the history of the implementation and the displacement of the implementation purpose of cow race activity as local wisdom in Tanah Datar West Sumatera Indonesia. **Methods.** This research used a qualitative research approach with a descriptive method. The informant of this research were 12 people from their area. This research used methodological triangulation to get the validation of data. Methodological triangulation was used to obtain data validity; use interviewing techniques to collect data and use documentation to prove the appropriate participants as sources of information. There are three steps to analyzing data those were reduced, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. **Results.** The results of this research were 1) Cow race started from the paddy field plow tradition by using cows that became recreational facilities for the society around and grow as a tourism destination without reducing the value of the activity, 2) The participants that followed the cow race were not only wishing for the award but also a tradition and culture that had to be protected and preserved together, and 3) There was an additional value from time to time in a cow race activity that was seen in the purpose, social activity, religion, object, and all things involved in this activity. **Conclusion.** Based on the results obtained, the local wisdom of the cow race in Tanah Datar was able to adapt to the time development without changing the values in that activity.

**KEYWORDS:** *Local Wisdom, Tradition, Recreation, Tourism Destination.*

## INTRODUCTION

Tanah Datar is one of districts in West Sumatera Indonesia. This district is about 1336 km<sup>2</sup> with 14 sub-districts those are *Sapuluah Koto, South Batipuah, Pariangan, Rambatan, Limo Kaum, Tanjaung Ameh, Padang Gantiang, Lintau Buo, North Lintau Buo, Sungayang, Sungai Tarab, Salimpaung and Tanjung Baru* (1). Based on the large of the area about 44,458 hectares were paddy field. The number of paddies that were harvested

was about 237,623 tons in 2014 (2). Based on the data it could be concluded that the majority of the citizens in Tanah Datar relied on the agricultural product as income that was planted paddies. There was an interesting thing which still done by the society in Tanah Datar that was local wisdom in the cow race as the basis of successful in agriculture. This activity as a culture that went from the idea and creativity of the society to be

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motivated became better in agriculture. In this situation the society in Tanah Datar had a culture to receive something new for welfare life. Culture was the whole knowledge that had by a group of human and became a guidance to interpret the environment in daily acts (3). Human culture as a local wisdom place that could be categorized into an idea, social activity, and artifact (4). Then, local wisdom was human efforts by using cognitive to act and respond to thing, object, or event that happened in certain situation (5).

Based on those references cow race was a local wisdom came from intelligence that produced the idea by using energy of animal for planting in the past that still done until now with the different purpose. Cow race in Tanah Datar West Sumatera in the past which had a different purpose with today was a local wisdom if seen from 3 different parts those were tradition, recreation, and tourism. Tradition was heredity customs (from an ancestor) which still run in society. Judgments or the assumptions of the existence ways were the best and right (6). Tradition was the similarity of materials and ideas that came from the past but still existed today and were not destroyed or desecrated. Tradition could be defined as a right inheritance or past inheritance. However, the tradition that occurred repeatedly was not done by chance or deliberate (7). More specifically the tradition that produced society cultures could be known for the tradition itself. According to Koentjaraningrat, culture had at least three forms, those were: (a) Culture as a complex ideas, ideas, values, norms, rules and so on. (b) Culture was the pattern of behavior of complex activities in society. (c) The form of culture was things as human products (8). Hence the cow race was an activity that had patterned from society in Tanah Datar. Uniquely, the tradition that has by the society in this place was able to develop in terms of function and recover local life community. It is also confirmed in the research that the vital needs of the population using skis as a means of transportation change with the times to the highest point in economic development, tourism, and sports (9).

Recreational activity was a physical activity that was done to fill time after pmidpng daily routines, however there was an energy to do other activities without having fatigue with the purpose to get refresh (10). Many benefits could be obtained from the activities in leisure time. The benefits were occurring because leisure time served any condition or characteristics that related

to individual development tasks, those were; 1) Self-development, 2) Motivation, initiative, and life purpose, 3) Achievement and competency, 4) Identity, 5) Involvement in the society and community, 6) Skills and social connections, and 7) Emotional and leisure time utilization (11). Recreational activity could be applied wherever and in whatever actions. It could be sports or a game. It involved tools, nature, animals, or just yourself in practice. The target of recreation was only to change the feeling from unhappy to be happy that could be seen from those who were in the activity (12).

