

Environment Preservation, Culture Maintenance, and Economy Improvement by Creatively Developing Traditional Cuisine into Modern Culinary Tourism Industry in Tegal

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Abstract. Environment preservation, culture maintenance, and economic improvement can be done by utilizing abundant local natural resources for traditional cuisine and using it as a tourist attraction in the form of traditional culinary tourism. This research shows how Tegal society utilize their farm and farming product for traditional cuisine as modern culinary tourism object. The data were collected by using folklore field research. The result shows that those efforts preserve the environment, maintain the culture, and improve the economy of Tegal society.

1 Introduction

Koentjaraningrat's idea of culture says that culture is a complete system of ideas, acts, and human beings' creation as part of their society with seven characteristics [1]. As human beings' creation, culture can be inherited, created, or learned. People may inherit culture from ancient societies, create a new culture for their society, or learn different cultures from other societies. Tradition is an example of human being creation. It is reflected in the way people utilize available and abundant natural resources in traditional cooking as local wisdom. A tradition was inherited from their ancestors and had already passed from generation to generation as part of their cultural identity. The way people keep tradition is part of cultural maintenance.

Culture is knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs, and human being capabilities or habits in their society [2]. Traditional cuisine is part of culture since it belongs to the society's knowledge, customs, capabilities of cooking and habits of consuming it during certain traditional or cultural events. In order not to lose culture after human beings no longer keep it, culture should be maintained by practising or developing it. Keeping traditional cuisine and developing it into a modern culinary tourism object is a way to maintain culture as it preserves the people's way of thinking and way of life which reflects their cultural identity.

This research shows how Tegal City local people utilize their natural resources such as farm and farmer products as the raw material or the ingredient of traditional cuisines which were creatively developed in the tourism industry as a particular and modern culinary tourism object from Tegal City to maintain their culture, livestock, and prosperity.

This research belongs to descriptive and qualitative research since it explains both the society and the local government's effort to maintain its culture by preserving their tradition through keeping the old way of processing, serving, and commercializing 2 (two) traditional cuisines and developing it into a traditional culinary object in a modern way to enjoy the cuisine. The two cuisine items were selected using the Purposive Sampling Technique [4] by selecting two legendary traditional cuisines in Tegal City. The data were obtained by using Dundes [5] two Folklore Methods named Identification and Interpretation.

In the first method, which is objective and empirical, the data were obtained by using the Documentation Method [6] to get information from various sources. In the second method, which is subjective and speculative, the data were gained by using Participatory Observation, Note Taking and Recording Techniques [6] to get information from informants. The methods were utilized to collect complete information and a comprehensive explanation of the history; the ingredients; the way

it is cooked, served, and consumed; the history behind its naming, the way it attracts tourists to taste it, and the way it is developed as culinary tourism object.

2 Result and Discussion

Culture is people's way of thinking and way of life which makes them live their life well within society. Through culture, people understand how their ancestors survived in the past, how they are now able to adapt culture to the present situation, and how they have a chance to develop a culture for their best in the future. Javanese culture reflects Javanese people's way of thinking and way of life that make them live their life well within their society from the ancient until the modern era that can be continued to the future. When Javanese people who possess Javanese culture keep practising their culture in their daily lives, Javanese culture will be preserved well and can be passed from generation to generation. Yet, when they are no longer using it nor transferring it to the youth, the culture can be threatened, shifted, extinct, or dead and become history that is only written as a manuscript or told as a story.

When a culture no longer exists within a society, the people's way of thinking and way of life are also gone as it is replaced with a new one that is considered more beneficial by the new generation. To keep a culture, the people should put an effort which is supported by the authority to keep involving it in their daily lives. As culture is reflected in various forms of human being creation, it can be maintained through many kinds of cultural maintenance. It is done to avoid the culture threat, shift, extinction, and death when it is only practised and preserved by the minorities or taken by others as political, economic, and social changes can also change people's attitude toward culture and reduce its value, usage, and respect [3].

One of the ways to preserve culture is by keeping legendary traditional cuisine that is made using available and abundant local ingredients which preserve local tradition as part of local culture. It is then creatively developed into a culinary tourism object in a modern way to adapt to the recent situation so that it can be enjoyed by the new generation. This research describes 2 (two) legendary traditional cuisines that were maintained by Tegal society in the past as daily consumed food and being developed into traditional culinary tourism objects in the modern way involving housewives as part-time workers in the local home industries to the societies' wealth and to add more income for the local government from the tourism sector.

How the two traditional cuisines were finally developed as culinary tourism objects that were enjoyed in a modern way is discussed as it

belongs to the seven elements of culture [2] showing the characteristics of traditional cuisine as a cultural product reflecting Javanese society's (1) religious system and religious ceremony, (2) organization and society system, (3) knowledge system, (4) language, (5) art, (6) livelihood system, as well as (7) technology and tools system.

