

## BANCAH AND SAGO: LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, CULTURAL ADAPTATION, AND ITS CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explains the concept of bancah, which translates to "swamps," as a source of ecological wisdom and an integral part of Minangkabau local knowledge. In Minangkabau society, bancah have traditionally been vital to the community's social and cultural life. While many people today view bancah as unproductive, their ecological and cultural significance is deeply rooted in Minangkabau identity. This study employs an ethnoscience approach, complemented by methods such as interviews, field observations, and literature reviews, to explore local memories and knowledge about bancah in the Minangkabau community, particularly in the Kuranji and Nanggalo districts of Padang. The analysis focuses on how the community understands bancah and its meanings in relation to ecology and culture. The findings show that bancah traditionally teach respect for nature and act as informal educational resources that promote sustainable practices. However, changes in land use and modern economic needs have led younger people to see bancah mainly as sources of income, ignoring their ecological and cultural importance. This shift poses a threat to the preservation of traditional knowledge and disrupts the ecological connections that are vital to Minangkabau cultural identity. The transformation of bancah reflects a larger shift in collective memory and cultural values, indicating the weakening bond between the Minangkabau community and its wetland heritage due to urban development. Preserving bancah as an ecological and cultural resource is essential for maintaining local food security, ensuring environmental stability, and keeping the connection of the Minangkabau people with their cultural heritage alive.*

**Keywords:** Bancah, Sago, Ethnoscience, cultural values, collective memory

### INTRODUCTION

In ethnoscience studies, swamps are recognized as more than just wetlands that provide natural resources; they are viewed as complex ecosystems. Swamps play a crucial role in the socio-cultural fabric of local communities (Alikhani et al., 2021; Géant et al., 2024). In the Minangkabau community, this concept of swamps is referred to as "*bancah*." *Bancah*, or swampy wetlands, significantly influences social and cultural life. Although *bancah* is often regarded as "unproductive" land in the modern era, its ecological and cultural functions are invaluable

(Reyes-Sánchez et al., 2022). Historically, *bancah* was seen as a valuable resource. It is a habitat for vital plants such as sago, ferns, kale, and other wild plants that serve as household staples for the Minangkabau people. Additionally, *bancah* provides a thriving habitat for various fauna (Handako et al., 2024). In ethnoscience studies, swamps are understood as more than just wetlands that provide natural resources; they are also viewed as complex ecosystems. Swamps are considered an essential element in the socio-cultural ecosystem of local communities (Alikhani et al., 2021; Géant et al., 2024). In the Minangkabau community, the conception of this swamp is called *bancah*.

*Bancah* or swampy wetlands play a significant role in social and cultural life. Although *bancah* is often considered "unproductive" land in the modern era, its ecological and cultural functions cannot be ignored (Reyes-Sánchez et al., 2022). In the past, *bancah* was considered a helpful resource. *Bancah* is a place where vital plants, such as sago, ferns, kale, and other wild plants that often grow in *Bancah*, become household staples for the Minangkabau people. *Bancah* is also a habitat where fauna live and thrive (Handoko et al., 2024).

*Bancah* is a location that offers both economic and cultural benefits. Historically, one of the financial activities associated with *bancah* involved allowing water to accumulate there. During the dry season, this water would be used to irrigate the rice fields surrounding the *bancah*. According to Kosmaryandi (2005), swamp land, known as *bancah* in Minangkabau culture, was a method employed by communities in the past to maintain moisture in the rice fields around the village. Furthermore, *bancah* served another economic purpose, as it was suitable for the growth of sago and other wetland plants (Rezeky et al., 2019). *Bancah* is also a location that has economic and cultural benefits. One of the financial activities of *bancah* in the past was to allow water to stagnate in *bancah*. When the dry season arrived, the rice fields around *bancah* would be irrigated with water from *bancah*. According to Kosmaryandi (2005), *bancah* was a method used by communities in the past to keep the rice fields around the village moist. In addition, another economic function of *bancah* was as land for the growth of sago and other swamp plants (Rezeky et al., 2019).