Tourism was an actualization of human creation, life arrangement, cultural art and historical nation and the state of nature that had attraction to be visited (13). Culture was everything that had attraction came from human's art and creation. For instance, religious ceremony, traditional ceremony, and traditional dances (13). As is done in Turkey, the sports lodges that were used as training grounds during the Ottoman Empire and are now considered the first sports museum in the world (14). Culture was resources to capital for tourism itself (15). Making traditional activities into an object of tourism was an obligation of people and government that involved in the culture itself. The community openness was the key to the success of tourism object in a place that should be protected by society firmness to maintain the values contained in that culture. It was based on law No. 10 years 2009 about Principal of Tourism Providence that must uphold human rights, cultural diversity, and local wisdom (16).

Based on the explanation about local wisdom of the cow race above hence this research explored about the history of cow race in Tanah Datar and the implementation of cow race activity today and displacement of cow race purpose in tradition, recreation activity and became tourism destination. The research questions were: 1) How is the history of cow race tradition in Tanah Datar West Sumatera? 2) How is the implementation of cow race activity in Tanah Datar West Sumatera now? 3) How is the displacement of cow race activity purpose in Tanah Datar West Sumatera from time to time?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research Design.** Qualitative methods were used as a form of inquiry to critically explore information with participants by understanding

their experiences of cow race. Such a technique allows the researcher to focus on finding what is needed in a significant way from the perspective of a person involved in cow race activities. The use of qualitative methods, including interviews and documentation, reflects the value of a firsthand perspective and understanding of multiple truths.

**Participant.** Twelve people participated in this research, those were: 1 chief executive at once, 1 PORWI chairman, 1 *Bundo Kanduang* (the personification of the Minangkabau ethnic group as well as the nickname given to women who lead a family in Minangkabau both as queens and as mothers of the king), 3 owners of cows, 2 jockeys, 2 people from tourism office, 1 tourist, and 1 photographer.

**Research Tools.** This research used methodological triangulation to get the validation of data. Methodological triangulation was used to obtain data validity; use interviewing techniques to collect data and use documentation to prove the appropriate participants as sources of information.

**Data Collection Process.** I take a participant-centered approach, encouraging participants to articulate their own experiences and share what they believe to be important. The unstructured interview approach was used to collect the data. It may begin with some definite questions, but the interviewer has considerable latitude to adapt questions to the specific direction of responses, in an effort to allow for more intuitive and natural conversations between researchers and participants (17). The researcher conducted an in-depth interview until the researcher finds the desired data. The data would be saved in audio format (with the participant's permission). Every single word in recording would be transcribed and described than the accuracy of data was identified toward the audio record, and the data that had personal information would be deleted from the transcript.

**Data Analysis.** Thematic analysis was conducted within a constructionist framework, which sought to theorize about the value context contained in the cow race activities. In line with this, I use interesting epistemological principles in framing how I understand ideas about the conditions of the cow race as a tradition, recreation and tourist destination. There are three steps to analysis data from descriptive qualitative research those were reduced, data display, and

conclusion drawing/verification (18). Reduction included collecting of data interview, and continue to obtain, identification, and focusing on data to make a formula from the research problem. After collecting the data, the researcher would be done the display data into a good sentence, and it can describe the form of conclusion for answering the research question.

## RESULTS

**The Origin of Cow Race.** Cow race was a tradition from ancestor that existed since hundred years ago, however it was not known exactly the year of this activity was started. Cow race was started from an old town called Pariangan in Tanah Datar District. Cow race was an effort of farmers in the past to find the way to plow the fields well and fast thus it was used cattle like a cow. Cow race firstly was discovered by *datuak* (Dt) Tantejo Gurhano. *Datuak* is a customary title given to someone through the agreement of a tribe or tribe in the Minangkabau region. Dt Tantejo Gurhano tried to find a way to make his paddy field became fertile and easy to be planted. The field that was used to plant paddy was a custom paddy field called *sawah adat* (ricefield of custom) that was high inheritance wealth from an ancestor that had by a whole family or community. It was because the paddy field planted had by community therefore the head of a community called *datuak* should share the skills of planting to the next generations called *anak kemenakan*. It was stated in the Minang proverb “*anak dipangku kamanakan dibimbiang*” (children are hugged and nephews are guided) that intended an uncle called *mamak* had responsibility to keep, maintain, provide his children and became a good model for his niece or nephew and guide them to run in the right way in their life.

