



THE SUNDANESE ECONOMIC SYSTEM AND COMMUNAL FOOD SECURITY: THE LEUIT MODEL OF KASEPUHAN CIPTAGELAR AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR GLOBAL POLITICAL-ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

Ade Priangani¹, Shylvia Windary¹, Fadhilah Yazid Rakasyi¹, Faza Fadhillah Razaqa¹

¹Program Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik,
Universitas Pasundan, Bandung, Indonesia

Korespondensi: shylvia.windary@unpas.ac.id

ABSTACT

Food crises, supply-chain disruptions, climate change, and unequal access to resources reveal the limits of economic governance that relies excessively on market mechanisms and external supply. This article examines the food economy of the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar community, particularly the leuit granary system and Leuit Si Jimat, as a community-based governance model relevant to the study of global political economy. The research adopts a qualitative document-analysis approach, drawing on a research report, scholarly articles, books, and institutional publications. Data were analysed through reduction, thematic categorisation, display, and conclusion drawing. Four findings emerge. First, Ciptagelar's food economy is embedded in customary norms, social relations, and ecological obligations, and therefore operates outside the logic of full commodification. Second, leuit functions as social infrastructure for storing reserves, distributing risk, and sustaining intergenerational continuity. Third, customary leadership, mutual cooperation, adherence to the agricultural cycle, and restrictions on rice sales reinforce the community's food sovereignty. Fourth, market pressure, environmental change, commercialisation, and weak legal protection constitute the principal constraints. The article argues that Ciptagelar cannot be mechanically replicated as a universal model; nonetheless, its underlying institutional principles - economic embeddedness, collective governance, decentralised reserves, and cultural legitimacy - can enrich the design of food-security policy. The article's contribution lies in connecting



Sundanese local knowledge with the concepts of embeddedness, common-pool resource governance, food sovereignty, and the pluralisation of global political-economic governance.

Keywords: *Sundanese Economy; Kasepuhan Ciptagelar; Leuit; Food Security; Food Sovereignty; Global Political Economy*

INTRODUCTION

Food security has shifted from a sectoral concern into a matter of political economy. The production and distribution of food take place within structures shaped by prices, market power, state policy, climate change, technology, and trade networks. When food supply depends on long chains, a disruption at one point can heighten vulnerability at another. This dynamic is visible in successive crises that have affected production costs, distribution, and household purchasing power. Governance of food systems can therefore not be assessed by market efficiency alone; it must also be judged by a community's capacity to safeguard access, maintain reserves, sustain ecological continuity, and retain control over its food sources.

The literature on indigenous food systems shows that local knowledge, biodiversity, territorial governance, and social relations play a central role in building resilience (Berkes, 2012; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations & Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, 2021; Folke, 2006). The Food and Agriculture Organization and the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT (2021) emphasise that indigenous food systems embody accumulated knowledge of seasons, ecosystems, diversification, and resource use, tested across generations. Such systems are not immune to pressure: climate change, monetisation, shifting consumption patterns, and market expansion can erode practices of sharing, communal management, and ecological sustainability.

In Indonesia, the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar community in Sukabumi Regency, West Java, demonstrates a food-security practice grounded in customary law (adat). Rice is not treated merely as a commodity; production, storage, consumption, ritual, and customary leadership are integrated within a single social governance system. The leuit constitutes a critical element of this system, forming a network of storage, processing, and consumption facilities distributed



across each settlement cluster (Aulia & Adhitama, 2021). Each household stores its harvested rice in its own leuit, while Leuit Si Jimat functions as a communal granary under customary authority. This arrangement helps the community manage reserves, harvest uncertainty, and social needs (Prabowo & Sudrajat, 2021; Tauchid et al., 2022).

The research report underlying this article advances a broad notion of a "Sundanese economic system" as an alternative to global political-economic governance. This term, however, requires more careful specification: the Sundanese people do not share a single, uniform economic system. The practice observed in Ciptagelar is a communal food-economy system that has developed within a particular history, territory, leadership structure, and set of norms. This article therefore does not generalise the Ciptagelar practice as representative of Sundanese society as a whole. Instead, it treats Ciptagelar as an institutional case study that embodies principles of local Sundanese economic organisation and that can be examined alongside contemporary governance concepts.