The growth of sago trees in *bancah* offers economic benefits for the Minangkabau people by satisfying their need for thatched roofs. Historically, thatched roofs were essential for the Minangkabau, who used them to construct huts, or *dangau*, in the middle of rice fields to protect the harvest. Additionally, these roofs were valuable for providing extra cover over the front of houses or on terraces. The presence of sago trees in the *bancah* region fulfills a cultural need for the Minangkabau, as it relates to the availability of reserve food resources (Delfi et al., 2022). *Bancah* serves as an ideal environment for sago trees to thrive, and their existence helps meet the Minangkabau people's demand for *lompong* sago.

*Bancah* is far more than just a barren stretch of land lacking in value or utility; it is a vibrant ecosystem that is carefully tended to and serves significant purposes within the community. This article explores the intriguing concept of *bancah*, shedding light on its profound connection to the collective memory of the Minangkabau people, particularly their cultural relationship with *lompong* sago. This vital resource has shaped their way of life. The study aims to evaluate the current state of *bancah* in Minangkabau, exploring how it reflects and preserves the collective memory and traditions surrounding sago among the Minangkabau community. This exploration is not only

a reflection of environmental stewardship but also an examination of cultural identity and heritage.

Historically, sago was a staple food source and an essential part of daily life for the community (Erwin et al., 2024; Kadir et al., 2024). As such, the existence of *bancah* offers opportunities for cultural resilience and ecological wisdom that support the livelihoods of the Minangkabau people. Furthermore, this paper contributes to the cultural and environmental resilience of the Minangkabau community, reinforcing their way of life. The cultural values upheld by the Minangkabau people have played a significant role in ensuring sustainability and fostering mutual resilience between the community and its socio-ecological environment.

## METHODS

This study utilizes an ethnographic approach, featuring in-depth interviews with the Minangkabau people living in the Kuranji and Naggalo Districts, where several *bancah* and sago trees are still found. Additionally, the research incorporates field observations and a review of literature focusing on Minangkabau culture and ecology. This method aids in exploring the significance of *bancah* in the collective memory of the Minangkabau people and how the values associated with *bancah* have been influenced by changing times.

The analytical tool utilized in this study is ethnoscience. Ethnoscience is a field that investigates and documents the knowledge and classification systems developed by local communities or ethnic groups to understand their surroundings better (Sari et al., 2023; Zainal et al., 2024). The term ethnoscience encompasses how a society perceives, recognizes, and categorizes elements in its environment, including flora, fauna, weather patterns, and other everyday concepts (Bobsin et al., 2023; Putra, 2021). Notably, the relationships between flora, fauna, weather patterns, and the concept of harmony concerning *bancah* and sago have significantly changed in Padang.

Changes in land use within Padang, particularly in the Kuranji and Naggalo Districts, have had a profound impact on the collective memory of local communities. Sago trees, which once flourished in the *bancah*, are now becoming increasingly rare. The findings reveal that the loss of sago trees not only eliminates food sources but also alters people's perceptions of the environment and erases much of the local wisdom that has been passed down through generations (Pearson et al., 2023).

In ethnoscience studies, collective memory and collective knowledge play crucial roles in understanding cultural values associated with natural resources, such as sago. The decline of sago trees in the *bancah* not only diminishes local food sources but also impacts people's identity and their perception of nature. The community's collective memory of *bancah* as an ecosystem that supports biodiversity, along with

the cultural significance of the sago tree, is gradually fading due to modernization and urbanization.

This transformation also signifies a loss of knowledge about the benefits of sago, traditional sago processing methods, and the importance of preserving wetlands as water reserves for rice fields during the dry season (Lyu et al., 2022; Pozza & Field, 2020). The erosion of collective memory threatens to sever the cultural and ecological connections of the Minangkabau people with nature, which were once significant connections. In the context of development, the community must recognize that *bancah* is not merely vacant land; it serves as an ecological and cultural resource that can support environmental balance and bolster local food security (Arisanty et al., 2024; Steenkamp et al., 2021).

Data collection in qualitative research focuses on the specific type of data being gathered and the process involved in collecting it (Strudwick, 2021). This process includes obtaining permission, implementing an effective qualitative sampling strategy by choosing well-informed and credible informants, developing methods for recording information (either digitally or on paper), and anticipating any potential ethical issues that may arise. Researchers typically use observation and interviews to gather data during field research (Creswell, 2015). In the research, the researchers collected documents related to the outcomes of collective decisions, as well as secondary data.