In plowing paddy field Dt. Tantejo Gurhano asked his nephew to control the cows that, helped by two people to hold and direct the cows. He started to plow the field with two cows in pair to make the plow process quickly. There was a different result of plowing the field by using cows and without using cows at that time. The fields that were plowed by cows were neater and regular than fields that plowed without cows.

The success of Dt. Tantejo Gurhano in plowing the field affected the society to do the same thing. The society tried to apply Dt. Tantejo Gurhano's way by using cows in plowing their

paddy fields. Hence, the society can feel the successful because of the improvement of the harvest result. Then, with pleasure to remove the feel of tired and fill free time thus there was an activity as entertainment by the society. This activity originally was done to be grateful of the harvest result and strengthen the kindship of the society at different places in that town, between farmers, cattle and others as entertainment for local society after harvesting before the next planting. Traditionally this activity was done in the areas that Mount Merapi could be seen clearly (The areas around Mount Merapi West Sumatera).

In the next period, cow race was used as a regular agenda of the areas around Mount Merapi and *Alek Nagari* (party of territory) activities that commonly called *Alek pacu jawi* (cow race event). The cow race event was an activity that followed by other activities like cow wearing a crown (Minangkabau typical ornament on the head), music from *gandang tasa*, *talempong*, and *aguang jana* (instrument music and traditional music) and plate dance. Due to the big of this event, therefore every activity was started by deliberation of *datuk*, *mamak*, and custom figures of each community to discuss the preparation. The materials to be discussed were about paddy field that was used and fundraising procedures from local society.

Cow race activity today has become a cultural attraction that showed to all societies not only to the society who lives around Mount Merapi but also for domestic and foreign tourist. This event has been facilitated by the regional government by promoting and intervention without disturbing the cultural values that contained in it. Therefore, the cultural event and tradition of local community can be safe and tourism sector can be more advanced.

**Cow Race Today.** In cow race activity was needed community leaders, head of the village and head of hamlets that gave permission for the event. PORWI (Cow Race Sport Unity) as event executor prepared for the needs. PORWI tasks were to manage where the cow race activity to do and the next place to do the cow race activity. It was needed about four weeks to prepare everything. The first thing was to decide the location. There was only in four sub-districts in Tanah Datar Regency those were: *Pariangan*, *Lima Kaum*, *Rambatan*, and *Sungai Tarab*. The requirement of the location was paddy field that

had been harvested. Paddy field used was the paddy field of society that had hired by the cow race committee. The committee asked permission of the owner of paddy field for cow race activity. In determining the cow race location must include some criteria. There were the requirements and decisions of paddy field that could be used for cow race, those were; 1) Paddy field was long and wide (at least 60 meters long, minimum width 10 meters and straight). 2) Paddy field was shallow and the land not overly diluted with 30 cm depth. 3) The end of race field was higher than race track it was aimed to provide a beauty when cows were at the end of the track. 4) The bund of paddy fields had to wide. 5) There was a resting location around a paddy field for the cows before coming into the race field. 6) Paddy field had to have a place for traditional music performances and dances, selling space for the community, opening and closing ceremonies. If the schedules and race place were ready, hence PORWI told to tourism office then tourism official promoted cow race later through the internet, social media, radio and etc.

The implementation of cow race was started by the opening of the Major of Tanah Datar, attended by the head of Tourism, Youth and Sport Office of Tanah Datar and also attended by custom figures and the society leaders. In the implementation, the cow used was a special male cow and was not used to plow paddy fields. There was a shifting value of agricultural needs to be a race thus cow owners tried to show their best cow that was able to run straight although with small body size. So the owners of the cows gave the special training to their cows. The cows' owner gave special foods, herbs and vitamins to the cows. The purpose was to make cows had a strong physical and stamina then was able to run faster in the race. The participants in the cow race consisted of tens to hundred cows that came from four other places (Subdistrict of Pariangan, Lima Kaum, Rambatan, dan Sungai Tarab).