This article addresses three questions. First, how do the leuit and Ciptagelar's food governance constitute an economic system distinct from conventional market mechanisms? Second, which factors support and which constrain the sustainability of this system? Third, what practical and theoretical contribution does it offer to the governance of the global political economy? These questions matter because discussions of global political economy still tend to depart from the state, the market, corporations, and international institutions, while the role of indigenous communities as producers of economic institutions has not received comparable analytical weight.

The article's novelty lies in the integration of four concepts. First, embeddedness explains that economic activity is embedded in social norms and cultural institutions (Polanyi, 2001). Second, common-pool resource governance explains the importance of rules, monitoring, legitimacy, and sanctions in sustaining collective resources (Ostrom, 1990). Third, food sovereignty emphasises a community's right to determine its food system according to its own needs and values. Fourth, the global political economy approach situates local practice within its broader relations with markets, states, development, and global pressures. This integration enables an analysis that neither romanticises local wisdom nor reduces it to

symbolic tradition, in keeping with scholarship that treats traditional ecological knowledge as an ongoing process of learning and adaptation rather than a static set of practices (Berkes, 2012).

ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

Economy Embedded in Social Institutions

Polanyi (2001) distinguishes an economy embedded in society from a market economy that seeks to separate economic activity from social relations. In an embedded economy, production and distribution are shaped by social obligation, reciprocity, redistribution, kinship, morality, and political authority; markets may still exist, but they do not become the sole organising principle. This concept is analytically useful for reading Ciptagelar, because rice follows customary rules from seed selection, through the planting and harvest seasons, to storage and consumption.

Embeddedness does not imply the absence of change. The community can adopt modern technology, interact with the state, and connect with markets. The analytical question is whether such changes shift community authority over food. Embeddedness is therefore used here to assess the extent to which economic decisions remain subject to social norms, sustainability, and collective interest.

Common-Pool Resource Governance

Ostrom (1990) shows that common-pool resources do not inevitably end in overexploitation. Communities can devise effective rules when group boundaries are clearly defined, rules fit local conditions, users participate in decision-making, monitoring functions, sanctions are graduated, and conflict-resolution mechanisms exist. This framework helps explain that the leuit is not merely a storage building: it is part of an institution that governs rights, obligations, production timing, the use of output, and social responsibility.

In Ciptagelar, food reserves are formed through a combination of household ownership and communal governance. This structure reduces dependence on a single, centralised store: risk is distributed across many family-level leuit, while Leuit Si Jimat supplies a symbolic, social, and redistributive function. This layered design can be read as a form of polycentric institutional arrangement operating at community scale.

Food Security, Food Sovereignty, and Resilience

Food security refers to the availability, access, utilisation, and stability of food. The concept is important, but it can focus on outcomes without necessarily assessing who controls production and distribution. Food sovereignty adds the dimension of political control, positioning the community as a subject entitled to determine the type of food produced, the production system, the knowledge applied, and the governance of resources.

Ciptagelar's practice brings these two dimensions together. Reserves held in the leuit support availability and stability; customary rules reinforce community control; and the agricultural cycle, together with the maintenance of local varieties, links food to ecological and cultural sustainability. The analysis therefore looks not only at the volume of reserves, but also at the institutions that allow those reserves to endure.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case-study design based on document analysis. This choice fits the character of the data contained in the underlying research report, which is methodologically more consistent with treatment as secondary data. The article does not claim to have conducted new interviews or field observation, since the report does not provide interview transcripts, an informant list, observation notes, or an auditable sampling procedure.

The data sources comprise the final research report "Sistem Ekonomi Sunda sebagai Alternatif Tata Kelola Ekonomi Politik Global" (Priangani et al., 2025), scholarly articles on Kasepuhan Ciptagelar and the wider Kasepuhan communities, books on political-economic and institutional theory, and publications of international bodies concerning indigenous food systems. Source selection followed three criteria: direct relevance to the leuit and to food governance, clear publication identity, and traceability of the source.