Identifying informants (participants) is essential, as they can be individuals or groups within a community (Franco & Yang, 2021). This selection process is critical in field research because the level of generalization, or its absence, often depends on the sampling technique used—essentially, how informants are chosen. This choice also affects the validity of the research findings. If the individuals interviewed, lack knowledge about the research topic, the resulting data will not be informative. Conversely, if the subject is complex and involves multiple stakeholders, but data is only collected from a single group, the findings and conclusions will be limited (Heritage, 2023). In qualitative research, sampling generally involves purposeful selection, focusing on a relatively small sample, often a single case, that is chosen with specific intent.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Changes in land use in Padang, particularly in the Kuranji and Nanggalo Districts, have significantly impacted the collective memory of local communities. Sago trees, which once thrived in wetland areas, are now increasingly rare. These trees not only serve as a source of food but also hold cultural and symbolic importance for the Minangkabau people. Interviews with several community members revealed that the loss of sago trees has not only diminished food sources but also altered people's perceptions of the environment, eroding some of the local wisdom passed

down through generations.

In an interview with Ani (56 years old, sago trader for 18 years), she shared that sago trees were once abundant around her village in Kuranji. However, due to changes in land use, these trees have been cut down, and the wetland areas have been converted into residential developments. Ani reminisces, "In the past, I still felt that this village was beautiful because there were many sago trees. However, the sago tree is now gone. It feels like something is also missing from this village." While sago flour can still be purchased in the market, it now comes from outside the region, leaving a sense of loss for the local food sources.

According to Burhan (50 years old, local), the *bancah* was once a valuable area for those who searched for eels and ferns. Burhan said, "In the past, the *bancah* was considered an important place. There were many sago trees and ferns, and we could also find eels there." However, the decline of sago trees has resulted in a loss of direct interaction with nature for the community. Additionally, the conversion of land for housing has harmed the ecosystem. Sago trees are known for their ability to maintain soil moisture and stability, making their loss particularly concerning.

According to Iyuih (55 years old, local), *bancah* is currently experiencing a decline in its significance. She reminisces about a time when the Minangkabau people valued *bancah* as an essential part of nature that needed protection. Iyuih states that "In the past, *bancah* was left to grow sago. Sago is resilient, and when it rains, it helps prevent soil erosion. However, nowadays, when people acquire land, regardless of its size, they tend to sell it or build a house on it". Iyuih's statement reflects a shift in values, where land that was once culturally significant is now regarded primarily as an economic asset that can be sold or developed for profit.

In addition, the community has experienced a loss of local wisdom regarding *bancah*. Ninil (32 years old, local) expressed this concern. He stated, "The perception of *bancah* and sago trees has changed drastically in this generation. Nowadays, people see the land as dirty and consider it useless. In the past, sago grew on such land, and it could be used as food." Ninil expressed his regret that the younger generation is drifting further away from traditional knowledge about the benefits and ecological value of *bancah*, which previous generations once safeguarded and preserved.

The decline in the presence of *bancah* in the Minangkabau region, particularly in Padang—specifically in the Kuranji and Nanggalo districts—significantly affects the younger generation's understanding of *lompong* sago, especially in terms of its cultural value and collective memory. For the older generation, *lompong* sago is more than just a food; it symbolizes local wisdom that connects them with nature and the *bancah* ecosystem. When processing or consuming *lompong* sago, individuals from the older generation, such as Ani, reflect on memories of the past when sago and *bancah* trees played a crucial role



in their daily lives.

Ani explained that although sago flour is still available in the market and is sourced from outside the region, it does not evoke the same feelings as when she used to make *lompong* sago using local sago ingredients. Her memories include playing in the *bancah* and waiting for the sago beetle to appear after cutting down the tree to extract its essence. This highlights the emotional and social value that sago and *bancah* trees hold for the older generation. Unfortunately, this value is gradually fading away due to changes in the ecological and social landscape of the area.