In cow race event, there were no formal rules, there was no the ordinal number, line judges, and timekeeper. The participants who were ready could bring the cows to the race. A pair of cows that came to the racetrack was tied an instrument like a plow instrument that made of bamboo to jockey to stand and control the cows. The owner of cows and jockey worked together to put the plow to cows. After a plow attached well, the end of the plow used by the jockey as footing and jockey handled

tail of cow to control cows in the running so jockey did not fall. To increase the cows running speed, it was not uncommon for a jockey to bite the tail of two cows. The length of the track that traversed by cows was about 60 meters and the width was about 10 meters. There were two participants in the track. After hearing a shout “*Hiiyaahh*” from the committee, so pair of cows runs and the jockey tried to control his cows to run on a straight line until the finish. It was not an easy thing because sometimes cows run to the right and left, hence the spectators that were near to paddy field had to run to save themselves. A cow rider had a risk to fall and a mud bath however it became a pride and satisfaction to them. Behind those pleasures, as jockeys they were only paid by the cows’ owner with its own that there was no basis of its own.

The cow race tradition did not require a special jury to judge who was the winner, but all participants who came and watched the cow race at that time were the jury. A jury judged as a whole with the criteria was seen from the cows that run in a straight line and quick. Therefore, there was an implied value in determining the winner, those were togetherness and unity. Cows with a compact and straight run followed the race to finish without separate was the winner in cow race. There was no special prize that was given to the winner, thus there was an award like a trophy and household needs. If the award was seen in nominal, there was not much, but the price of the winner cows automatically was higher than usual cows. The price for the winner cows could be 50 millions rupiah. During cow race activity, sometimes there was also a transaction for selling cows by the owner of the cows and traders. There was a reason of why there was no big prize in cow race activity because if there was any prize hence it could be categorized as gambling. Gambling was not allowed in this activity because it opposed to the customs and the prevailing religion in the society. The participants that followed the cow race were not only wishing for the award but also a tradition and culture that had to be protected and preserved together. Then cow race activity was a facility for cow race lovers in distributing hobby and recreation facility.

In the cow race event there was a place for resting to cow, traditional market, local game, and traditional dance. At traditional market, it was met street vendors, mini-restaurant that sold coffee and local game thus this location was very crowded. When cows were at the racetrack, the

traditional music was played to follow up this activity. Before closing was started dozens of *Bundo Kanduang* walked together from head of the village office to cows’ racetrack. Each *Bundo Kanduang* bought a platter that filled with typical foods. Not only *Bundo Kanduang*, a half of cows adorned walked together with the head of the village office to cows’ racetrack, it was called get dressed cows. These cows were also contested then the best cows’ clothing would be the winner and got the award. The marches were accompanied by the music of the *talempong* hence this event was more festive. After arriving at the location of foods carried by *Bundo Kanduang* then those were served to community leaders and the society who came to the location.

**Tradition, Recreation to Destination.** The following was a shift in the objectives in a cow race from time to time. Tradition and recreation became tourism destination. This shift was seen from several indicators those were the goal, social activity, religious, and object involvement. Those were presented in [Table 1](#).

## DISCUSSION

The ability in self conforming to the timely development without removing the value that had been contained and increasing welfare was intelligence. This intelligence was owned by the society in District Tanah Datar West Sumatera that could maintain wealth culture as a tradition, recreation to tourism destination. It was known that local wisdom was a human intelligence owned by a certain ethnic obtained through societies’ experiences (19). Local wisdom was a social capital to identify themselves, to actualize the potential, to interact and adapt to the environment, and anticipating in relation to nature and social environment (20). Consequently cow race history in Tanah Datar could survive through three dimensions of change from tradition, society recreation activity and destination for tourists as a form of local wisdom.

The implementation of cow race still respected to the cultural values that contain in every activity. It was started from gathering of *niniak mamak*, *alim ulama*, and *cadiak pandai* then PORWI organization is also involved right now. This activity could maintain togetherness in the society like togetherness in preparing and cleaning cow race area (21). In addition, cow race had recreational value to the society. Cow race became an entertainment for the society from

children to adults, they felt happy to see cows run in paddy field, and increased the relation of the society from one community to the others like a relation between jockeys in cow race (22). Cow race happiness increased because every beat of cows in race accompanied with music of *Aguang Jana*. This music was an important part in enjoying cow race activities (23). This music was played from the head of the village office until cow race area. This music instrument was played along the street with the purpose to announce to the society that the event would start (23). The attractiveness of cow race was seen in passion and spirit of happiness from jockeys, the owner of cows, society, government and tourists (24). This

activity was closed by plate dance as a traditional dance that used plate as a tool in dancing (22).

