

Local Wisdom of Preserving Natural Resources for Maintaining Traditional Food to Add Income for Tegal Local People and Local Government

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Abstract. Tegal people have a local wisdom of preserving natural resources to maintain their traditional food. The traditional food is then developed into traditional culinary tourism object that is served in a modern way to improve their economy. This research shows how they maintain their culture by utilizing the local bean that is processed into *tempeh* and then specially made into *pongol* and the local duck egg that is processed into salty egg to preserve their crops and farm product. The data were collected by using folklore field research. The result shows that the local people keep their ancestor's way of thinking and way of life, adapt it to the recent situation, and develop it for the future as their cultural identity.

1 Introduction

As a system of ideas, acts, and human being creations that can be bequeathed, made, or imitated [1], culture is descended from the ancestors, modified to adapt to the recent situation by creating a new culture, or imitated from other societies. Food belongs to culture since it is a human creation using natural resources and local wisdom to process it into decent meals. As food is developed by adding different functions and purposes, it belongs to tradition. Culture reflects human being's way of thinking and life as it is part of their knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, ability, or habits [2]. Traditional cuisine belongs to culture as it is part of human beings (1) knowledge of food processing, (2) belief of the food's function and purpose, (3) art of the food taste and look, (4) custom of the food serving rule, (5) ability of the food processing technique, and (6) habits of food consumption.

To keep culture, people must practice and pass it on to the next generation. The society should make a collective effort, together with the local government, and supported by the central government, to keep their culture continuously practised in their daily life as culture maintenance cannot be solely done by a small group of people who own the culture. The culture's threat, shift, and extinction might happen when it is only practised by the minorities, taken by others, or abandoned by the local authority. It is happening because political, economic, and social changes may change people's attitudes toward culture that is potentially reducing its value, usage, and respect [3].

A good example of culture maintenance related to food and tradition is found in Tegal District and City where the local people maintain their culture that was inherited from their ancestors by making it in a modern way and developing it for future purposes. They optimize their local natural resources which are abundantly found around them into traditional food that is served for specific purposes in tradition and sold as commercial products in the tourism industry. This research describes Tegal local wisdom of optimizing the local crops and farm production by making it into traditional food for the family's daily consumption and religious serving. The food is then commercialized by modifying it to suit modern needs and creatively developed in the tourism industry traditional culinary tourism object which is enjoyed in a modern way.

Two traditional foods from Tegal were selected using the Purposive Sampling Technique [3] as it is preserved and developed into culinary tourism object. The data were collected by using Dundes [4] two Folklore Methods: Identification and Interpretation. In the first method, the data were gathered using the Documentation Method with Participatory Observation, Note Taking, and Recording Techniques [6] to gain information from various sources to be identified as Tegal

legendary traditional food which were creatively developed as culinary tourism objects. In the second method, the data were interpreted as part of the tradition of farming and harvesting crops and farm products, utilizing it as part of the ingredients, processing it into traditional food, serving it in tradition, modifying it as a daily meal, and developing it as a commercial product.

2 Result and Discussion

As has been discussed by Atrinawati [7, 8], *Sega Ponggol* is a traditional food from Tegal District and City, that is usually consumed in the morning as a breakfast menu. In this research, the researcher describes the folklore that exposes the folktale and the history of *sega ponggol*. From the Identification Method, the researcher found out that in the past, *sega ponggol* was previously cooked by wives for their husbands who were leaving the house very early in the morning to work as sugar cane labourers in Tegal Regency and Brebes District who worked in the sugar cane fields for the Dutch colonial sugar factory. Normally, those workers were given *sega ponggol* by their families which is specially taken for breakfast and lunch although the sugar cane factory can also provide the meal by asking someone to cook *sega ponggol* for the workers. The workers were given *sega ponggol* as a take-away breakfast and lunch to enable them to have breakfast and lunch at the working place, not at home. Therefore, they can go early in the morning to work without having breakfast first at home or go back home to have lunch in the afternoon and then go back to the workplace. It saves time as it took hours to go back and forth from the sugar cane field to their home by walk as there is no vehicle specially provided for them to do that.

To make *sega ponggol*, we cook the rice first. Make sure that the rice is not over-watered or too moist so that it will not get easily stale after being wrapped in banana leaves. The rice damp wrapping may cause the hot rice to sweat and stale. The cooked rice is then added with the main topping named 'oreg tempeh' in the Javanese Language which is called *ponggol* in Tegal Dialect. *Ponggol* itself is made by specifically selecting nearly stale tempeh called 'tempe semangit' in the Javanese Language, reflecting the local people's local wisdom of utilizing an almost spoiled raw material and processing it into a decent meal. The next step is sauteing chopped onion, garlic, and big green chilli for a specific hot flavour, and red chilli for a common hot flavour and red colour. Add small-diced chopped tempeh and pour heavy coconut milk on it to get a dense or *mluget* (Javanese Language with Tegal Dialect) sauce on the tempeh. To have a reddish-brown colour and a sweet

flavour, add soy sauce. And then, add beef or chicken broth, bay leaf, galangal, lemongrass, salt, pepper, and palm sugar to get a tasty *ponggol*.