The changing value and meaning of *lompong* sago among the younger generation, who no longer associate it with *bancah* or sago trees, reflects a shift in the collective memory of the local community. Collective memory suggests that shared experiences are influenced by the social and environmental contexts in which a society exists (Heux et al., 2023; Orianne & Eustache, 2023). As *bancah* disappeared and sago trees ceased to grow around settlements, *lompong* sago lost the cultural and ecological significance that it once held for previous generations. The collective experience of *bancah* and the activities centered around it, which used to be a shared memory, is slowly fading and is no longer understood by younger people. *Lompong* sago has become a "separate food" from its historical roots, no longer evoking the memories of the community that gathered, worked, and interacted in *bancah* to prepare their local dishes.

Local knowledge, particularly the understanding of the process involved in making *lompong* sago, is deeply connected to the *bancah* ecosystem, which provides vital resources for the community. The *bancah* is the environment where sago trees flourish, and the entire process of harvesting and processing sago is traditionally conducted there using tools such as the *lasuang aia*, which operates with a waterwheel. This tool is significant not only for its role in producing sago but also as a cultural element that fosters community unity.

However, with the decline of traditional tools like the *lasuang aia*, the process of making *lompong* sago has shifted to an individual practice often executed in a modern manner, leading to a loss of its communal essence. Cultural practices such as making *lompong* sago in the *bancah* reflect the habitual patterns that shape the community's identity. As joint activities in *bancah* diminish, the associated habitus of making *lompong* sago has also faded, giving way to new consumption patterns that disconnect *lompong* sago from a broader ecological experience.

Local knowledge that was once passed down from generation to generation is now at risk of extinction, coinciding with the loss of sago and *bancah* trees, which are the primary habitats for these species. *Lompong* sago has transformed from a symbol of the connection between humans and nature into a product that no longer reflects the identity and values of the Minangkabau people. The

younger generation is increasingly disconnected from the process of sourcing and processing raw materials from their natural environment. As a result, their understanding of environmentally friendly practices and the sustainability of the ecosystem is diminished. This disconnection leads to a growing gap in collective memory and local knowledge, putting younger individuals at risk of losing their appreciation for the importance of preserving the natural resources surrounding them.

The narratives from informants indicate that the loss of *bancah* and sago represents a loss of collective memory and social connections associated with the process of making *lompong* sago together. The informant highlights that *bancah* and sago trees are not just elements of nature; they are also vital sources of collective memory that help previous generations understand the values of local wisdom. It is essential to focus on preserving the knowledge of *lompong* sago and *bancah* to ensure that these cultural and ecological values remain relevant and can be passed down to future generations.

In ethnoscience studies, collective memory and collective knowledge are crucial for understanding the cultural values associated with natural resources such as sago. The decline of sago trees in *bancah* not only diminishes local food sources but also impacts people's identity and their perspective on nature. The community's collective memory of *bancah* as an ecosystem that supports biodiversity and the cultural significance of the sago tree is gradually fading in the face of modernization and urbanization. This shift also signifies a loss of knowledge, including details about the advantages of sago, traditional sago processing techniques, and the importance of preserving wetlands as sources of water reserves for rice fields during the dry season. The erosion of this collective memory threatens to sever the cultural and ecological connections of the Minangkabau people with nature, which were once deeply meaningful and significant.

In the context of development, the community needs to recognize that *bancah* is not merely vacant land; it serves as an ecological and cultural resource that can promote environmental balance and ensure local food security. Much of the land in Minangkabau has undergone significant changes in its function. In certain areas, such as Kuranji and Nanggalo in Padang, *bancah* has been transformed into residential areas or developed for other purposes. The loss of this *bancah* has led to environmental changes, as it plays a vital ecological role in controlling floods, maintaining soil moisture, and providing habitat for various species of flora and fauna.

One of the primary types of vegetation found in *bancah* is the sago palm, also known as the sago tree. For the Minangkabau people, sago is not only a food source but also a symbol of the natural ecosystem's sustainability. Sago trees help keep the soil moist in the village and contain water reserves. Additionally, they support the ecosystem of both plants and animals that thrive in *bancah*. However, with the loss of *bancah*,

the natural habitat for sago trees has been destroyed, resulting in the Minangkabau people losing an essential food resource. Burhan shared his perspective during an interview session, stating, "In the past, the village was considered a useless place, but we derived many benefits from it. There were sago trees, ferns, and even eels that lived among the sago trees."