The analysis proceeded through four stages. First, data were screened to separate material relevant to the research focus from administrative or unrelated content. Second, data were coded into themes: economic embeddedness, food reserves, customary governance, social capital, ecological relations, external pressure, and policy implications. Third, findings were compared across sources to identify consistencies and discrepancies. Fourth, conclusions were drawn with explicit attention to the limits of generalisation.

The trustworthiness of the analysis was strengthened through source triangulation. Claims drawn from the report were checked against scholarly articles and institutional publications, and the article undertook a conceptual correction of the original report: literature on Sundanese ethnic migration, Islamic economics, and classical economic theory that has no direct bearing on the case was not used as a primary basis for analysis, and chemical process flowcharts and roadmap sections referring to refugees were likewise excluded as inconsistent with the object of research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Empirical Configuration of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar's Food System

The findings of the underlying research report indicate that Kasepuhan Ciptagelar's food-economy practice forms a single, integrated system linking agricultural production, storage, social distribution, ritual, customary leadership, and the management of relations with nature. This integration matters because community food security does not arise from a single technical policy; it is built through a sequence of rules that govern the process from the timing of planting to the eventual use of the harvest. Within this structure, rice is not positioned solely as a tradable good in the market: it is a source of life, a family reserve, a symbol of community continuity, and a key element in the relationship between residents and customary institutions (Priangani et al., 2025; Prabowo & Sudrajat, 2021).

Empirically, the underlying report records two layers of food storage. The first layer consists of family-owned *leuit*, in which each household stores the rice it has harvested. The second layer is *Leuit Si Jimat*, a communal granary under the authority of the customary leader. This layered structure produces a distribution of reserves that is not wholly centralised: households retain the capacity to meet daily consumption needs, while the communal granary provides a buffer function when some community members experience shortage. Tauchid et al. (2022) similarly record that residents facing food shortages can obtain rice through a mechanism regulated by the community. Food reserves thus function as an instrument of social protection, not merely as a commodity stock.

The underlying report states that community rice reserves can sustain needs over an extended period, with some claims suggesting a duration of roughly five years. This claim should be read as a qualitative indication of storage capacity and production continuity based on community testimony, rather than as the result of a quantitative stock audit. Even so, the

finding is consistent with literature indicating that dried rice stored in a leuit can be kept for a long period and drawn upon according to household need (Tauchid et al., 2022). This suggests that the success of the system should not be measured only by annual harvest volume, but by the capacity to convert production into reserves that endure across seasons.

A further empirical dimension appears in the Seren Taun Leuit Si Jimat tradition. At the close of each agricultural cycle, a portion of the harvest is handed over and stored in the customary granary as an expression of gratitude and as preparation for the following period. Desiany et al. (2022) explain that the transfer of rice to the customary leader carries both social and educational meaning, affirming that present consumption must not compromise the entitlements of the next generation or the next season. Seren Taun therefore functions as more than a cultural ceremony: it operates as a mechanism of institutional reproduction, since community members repeat, witness, and pass on the rules governing production, reserves, and collective responsibility.

Ciptagelar's agricultural practice also follows a customary calendar. Rice cultivation is generally undertaken within a single annual cycle linked to a sequence of rituals. Restraint on planting intensity may appear less productive when judged solely by short-term output; from a sustainability perspective, however, this pattern allows time for soil recovery, reduces dependence on external inputs, and preserves the alignment between the social and the ecological calendar. Prabowo and Sudrajat (2021) show that farming in Ciptagelar is understood as a cultural symbol and an expression of harmony with nature, meaning that production decisions are informed by more than price and volume calculations.

These empirical findings point to four core functions of Ciptagelar's food system. First, a production function realised through household-based rice cultivation governed by customary rules. Second, a storage function realised through the network of household leuit and the communal granary. Third, a redistribution function realised through assistance to, or lending of rice among, community members in need. Fourth, a social-reproduction function realised through ritual, leadership, and the transmission of knowledge. These four functions are mutually dependent: leuit cannot function effectively without consistent production; production cannot be sustained without ecological rules; rules cannot be observed without social legitimacy; and legitimacy cannot endure without intergenerational transmission.