Sega Ponggol is normally served by putting rice on a banana leaf and *ponggol* on top. It is usually added with various toppings like fried noodles or vermicelli, stir-fried long beans or kale, cucumber pickle, *sambal* (red chilli sauce), and orange *kerupuk* (traditional crackers for *ponggol*). It can also be added with side dishes such as *pindang*-seasoned or spicy boiled chicken egg, chicken intestine or gizzard-heart satay, 'gorengan tempe' and 'tahu kuning' or fried tempeh and yellow tofu (Tegal kind of tofu), etc. *Sega Ponggol* is usually taken away in banana leaf as a breakfast or lunch 'box'. It is usually consumed by the low and middle-class society for its low price as one pack of it costs five thousand rupiah only. The affordable price is caused by the low price of the ingredients and the simple way of cooking it.

A different way of serving *sega ponggol* is done by making it as *sega ponggol setan* or *pongset*. *Pongset* is a very hot and spicy *sega ponggol* as a very late supper meal as it starts to be served at eleven p.m. The word 'setan' or satan refers to the very hot and spicy taste of *ponggol* that directly wakes sleepy people up. It is also used as a local language curse for something bad like the *pongset* taste which is so hot and spicy since it is made by adding a very hot small orange chilli named 'rawit setan'. It also refers to a ghost that usually shows up at night. Thus, *pongset* means a very hot and spicy taste of *sega ponggol* that is consumed very late at night for the customers who were awake at night like ghosts. This odd but creative way of selling product gained success as nowadays the generation commonly stay up late at night to finish their task or just to hang out with their friend.

Ibu Kusniroh serves *Sega Ponggol Setan* a night traditional culinary tourism object in a modern way of consuming it, that is, by serving it on the plate as a dine-in meal, not in banana leaf wrapping as a takeaway box. It is popular among the youth and the middle-aged who like to stay up late at night. *Sega Ponggol* Ibu Kusniroh is a small home industry which employs housewives as part-time workers that work in two shifts. For the first shift in the morning and the afternoon, they get the raw material from the traditional market, prepare the whole ingredient, and cook the main course like rice, *ponggol*, toppings, and side dishes. For the second shift at night, they serve the customer and prepare side dishes that must be freshly served like *gorengan*.

Another traditional food from Tegal is a salty egg. The folk tale shows that 'ndog asin' or *telor asin* was first created by Chinese descendants and used as a special religious service for their Gods in religious ceremonies that became a religious tradition called 'sembayanan' [6]. It was first introduced as a commercial product by Chinese couple from Brebes District, called In Tjiauw Seng dan Tan

Polan Nio, as a side dish that can be consumed every day in 1959. It is done as they do not want to make the abundant local duck egg production wasted and the local people like the taste of their salty egg. Thus, they can get profit by selling it. In Chinese tradition, using natural resource like duck eggs and processing it into salty eggs is part of their local wisdom of preserving the duck egg that has a short life without being kept in the fridge as it is an uncommon home electronic device at that time. The duck egg gets easily rotten when it is taken on a long trip without being specially processed. The Chinese use salt solution to soak the egg as it prevents a kind of decomposing enzyme from activating the rotten process. As the home industry began, the local wisdom continued by processing *Anas platyrhynchos domesticus* duck egg with typical blue colour shell, into salty egg. Since then, Brebes is known for its blue salty egg. The Indonesian Education and Culture Ministry established Brebes salty Egg as a Non-Tangible Cultural Heritage in 2020.

From Brebes District, salty egg as traditional food is spread into the surrounding areas like Slawi and Tegal. A good example of a salty egg small and medium business in Tegal is Telor Asin Pangon Masir Orange. This business improves the local people's economy and adds to the local government's income since it employs housewives as a part-time worker who helps the business owner to collect, sell, and process duck egg into a salty egg that is specially chosen by customer as culinary tourism object which increases local government income from culinary and tourism industry tax.

This business is established by Syarif Mujiharto in Slawi, Tegal District. The tasty salty egg and the exclusive packaging make this business flourish well as it has two branches in Adiwerna (Tegal District) and Slerok (Tegal City). This creative home industry is unique as it produces a special type of salty egg and has a different kind of packaging from any other salty egg businesses in Brebes, Slawi, or Tegal. Syarif Mujiharto said that they produce the *masir* kind of salty egg, create a classy box for the salty egg packaging, and promote the three flavours of salty egg uniquely using social media in three languages.