The collective memory of *bancanh* is closely tied to Minangkabau identity and culture. In the Minangkabau community, *bancanh* is regarded as a vital component of the ecosystem, providing a diverse range of resources. It is also actively managed to ensure the sustainability of land and food sources, such as sago (Dewayani et al., 2024). *Bancanh* has become an essential element in people's lives, both economically and culturally. Economically, *bancanh* offers a variety of resources that can be utilized (Harahap & Yonariza, 2022; Kurniasih et al., 2023).

For older generations, the memory of *bancanh* carries significant historical value. For instance, Burhan recalls going to *bancanh* to search for eels and ferns. "In the past, it was a place where we interacted with nature. Children grew up experiencing nature firsthand," he said. *Bancanh* is considered an informal learning space for the younger generation, helping them understand the local ecosystem, learn how to find food, and understand the importance of caring for nature wisely (Hasanuddin, 2017).

On the other hand, these values no longer align with the perspectives of the current Minangkabau youth. Ninil, who participated in this study, stated, "Now people see that the land is dirty and has no use." This reflects a shift in the function of *bancanh*, which has changed the community's view of it. As a result, the collective memory of its value and importance has been eroded by modernization and development.

From the perspective of ethnoscience, *bancanh* represents a significant aspect of the local wisdom of the Minangkabau people. Ethnoscience suggests that individuals' knowledge of their environment includes understanding how to use natural resources, protect them, and achieve a balance between human existence and the surrounding ecosystem (Ilhami et al., 2021; Majumdar & Chatterjee, 2021; Withanage & Lakmali Gunathilaka, 2022). For the Minangkabau community, *bancanh* is not merely viewed as a "wild" or "disorderly" area; instead, it is seen as a valuable environment that should be preserved and used wisely.

The Minangkabau people have a deep understanding of *bancanh*, recognizing it as the source of life. They view *bancanh* as fertile land, abundant with various types of valuable plants and animals. This knowledge has been passed down orally over time, becoming an integral part of the Minangkabau cultural identity. Additionally, it reflects their respect for nature, which they consider the giver of life.

Ethnoscience enables us to comprehend how the Minangkabau people perceive *bancanh* as both a source of food and a repository of local knowledge. These perspectives reflect the traditional wisdom of the Minangkabau regarding their relationship

with nature. However, modernization often reduces *bancanh* to merely a piece of land to be exploited. This exploitation ultimately leads to the gradual disappearance of traditional values that honor and respect *bancanh*.

The transformation of the *bancanh* into a residential area in Padang has significantly impacted collective memory and community perception. Iyuih stated in an interview, "In the past, the land was left to grow sago... However, people now prefer to build houses on land that used to have sago." This illustrates a shift in people's values concerning *bancanh*, which was once preserved as an essential part of the ecosystem.

The older generation views *bancanh* as a vital resource for food, educational opportunities, and a source of clean water. However, they now see it as displaced land. This separation diminishes people's emotional and cultural connection to nature, ultimately affecting their collective memory of the natural world. Traditional knowledge about using *bancanh* for planting sago or sourcing food has begun to fade alongside the decline of *bancanh* itself. Ninil stated that today's society, especially the younger generation, no longer appreciates the value of sago and *bancanh* as previous generations did. They tend to see *bancanh* as less productive land, showing more interest in using it for development purposes. The understanding of the importance of this land in maintaining local wisdom and ecosystem balance is also reduced.

*Bancanh* plays a vital role in various traditional Minangkabau rituals. In these ceremonies, *bancanh* serves as a source of food and ritual materials, symbolizing abundance and prosperity. For instance, it provides food for traditional events such as weddings and *gala batagak*. In the past, for significant occasions (*gadang*), people in Padang would not buy sago flour; instead, they made it themselves from sago stalks found in *bancanh*.

The sago processing system involves using the lower part of the sago stalks to produce sago flour, while the upper part is given to livestock. Traditionally, sago was processed using a water mortar (*lasuang aia*), which was operated by a water-driven wheel. According to Nurhayati (85 years old, local), there were once many watermills in Padang, each accompanied by its waterwheel.