Table 1 Empirical Findings and Political-Economic Functions

Empirical finding	Evidence in practice	Political-economic function	Source
Household leuit	Harvested rice is stored by the household and drawn upon gradually according to need	Reduces dependence on daily purchase and price fluctuation	Prabowo & Sudrajat (2021)
Leuit Si Jimat	The communal granary, under the authority of the customary leader, holds the community's pooled contribution	Provides a collective reserve, legitimacy, and a redistributive mechanism	Desiany et al. (2022)
Restriction on rice sales	Rice is prioritised for consumption and community continuity rather than free commodification	Protects stock from market pressure and preserves community control	Prabowo & Sudrajat (2021); Ibrahim (2021)
Seren Taun	Harvest is handed over and stored, accompanied by a ritual of gratitude and cyclical evaluation	Reproduces compliance, identity, and intergenerational responsibility	Desiany et al. (2022)
Long-term reserve	The report indicates a reserve capacity sufficient for several years of need	Increases resilience to crop failure and supply disruption	Tauchid et al. (2022)

Leuit as Infrastructure for Reserves, Risk Distribution, and Social Protection

Analysis of the storage structure shows that the leuit functions as economic infrastructure and social infrastructure at once. In a commercial food system, a warehouse is typically understood as a logistics facility that holds goods pending sale. In Ciptagelar, the leuit follows a different logic: storage is not directed primarily toward waiting for the highest price, but toward ensuring continuity of consumption, preserving seed stock, absorbing harvest uncertainty, and meeting social obligations. This difference in purpose produces a difference in economic behaviour - rice is not released to the market as soon as prices rise, because the value of reserves and community security is placed above short-term gain.

The network of household leuit creates a decentralised reserve. Spatially, the presence of a leuit complex, a saung lisung (rice-pounding shed), and a goah (cooking area) in each cluster allows each settlement unit relative self-sufficiency in storing, processing, and cooking rice (Aulia & Adhitama, 2021). This model spreads risk across many household units: if one storage site is disrupted, the community's reserves are not entirely lost. Leuit Si Jimat then complements this network through its communal function. This configuration embodies a

principle of redundancy which, in conventional management theory, is often treated as an added cost; in a system exposed to climatic uncertainty and supply disruption, however, redundancy is a source of resilience, since dispersed reserves give the community a wider range of options for responding to crisis.

The leuit also alters households' bargaining position vis-à-vis the market. Households without reserves must buy food when prices rise or sell assets when income falls. Households holding stock, by contrast, can delay transactions and adjust consumption without immediately entering the market. This capacity to defer transactions constitutes a form of bargaining power; from a political-economy perspective, food reserves reduce structural dependence on traders, consumption credit, and external distribution.

The social-protection function is visible when communal reserves are used to assist members facing shortage. This mechanism is not identical to state social assistance: access is determined by community membership, norms of reciprocity, and customary authority. Its advantage lies in social proximity and direct knowledge of residents' circumstances, which keeps the cost of identifying recipients relatively low because members know one another; the system's effectiveness, however, also depends on the legitimacy of leadership and the fairness of its decisions.

This finding supports the argument that food reserves constitute a political institution. A comparison between customary and non-customary villages likewise shows that local institutions and community character shape patterns of food security, so that reserves cannot be separated from the social structure that manages them (Perdanaputra & Prasodjo, 2019). Reserves determine who is able to endure disruption, and they determine who holds the authority to distribute resources. In Ciptagelar, this authority is not monopolised by a single actor: households maintain their own reserves, while the customary leader manages the communal reserve. This division produces a balance between household autonomy and collective solidarity.

Economic Embeddedness: Rice Outside the Logic of Full Commodification

The concept of embeddedness helps explain why Ciptagelar's food system cannot be understood solely through the categories of production, price, and consumption. Polanyi (2001) explains that in many societies economic activity is embedded in social institutions, so that exchange proceeds together with moral norms, family obligation, political authority, and belief.

Ciptagelar exhibits a similar pattern: decisions concerning rice are consistently linked to custom, ritual, leadership structure, and relations with nature.

The underlying report and prior studies point to a strong prohibition or restriction on the sale of rice. This does not mean the community rejects market activity altogether: it continues to use money, sell other commodities, use technology, and interact with external actors. The restriction applies specifically to rice because rice is regarded as a source of life and an element of identity. Ibrahim (2021) notes that customary law prohibits the sale of paddy or rice because doing so is understood as tantamount to selling one's life. Economically, this prohibition keeps stock within the community; politically, it preserves customary authority over the definition of value.