As a tourism destination, cow race had a special place for tourists who wanted to enjoy local wisdom in *Tanah Datar*. In 2017 cow race contributed most tourists who visited domestic and other countries (25). Thus, this event gave positive effects not only in self-development of society but also to the economics of the society. Tourists who came had a satisfaction to the values that contained in the activity (26). This event could increase the income of traders about three hundred thousand rupiah until six thousand rupiah. While for parking obtained income about three hundred thousand rupiah for one event (3-5 times) (21).

**Table 1.** Development of Local Wisdom Value in Tradition, Recreation to Tourism Destination

	Tradition	Recreation	Destination
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cow as the first tool to plow the paddy field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of cow was rare because the use of plow machine</li> <li>The society did the cow race activity as an activity to gather and entertainment for the society around after the harvest season</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was not used cows anymore to plow a paddy field.</li> <li>The society did cow race as an activity to gather and entertainment for the society around after the harvest season.</li> <li>Cow race has become a tourism attraction for domestic and international.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge transfer in plowing paddy fields by using cow was better than farmers own.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gathered event in establishing the meeting.</li> <li>As a recreation for the society in the village</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gathered event in establishing the meeting</li> <li>As a recreation for the society in the village</li> <li>The areas involved were more however those were still in the scope of Tanah Datar District</li> <li>There were a communication and interaction with domestic and international newcomers.</li> </ul>
<b>Religious</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on gratitude to one God</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on gratitude to one God</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on gratitude to one God</li> </ul>
<b>Object</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cows that were used to plow a paddy field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bull (had not used to plow a paddy field)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bull (special for cow race activity)</li> </ul>
<b>Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A community from one <i>Datuak</i> then grows in the village</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Niniak mamak*</i>, <i>alim ulama**</i>, <i>cadiak pandai</i>, <i>bundo kanduang***</i> and society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Niniak mamak</i>, <i>alim ulama</i>, <i>cadiak pandai</i>, <i>bundo kanduang</i> and society</li> <li>Cow Race Sports Unity (<i>PORWI</i>)</li> <li>Government (Regent, Tourism Office)</li> </ul>

Note:

\* A traditional institution consisting of several *datuak* who come from various tribes or clans in the tribes of Minangkabau

\*\*Religious leaders who are tasked with protecting, fostering and guiding Muslims

\*\*\* the personification of the Minangkabau ethnic group as well as the nickname given to women who lead a family in Minangkabau both as queens and as mothers of the king

## CONCLUSION

Local wisdom of cow race in Tanah Datar presented changes from all the time. The history noted that this activity was the basis of the successes of the society in planting. Then, it was

followed by recreational activity of the society as entertainment in their leisure time to increase social relationship. Currently, cow race has become a tourism destination that can improve the economics of the society without reducing the

value of tradition and recreational of the activity. The benefits of this research are as a sample for practitioners and governments who are responsible for developing the community's economy through tourism and recreation base on local wisdom.

At the end, this study recorded a stage of destination that developed from local wisdom which currently has an impact on improving the local community's economy. It is hoped that readers can understand and apply all these stages to other local wisdom.

### APPLICABLE REMARKS

- The cow race is important in the history of Tanah Datar community life as a transition from traditional, recreation, and tourist destination.
- The cow race is a valuable asset and needs to be given special attention in order to develop into an important part of the community's economy.

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### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Study concept and design: Endang Sepdanius. Acquisition of data: Anton Komaini. Analysis and interpretation of data: Muhammad Sazeli Rifki. Drafting the manuscript: Rini Afriani. Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: Ilham. Statistical analysis: Nuridin Widya Pranoto. Administrative, technical, and material support: Endang Sepdanius. Study supervision: Anton Komaini.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors mention that there is no "Conflict of Interest" in this study.

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