In the past, sago flour harvested from *bancanh* was the primary ingredient for making cakes for traditional activities. For everyday meals or for producing lompong sago for sale, sago flour was purchased from the market. Nurhayati explains that traditional activities often utilize the sago that thrives in *bancanh*, as it flourishes in that environment. The demand for sago flour remains high because various types of food, such as *lompong sago*, *dodol sago*, and *lapek sago*, are prepared for traditional events.

This memoir articulates the reflections of a resident who nostalgically recalls the sago that once thrived in the *bancanh*. The recollections of the sago trees in this village evoke memories for the older generation of periods characterized by communal unity

and traditional ceremonies, which were intricately linked to local wisdom in the sustainable utilization of natural resources. However, the diminishing quantity of *bancah* has resulted in a concurrent decline in the memory of sago and the customary dishes prepared for various events. This reduction hurts the community's appreciation for sago-based dishes, which are integral to these ceremonies. The loss of *bancah* signifies not only a tangible transformation of the Minangkabau landscape but also a profound symbolic degradation of the memories, values, and knowledge embedded within Minangkabau culture. As increasing tracts of land are repurposed for residential development, the symbolic importance of *bancah* continues to diminish, thereby jeopardizing the local wisdom associated with it and putting it at risk of extinction.

Data collected from this field indicates that *bancah* plays a crucial role in the social, economic, and cultural life of the Minangkabau people. Historically, *bancah* has served as a source of food and collective knowledge, embodying shared memories passed down through generations. However, the shift in land use from *bancah* to residential development has altered the community's perception and value of *bancah*, causing the collective memories related to it to fade away gradually.

*Bancah* is not only a symbol of the local wisdom of the Minangkabau people in managing the environment but also represents the rich cultural heritage of the region. It embodies the Minangkabau's cultural knowledge and identity, reflecting a way of life that values nature as a sustainable resource. To preserve this collective memory and local knowledge, it is essential for both the community and the government to protect *bancah* and acknowledge the cultural values associated with it.

The transformation of *bancah* into residential areas in Padang has profoundly affected the community's collective memory and perception, particularly regarding their connection with nature. Iyuih, who is 55 years old, recalls that in the past, *bancah* was allowed to grow sago and played a crucial role in the local ecosystem. However, this land, once valued for its food production and natural ecosystems, has now been converted into residential developments. This change reflects a shift in values, as people appear to prioritize physical development over the preservation of natural landscapes that hold historical and cultural significance. This shift signifies the loss of traditional values that once regarded *bancah* as integral to the ecological and cultural identity of the Minangkabau people.

For the older generation, *bancah* has a much broader role than just a source of food. *Bancah* is a study room, a place to find food, and a source of clean water, providing daily necessities. With the loss of *bancah*, the older generation feels that they have lost their emotional and cultural attachment to nature. The absence of this *bancah* also eliminates the opportunity to pass on traditional knowledge about sustainable land cultivation and use.

The loss of *bancah* represents not only a physical transformation of the Minangkabau landscape but also a significant symbolic erosion of memories, values, and knowledge intrinsic to Minangkabau culture. In this context, *bancah* transcends its mere characterization as "dirty" or "unproductive" land; it embodies local wisdom that fosters a lifestyle oriented towards respecting and sustaining nature. The encroachment of residential areas into *bancah* territory further diminishes its symbolic significance, potentially resulting in the gradual decline of collective memory and cultural knowledge associated with *bancah* and its ecosystem. This underscores the urgency for a concerted effort to preserve *bancah*, not only to maintain ecological integrity but also to safeguard the cultural values and identity of the Minangkabau people for future generations.

In the context of the Minangkabau people, *bancah* has a strong connection with the traditional food of *lompong* sago, which is made from sago flour and is often seen as a symbol of togetherness, simplicity, and a deep attachment to nature. The processing and utilization of *bancah* to obtain raw materials for making *lompong* sago is a practice that has been carried out for generations, especially in previous generations. However, the less land there is the less knowledge about this practice and the less memory related to it.