Like any other salty egg store, they also have two kinds of boxes. The small box contains six salty eggs, while the big box loads ten of them. The difference between their box with others is that it does not put any picture on it. There is no picture of the salty egg, the store, or the business owner. There is no full writing of the store location, the salty egg flavour, and the salty egg price as it is usually put on common salty egg boxes. It is a glossy orange box with no picture, showing only the business name, Whatsapp number for online purchasing, and an Instagram account for business promotion.

The customer can make an online order instead of coming and directly buying the product from the store. If they make a direct buy, the customer can put their purchasing picture on the store as their Whatsapp status or Instagram feed and story since the business owner took pictures of the customer when they buy the product on the store, and put it on their Instagram feed or story, and let the customer know about it so that they can follow the account and put their picture on their social media as a free promotion for the business. This classy packaging makes customers choose this product as a gift for people they honoured.

The name 'telor asin pangon' or *pangon* salty egg refers to a salty egg from a duck egg whose duck was 'diangon' or being grazed so that it only eats natural and healthy food like plants, worms, snails, or insects. Thus, they are not given 'pelet' or human or manufactured artificial food. As a result, the salty egg is not fishy, tastier, and healthier. The word 'masir' refers to the very oily duck egg yolk that turns into a rough texture after being cooked into salty egg. As the rough texture resembles the sand, the local people named it 'masir' or sandy.

Like any other salty egg, the duck egg is also processed into a salty egg in similar steps. First, sort good duck eggs from the duck egg farmer and thoroughly clean them by soaking them in clean water for two minutes. Take away the bad eggs that float on the water's surface. Gently clean the soaked duck egg using sandpaper so that it will not crack. To turn the duck egg into a salty egg, dissolve salt into clean water and soak the duck eggs for 10 to 12 days. To have a saltier taste, the salty egg can be soaked again for up to 42 days or 6 weeks.

A different way to make a salty egg is by mixing wood ash or smooth-mashed brick with water into a paste and mixing it with salt to substitute the salt-dissolving liquid. Cover the duck egg with the salty wood ash or brick pasta up to 3 cm thick and let it sit for 14 days. Carefully clean up the egg and boil or steam it with low heat for an hour. A new and creative way of making salty eggs is developed by adding a particular seasoning to produce salty eggs with a 'pindang', 'rendang', or 'hot and spicy' flavour. The salty egg can also be smoked or grilled instead of boiled or steamed. As a commercial product, the salty egg has a high selling value as it can be sold for up to two times more expensive than its raw duck egg price.

The business owner's creative idea of preserving salty eggs as traditional food, keeping its traditional way of cooking it, developing a new way of packaging it, using three languages to promote it, and involving it in the tourism industry should be backed up by the local people and the local government by buying the product and promoting it through social media that is very common nowadays. The three languages were used in the promotion to maintain the local language as well as to attract local, national, and international tourists. To develop

the business, the local government may cooperate with local banking to give soft loans. Therefore, the business growth will improve the local people's economy, add income for the local government, and support the central government program of sustainable development goals.

3 Conclusion

For Tegal local people, 'sega ponggol' and 'ndog asin' is a legendary traditional food that reflects their (1) religious system and ceremony as it is usually served as part of the side dish of traditional serving called 'berkat' which is blessed by the religious figure and then distributed everybody who join a religious ceremony; (2) organization and society system as it is firstly used by the Chinese descendants in Brebes District as religious serving for their Gods in religious ritual called 'sembayanan' or praying, but then, it can be enjoyed by commoners, particularly the low and the middle class society because of its affordable price; (3) knowledge system because it exposes how the local people figure out how to prevent the natural resources like crops and farm product from getting rotten easily by preserve it into more long lasting food than before, such as 'tempeh' from soy and 'salty egg' from duck egg; (4) language as it still utilizes the local language for the food name, description, and promotion as culinary products; (5) art as it is used as part of a particular serving ritual for mythical creatures in traditional arts, (6) livelihood system since it is used as daily commercial products and culinary tourism objects that improves the local people economy; and (7) technology and tools system as it shows the local people specific way of processing the natural resources into traditional food.

The researcher concludes that Tegal local people's local wisdom reflects their ancestor's way of thinking and way of life that is passed to the nowadays generation. This local wisdom preserves the local farm and farming products that support their farm and farming business. It maintains the local culture of the tradition of processing farm and farming products into a decent and affordable meal for the local people. It improves their economy as it is used as commercial product in the tourism industry. This whole process shows that local wisdom saves the environment, maintains the culture, and improves the economy if the local people keep preserving and practising what is best for the ancestors' lives that made them survive in the past as well as what is good for the future that can make them live well tomorrow.

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