The restriction on commodification erects an institutional boundary between basic need and the market. This boundary matters precisely when market prices create an incentive to sell stock: without such a rule, households might gain short-term income but lose their reserves. Customary rules resolve this intertemporal dilemma by prioritising future security. Cultural norms thus produce an observable material effect: rice remains within the community's network of consumption and reserve.

Embeddedness is also visible in the relationship between production and ritual. Seren Taun, the planting calendar, and the reverence accorded to rice are not external to the economy; they regulate economic behaviour. Ritual sets timing, reinforces discipline, and conveys moral standards to younger generations. Krisnawati et al. (2024), in a study of Kasepuhan Sinarresmi, show that the metaphor of rice and agricultural ritual shape how the community understands food security, a finding that reinforces the argument that cultural symbols can perform a regulative function.

Embeddedness, however, does not guarantee efficiency or fairness. Norms can become rigid and resistant to change, and customary authority can concentrate power. Analysis should therefore not stop at praising tradition; the pertinent questions are whether the rules continue to command residents' consent, whether the distribution mechanism operates fairly, and whether younger generations have space to participate in institutional adaptation.

Collective Governance and the Relevance of Ostrom's Principles

Ostrom's (1990) framework explains that communities can manage shared resources through rules they themselves devise and recognise. The Ciptagelar case exhibits several

features consistent with this framework. First, the community's social boundary is relatively clear, defined through identity as a Kasepuhan resident and adherence to *tatali paranti karuhun* (ancestral custom). Second, rules governing production and storage are adapted to local ecological conditions and history. Third, the customary leader and residents exercise monitoring through social proximity. Fourth, mechanisms of distribution and correction exist, rooted in community relations.

The *leuit* can be viewed as a common-pool resource with a distinctive character. Rice held in a household *leuit* remains under household control, whereas *Leuit Si Jimat* serves a communal function; the system is therefore not one of pure common ownership, but a layered governance arrangement combining household rights with communal obligation. This combination avoids two extremes. Research on cultivation typology and the sustainability of food availability in Ciptagelar likewise shows that production practice and customary institutions reinforce one another in sustaining supply (Ikmaludin et al., 2018): the community neither surrenders its entire stock to a central authority nor leaves every decision to individual discretion.

Customary leadership performs a coordinating function. The leader does not merely issue instructions but maintains the calendar, ritual, and norms that connect members. Legitimacy derives from history, trust, and the capacity to maintain balance; in institutional terms, legitimacy lowers the cost of rule enforcement, because compliance does not always require formal sanction - residents follow the rules because they regard them as right and as part of a shared identity.

Even so, Ostrom's principles also reveal points of vulnerability. The system will weaken if community boundaries become blurred, if rules lose their fit with changing conditions, if monitoring declines, or if customary authority is no longer trusted. External pressure can alter internal incentives: rising cash needs, changing consumption patterns, or market opportunities can make the prohibition on selling rice seem excessively burdensome. Sustainability therefore requires a continuing process of adaptation and rule renewal.

The analytical implication is that the success of the *leuit* does not derive from the physical form of the granary, but from the institution that governs contribution, storage, use, monitoring, and meaning. Government programmes that construct granaries without strengthening collective rules risk producing buildings that go unused; replication should proceed from institutional design, not from facility construction alone.

Food Security, Food Sovereignty, and Ecological Resilience

From a food-security perspective, the Ciptagelar system addresses four dimensions. Availability is built through rice production and long-term storage. Access is safeguarded through household ownership of the leuit and communal assistance mechanisms. Utilisation is supported by the use of rice as a staple food connected to local knowledge. Stability is reinforced by reserves that extend beyond a single season. These four dimensions show that resilience does not depend solely on the volume of the current harvest.

The system also reflects food sovereignty, since the community retains control over seed, planting calendar, storage, and the rules governing the use of output. This control distinguishes Ciptagelar from approaches to food security achieved through import or external assistance. Food security addresses whether food is available and accessible; food sovereignty addresses who determines the system of production and distribution. In Ciptagelar, the two dimensions reinforce one another.