Among the Minangkabau people, *bancah* is not only considered a part of nature that provides resources to meet life's needs but also a symbol of ecological balance deeply rooted in their culture (Fenetiruma & Kamakaula, 2023; Prasetyo, 2023). One form of expression of this relationship is through the making of *lompong* sago, a traditional food made from sago. *Lompong* sago, which is made from sago flour, bananas, coconut, and brown sugar, is not just a food but reflects collective values, togetherness, and the wise use of natural resources. This is closely related to memory and knowledge about sago, including *lompong* sago food and the existence of *bancah* itself.

Historically, *bancah* has been a thriving place for sago trees, which are the primary ingredient of *lompong* sago, a traditional food. For the Minangkabau people in Padang in ancient times, making *lompong* sago involved not only the process of processing materials but also a social gathering where women from different generations came together to create it. When there are traditional events or when they come together to make a large number of *lompong* sago, parents and girls gather to make *lompong* sago together. However, with the decreasing area of *bancah* that has been converted into settlements or other agricultural lands, the existence of sago trees is also threatened. The loss of sago trees from this *bancah* not only eliminates local raw materials that are close and easily accessible but also breaks the cycle of social and cultural attachment that used to exist around the processing of *lompong* sago (Handoko et al., 2024)

The reduction, or perhaps more accurately, the loss of *bancah* in many Minangkabau areas, especially



Padang, and particularly in Kuranji and Nanggalo Districts, has a significant impact on the younger generation's understanding of *lompong* sago. For the older generation, *lompong* sago remains a symbol of local wisdom and a connection with nature. Because when making or eating *lompong* sago, it brings back memories of their experiences with *bancah*. However, in the eyes of the younger generation, *lompong* sago is starting to be seen as a food that is not in demand and is rarely found in daily life. The absence of *bancah* and sago trees around them makes *lompong* sago no longer have history and meaning. *Lompong* sago is no longer associated with the experience of *bancah* and the ecosystem that grows in it. So, between the *lompong* sago and *bancah*, it seems as if there has never been a connection in the past or the present.

Ani, a *lompong* sago trader, revealed in an interview that although sago flour is still available in the market and more is imported from other areas, she still remembers the *lompong* sago they made together when they were little. Even though the *lompong* sago she sells is made from sago flour that he bought, it still brings memories of the past when he played with his friends in the *bancah*. According to her, "Although I can still make *lompong* sago with sago flour from the outside areas, it feels different when we no longer see sago trees around us. When I made this *lompong* sago, I still remember that we used to play in the village, looking for sago beetles. If the *mamak-mamak* (mothers) cut down the sago stalks to harvest the sago, then we would play there. Two days later, we will look for sago beetles in *bancah*. Now, let alone a sago tree. There is no sago tree in sight. There is a sense of loss when I no longer see sago trees growing in this village." This indicates that the shift in the existence, function, and usefulness of *bancah* in the Minangkabau community is beginning to change.

Another factor is that the way raw materials are obtained has changed the essence and emotional value of *lompong* sago for the local community. According to the stories of several informants, *lompong* sago provides reflections on memories related to their knowledge of *bancah*, as well as memories about making *lompong* sago with family and community. The beginning of the disappearance of *bancah* and sago signifies the loss of part of the collective memory and social experience inherent in the process of making *lompong* sago together with the community and family.

In Minangkabau culture, collective memory, particularly regarding the use of *bancah* in obtaining sago, is an essential aspect of the community's identity. The traditional processing of *lompong* sago, for instance, involved a sense of togetherness among family members and neighbors, especially women who would gather around the *bancah* to search for sago and ferns. This practice exemplifies collective memory—shared experiences and stories that are remembered collectively and passed down through generations. These experiences become integral to the community and are transmitted to future generations

as valuable knowledge. The memories associated with sago, *bancah*, and *lompong* sago form a collective heritage that continues to be shared. However, as the use of *bancah* and the harvesting of sago decline, this knowledge is increasingly forgotten, leading to a disconnection from the traditional practices associated with *lompong* sago today.

The lack of meaning and connection between sago and *bancah*, as well as their ecosystem, diminishes the value and significance of the *lompong* sago itself. The informant's observation highlights this devaluation that many young people today are unaware of *lompong* sago as a traditional local food of the Minangkabau culture. With fewer opportunities to gather sago, the chances to keep this collective memory alive are diminishing. Young individuals who no longer see or experience the process of harvesting sago from *bancah* lose a profound understanding of this cultural heritage. Gradually, people feel that *lompong* sago is no longer part of their identity, as this food is now rarely made from ingredients sourced from the local environment. In the past, there were specific times when sago from the village would be processed into *lompong* sago, fostering a sense of community as people came together to make it.

By employing an ethnoscientific approach, the change in land use among the Minangkabau people reveals a transformation in their knowledge system and an enhanced understanding of nature and its resources. From an ethnoscience perspective, a *bancah* is not just a location where sago grows; it is also an ecosystem that supports various plants and animals, such as ferns and eels, which are vital to the lives of local communities. When the village disappears, the traditional knowledge for processing and sustainably utilizing the environment also diminishes.

From the perspective of ethnoscience, local knowledge includes not only physical processes but also socio-cultural dimensions that unite communities and strengthen their collective identity. For instance, Mrs. Ani explained that the loss of a sago tree in *Bancah* signifies the loss of a part of the cultural heritage that has been passed down through generations. As the practice of making *lompong* sago from local materials fades away, the community also loses a vital aspect of its cultural identity.

The connection between the loss of *bancah* and the diminishing significance of *lompong* sago highlights the necessity of preserving traditional environments as part of efforts to maintain cultural identity. In the face of modernization and development, *bancah* is often viewed as unproductive land and is frequently converted into settlements or other types of land deemed more profitable. These rapid and extensive changes in ecological usage for development purposes (Malhi et al., 2020; Weiskopf et al., 2020) not only affect the environment but also impact the collective identity and sustainability of Minangkabau culture.

To preserve their cultural heritage, the Minangkabau people must continue to emphasize the value of *lompong* sago and the importance of *bancah*

in their social traditions and rituals. Engaging the younger generation in the process of making *lompong* sago and instilling the essential values associated with *bancah* can help maintain the collective memory tied to this culture. In the long run, fostering awareness of the significance of preserving *bancah* and wisely utilizing natural resources can ensure that *lompong* sago remains a symbol of local identity and wisdom in Minangkabau culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

When considering the concepts of collective memory, collective knowledge, and an ethnoscientific approach, it becomes evident that *bancah*, sago, and *lompong* sago are not merely physical elements or food ingredients for the Minangkabau people; they are, in fact, integral components of their cultural identity. The community's collective memory encompasses the experiences and interactions between generations regarding the use of *bancah* as a valuable resource. In this context, *bancah* symbolizes a sustainable ecosystem that provides not only sago trees and other food sources but also a means of connection among community members through the practices of harvesting and processing sago.

The decline of *bancah* functions significantly affects the collective memory of the community, particularly in preserving the relationship between the ecosystem and local culture. For the Minangkabau people, *lompong* sago represents more than just food; it symbolizes local wisdom and togetherness, embodying traditional knowledge about the sustainable use of natural resources. The loss of *bancah* not only diminishes the availability of local raw materials but also disrupts the transmission of knowledge and cultural practices related to *bancah* and sago, which have been inherited through generations.

This shift highlights the importance of preserving the environment and reinforcing traditional values. Adopting an ethnoscience approach enables a comprehensive understanding and recognition of the ecological benefits and social significance of *bancah*. This ensures that the Minangkabau community's identity and cultural knowledge regarding sago and *lompong* sago are preserved and kept alive.

This research suggests that preserving collective memory and local wisdom within the community can be achieved by utilizing existing resources, such as food, and integrating them into the cultural identity. Currently, Padang, as the economic center of West Sumatra, is experiencing rapid and diverse development. Consequently, the lands suitable for sago cultivation in *bancah* are diminishing, and these areas can now only be found on the city's outskirts. Therefore, there is a pressing need for government attention to preserve *bancah* and processed sago, especially *lompong* sago, which is characteristic of the Minangkabau people.

This research has limitations in mapping the

*bancah* that are scattered throughout Padang. The researcher believes that many more *bancah* locations in the suburbs of Padang remain unused. Additionally, this paper primarily presents oral narratives and community knowledge about *bancah*. However, it does not include an identification of the current *bancah* processes that the community regularly employs in Padang.

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