An ecological orientation is evident in the regulation of the agricultural cycle, respect for territory, and restraint on exploitation. In an agroecological perspective, the relationship between local knowledge, diversification, and producer control over the food system underpins sustainability and food sovereignty (Altieri & Toledo, 2011). The underlying report links the Sundanese economic system to a principle of harmony with nature; in Ciptagelar, this principle is visible in the alignment among planting time, ritual, and environmental knowledge. The Food and Agriculture Organization and the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT (2021) show that indigenous food systems often possess diverse knowledge, strong ties to territory, and adaptive mechanisms important for climate resilience.

Ecological resilience, however, faces challenges that custom alone cannot resolve. Shifting seasonal patterns, extreme weather, land degradation, and pressure on forest areas can disrupt production. Local knowledge remains important but requires access to climate information, area protection, and policy support; the relationship between local knowledge and modern science should be built through dialogue rather than one-sided replacement.

This analysis suggests that Ciptagelar's resilience is social-ecological in character. Resilience, in this context, refers to a system's capacity to absorb disturbance, sustain its core functions, and adjust as conditions change (Folke, 2006). The resilience of stock cannot be separated from the resilience of territory; the resilience of territory cannot be separated from

the legitimacy of rules; and the legitimacy of rules cannot be separated from cultural identity. Interventions that raise productivity while weakening territory or social institutions may therefore yield short-term gains alongside long-term vulnerability.

Drivers and Constraints on the Sustainability of the System

The first driving factor is social capital. Trust, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and identity as a Kasepuhan resident support collective action. Social capital lowers transaction costs because many obligations need not be formalised in contracts. This finding aligns with Pretty (2003), who shows that trust, norms, and social networks can support the collective management of resources. Residents mobilise labour, store rice, and observe ritual on the basis of shared norms, and the underlying report identifies social solidarity as the foundation of *Leuit Si Jimat* (Priangani et al., 2025).

The second factor is the legitimacy of customary leadership. Rules are effective when residents recognise the authority that establishes and enforces them. The customary leader performs functions of coordination, representation, and the safeguarding of values; this legitimacy enables the community to maintain restrictions on rice even where the market offers a different incentive.

The third factor is the layered design of reserves. The combination of household *leuit* and communal granary distributes responsibility: households are not wholly dependent on a central institution, yet families are not left to face risk alone. This structure increases the community's adaptive capacity.

The fourth factor is selective adaptive capacity. *Ciptagelar* does not close itself off from technology or external relations; the community adopts modern elements as long as these are not seen as undermining the core principles of food governance. This capacity matters because an institution that endures is not one that never changes, but one able to determine the limits of change.

Conversely, the first constraining factor arises from monetisation and market penetration. Needs relating to education, health, transport, communication, and modern consumption increase the demand for cash; as cash pressure rises, so does the incentive to sell output or convert land use. The prohibition on selling rice can be sustained only as long as the community has alternative sources of income.

The second constraining factor is intergenerational change. Younger generations face a wider range of education, employment, media, and aspirations. If knowledge of the leuit is conveyed only as an obligation, without room for dialogue, its legitimacy may decline; the transmission of knowledge needs to explain the material function of the rules, not merely demand compliance.

The third constraining factor is uncertainty in territorial protection and legal recognition. Customary food systems depend on land, forest, water, and social space; pressure from development or economic expansion can erode this material base. Cultural recognition without territorial protection is insufficient to guarantee sustainability.

The fourth constraining factor is climate change. Land-use change, population growth, and climate change have been identified as interacting pressures on food security, meaning that local reserves need to be supported by ecosystem protection and adaptation policy (Molotoks et al., 2021). Seasonal uncertainty can disrupt the planting calendar, production, and the quality of output; reserves buy time for adaptation, but they will diminish if disruption recurs. Traditional resilience therefore requires support in the form of information, conservation, and mitigation policy.

Table 2 Drivers and Constraints on Sustainability

Dimension	Driver	Constraint	Analytical implication
Social	Mutual cooperation, trust, collective identity	Individualisation, shifting generational aspiration	Social capital must be continuously reproduced, not assumed to be fixed
Institutional	Customary rules and leadership legitimacy	Declining compliance and authority conflict	Effectiveness depends on legitimacy and adaptive mechanisms
Economic	Layered reserves and restriction on commodification	Cash needs and market penetration	Alternative income sources determine the sustainability of the rice-sale prohibition
Ecological	Local calendar and sustainability orientation	Climate change and territorial degradation	Reserves require ecosystem protection
Political-legal	Community autonomy and support networks	Weak legal recognition and development pressure	Food security requires protection of rights and territory

Ciptagelar's Economic System in Global Political-Economic Perspective

Ciptagelar's relevance to the global political economy does not rest on a claim that a local system can replace global economic mechanisms in their entirety. Its relevance lies instead in an empirical critique of the assumption that market efficiency always produces security. A global system relying on long supply chains can deliver food at scale, but it also creates dependence on energy, transport, inputs, corporations, and international prices. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that disruption to distribution and falling incomes can quickly translate into food-access risk, particularly for vulnerable groups (Laborde et al., 2020). Ciptagelar shows that part of this risk can be reduced through local reserves and community control.

The case also broadens the unit of analysis in political economy. International political-economy literature often centres attention on the state, multinational corporations, global markets, and international organisations, positioning indigenous communities primarily as recipients of impact. The findings here show that communities are also institution-builders: they establish production rules, restrict the market, manage reserves, and construct legitimacy. In other words, communities do not merely adapt to the global political economy; they generate alternative governance at the local scale.

The Ciptagelar system presents a counter-institution to full commodification. Rice occupies a moral domain set apart from the market, a restriction that challenges the notion that all resources receive their best allocation through price. In the case of basic needs, price does not always guarantee access; communal reserves and norms of distribution can provide protection when purchasing power weakens.

This finding also supports the pluralisation of knowledge from the Global South. Governance theory often moves from universal concept to local application; Ciptagelar offers the reverse direction, in that local practice can be used to test, refine, and extend theory. The concepts of embeddedness and the commons acquire empirical form through the leuit, while the practice of the leuit adds an element that theory has under-articulated: the role of ritual, spirituality, and cultural identity in sustaining economic institutions.

At the same time, the article avoids claiming that the Ciptagelar system is a universal model. Its governance depends on a long history, territory, leadership structure, and social

cohesion; other communities may lack the same conditions. What can be transferred, therefore, is the underlying institutional principle, not the cultural form in its entirety.

Analytical Model and Policy Implications

Based on these findings, an analytical model of Ciptagelar's food-economy system can be formulated as a causal chain. Cultural value confers legitimacy on customary rules; customary rules govern production, storage, and commodification; this governance produces household and communal reserves; reserves reduce market dependence and support redistribution; and the resulting reduction in dependence, together with redistributive capacity, strengthens food security and food sovereignty. Each link in this chain depends on territorial protection, knowledge transfer, and adaptive capacity.

This model indicates that policy cannot focus on granary construction alone. Recent research on Kampung Naga and Ciptagelar likewise affirms that integrating local wisdom into food policy must preserve its ecological and social dimensions, not merely adopt its technical form (Rahman, 2024). Government support should build an institutional ecosystem in the following respects. First, recognition and protection of customary territory should form the basis of policy, since food production requires access to land and resources; this is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which recognises indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories, resources, culture, and institutions (United Nations, 2007). Second, food programmes should respect community authority and the principle of free, prior, and informed consent. Third, technological support should be co-selected so that it strengthens, rather than replaces, local knowledge.

Fourth, village food-granary programmes should incorporate institutional indicators. Research on indigenous communities shows that local values embedded in agricultural practice shape how communities define food security, distribution, and sustainability (Handoyo et al., 2022); evaluation should therefore assess not only storage capacity, but also the clarity of contribution rules, lending mechanisms, monitoring, sanctions, and conflict resolution. Fifth, government could develop inter-community learning schemes enabling the principles of distributed reserves and participatory governance to be adapted to local context.

Sixth, food-security policy should add resilience measures. Annual production indicators alone are insufficient; government should also assess how long reserves can sustain consumption, how widely storage sites are dispersed, how vulnerable groups gain access, how

many varieties are maintained, and the extent of community control over food decisions. Such indicators would produce evaluation better suited to conditions of uncertainty.

Seventh, tourism development and cultural promotion should be managed so that ritual is not reduced to mere commodity. Tourism revenue can support the community, but decisions on the boundaries of access, documentation, and the use of cultural symbols should remain with residents; uncontrolled commercialisation can weaken the meaning that sustains compliance with the food system.

Accordingly, the principal policy implication is not to replicate the leuit as an artefact, but to build food governance that combines reserves, participation, local legitimacy, ecological protection, and risk-sharing. This principle can be applied through village granaries, food cooperatives, seed banks, household reserve programmes, and local distribution networks, with each application adapted to the social and ecological structure of its locality.

Synthesis of the Discussion

Overall, the findings show that Ciptagelar's food-economy system operates through a reciprocal relationship among culture, institution, the materiality of food, and power. Culture confers meaning on rice; meaning sustains rules; rules preserve reserves; reserves confer autonomy; and autonomy strengthens the community's capacity to sustain the rules. This relationship forms a relatively stable institutional circle.

The analysis also shows that social solidarity does not arise spontaneously; it is produced through repeated practice - storage, contribution, mutual assistance, and ritual. Social capital is therefore both a product of institutions and a precondition for institutional success: the leuit builds solidarity, and solidarity, in turn, makes the leuit function.

The findings of the underlying report become more meaningful when read through embeddedness, commons governance, and food sovereignty. Embeddedness explains why the economy remains subject to norms; commons governance explains how the community regulates authority and reserves; and food sovereignty explains the political meaning of control over food. Together, these three perspectives connect local data to debates in the global political economy.

At the same time, the underlying data have limits. Prior research shows that high food availability does not automatically translate into good nutritional status, meaning that

evaluation of the system needs to distinguish stock availability from consumption quality, care practices, and nutritional condition (Khomsan et al., 2013). No quantitative inventory exists of the number of leuit, stock volume, the number of assistance recipients, changes in production, or comparative welfare measures. The claim of a five-year reserve is therefore treated here as qualitative information requiring field verification. This limitation does not negate the contribution of the underlying research, but it does define the level of conclusion that can properly be drawn.

The analytical conclusion is that Ciptagelar offers a model of principles, not a blueprint. These principles comprise economic embeddedness, restriction on the commodification of basic needs, distributed reserves, communal governance, cultural legitimacy, and selective adaptation - principles relevant to enriching the governance of a global political economy currently confronting food crises, climate change, and supply-chain instability.

CONCLUSION

The leuit system of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar demonstrates that food security can be built through institutions that situate the economy within social norms, culture, and ecology. The leuit functions simultaneously as a storage facility, an instrument of risk distribution, a mechanism of social protection, and a symbol of customary governance legitimacy. Leuit Si Jimat reinforces the communal dimension, while household leuit constitute a decentralised reserve.

Driving factors include customary leadership, clear rules, mutual cooperation, collective identity, adherence to the agricultural cycle, and restriction on the commodification of rice. Constraining factors include market pressure, monetisation, shifting generational aspirations, climate change, extractive economic expansion, and weak legal protection.

Theoretically, the Ciptagelar case reinforces the argument that economic governance is not devised by the state and market alone; communities also produce effective rules. The concept of embeddedness explains the binding of the economy to custom; common-pool resource theory explains the function of rules and legitimacy; and food sovereignty explains community control over production and reserves. Within the global political economy, these findings support a more plural approach that gives space to knowledge from the Global South.

In practical terms, the Ciptagelar model cannot be copied directly. Building a leuit without its accompanying social institutions will not produce the same resilience. Policy needs

instead to adapt its underlying principles: distributed reserves, participatory governance, territorial protection, the strengthening of local knowledge, and an equitable relationship between the state and indigenous communities.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This article relies on secondary data and did not undertake new field verification. Consequently, it does not directly measure reserve volume, changes in welfare, or the community's internal dynamics. Further research should employ observation, interviews, and longitudinal data to examine change in the leuit system, the responses of younger generations, the impact of climate change, and the relationship between the community and state policy.

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