In this research, 'sega ponggol' or *ponggol* rice and 'ndog asin' or salty egg as two legendary traditional cuisines from Tegal City reflect the society's (1) religious system and ceremony since it is served as part of traditional serving called 'berkat' which is blessed and distributed to people who join the religious ceremony, (2) organization and society system since it is previously utilized as religious serving for Chinese God in their religious ritual but then it can be enjoyed by commoners, particularly the low and the middle class society because of its low price, (3) knowledge system since it shows how the people know how to preserve the local natural resources that were easily rotten like crops and farm product like 'tempeh' from soy and 'salty egg' from duck egg as enjoyable and profitable side dish, (4) language since it still uses the local language for naming, describing, and promoting the culinary products, (5) art since it is served as special serving for mythical creatures in traditional arts, (6) livelihood system since it improves the people's wealth who were involved in the culinary business and tourism industry, as well as (7) technology and tools system since it reflects the people's particular way of processing the traditional cuisines.

The whole explanation above shows how Tegal City society maintains its culture by learning from their ancestor how to process the traditional cuisine and use it for the tradition, developing it creatively in a modern way to enjoy and use it as a commercial product, and planning its further development for the future by involving the latest technology.

Sega Ponggol is a traditional cuisine that is commonly served in the morning as breakfast. History shows that it was made by the housewives for their husbands who were working as sugar cane labourers in the Tegal Regency and Brebes District in the sugar cane field owned by the Dutch colonials. Husbands, brothers, or sons were given *sega ponggol* by their wives, sisters, or mothers for breakfast and lunch. It is facilitated by the sugar cane factory owner by appointing a cooker to provide *sega ponggol* for the workers. It is done so that they could go earlier in the morning without having breakfast at home or go back home for lunch in the afternoon as it took ample time to go back and forth from the sugar cane field to their home or the factory by walk since there is no vehicle available for them to do it.

Sega Ponggol is made by cooking the rice first. The cooked rice is then added with 'oreg tempeh' named *ponggol* as the main topping. The *oreg* tempeh is made by sauteing chopped onion, garlic, and chilli first before adding small-diced chopped tempeh and putting heavy

coconut milk on it to get a very dense sauce on the tempeh. To have the reddish-brown colour as well as the sweet flavour, add soy sauce. And then add beef/chicken broth, bay leaf, galangal, lemongrass, salt, pepper, and sugar to get a tasty *ponggol* and let it sit until it is perfectly cooked. *Sega Ponggol* is commonly served by putting rice on banana leaves and then *ponggol* on top. It is commonly added with side dishes like fried noodles/vermicelli, sautéed long beans, cucumber pickle, sambal, and orange *kerupuk* (traditional crackers). It is commonly wrapped with banana leaves and taken away as breakfast or lunch.

A more modern and creative way of enjoying *sega ponggol* for the young generation who spend their time late at night to do their task or just to hang out with friends is serving it at midnight. This kind of *sega ponggol* is called *Sega Ponggol Setan* or *Pongset*. The word 'setan' or satan' refers to two things. The first one is the very hot and spicy taste of *ponggol* that directly open the sleepy eyes who need to be alerted. The word 'setan' is commonly used as a curse for something worse like the *pongset* taste which is very hot and spicy. It is also used to name a very hot chilly called 'rawit setan'. The second one is a ghost who usually wanders around at night. Thus, *pongset* means the hot and spicy taste of *sega ponggol* which is served at midnight for people who are 'alive' at night like the ghost.

Sega Ponggol Setan Hj. Kusniroh is one of many *pongset* sellers available throughout the city offering a night traditional culinary tourism object that is already popular among the young generation and middle-aged people who love to hang out late at night. Hj. Kusniroh previously worked as a fryer for her younger sister-in-law who initiated the first *pongset* seller in the city by offering *sega ponggol* with hot and spicy taste at night which is wrapped in banana leaf as a takeaway meal from eleven p.m. until dawn. She was then asked to open her own business. She started to open the business by utilizing a small kiosk in Kemuning Street and served *pongset* on the plate as a dine-in meal with 'gorengan tempe/tahu' or fried tempeh and tofu that can be enjoyed on the spot as an additional side dish.

This home industry belongs to small and middle businesses employing housewives as part-time workers who work in two shifts. The first shift started in the afternoon during which the workers cooked the main course like rice, *ponggol*, and additional side dishes. Meanwhile, the second shift started at night when the workers cooked the additional side dishes that needed to be freshly served. The creative innovation in this industry must be supported by the whole society by promoting it through social media using three languages, Java Language with Tegal Dialect, Indonesian, and English to preserve the local language and to promote the culinary product locally, nationally, and internationally. This business should also be supported by the local government by giving a

kind of soft loan to develop the small business, to improve the local people's economy, to get additional income for the local government, and to support the central government program of sustainable development goals.

Meanwhile, 'ndog asin' or salty egg was previously used by Chinese people in the Tegal area as a particular serving for their Gods in a Chinese religious ritual called 'sembayangan'. It was a Chinese couple from Brebes District named In Tjiauw Seng dan Tan Polan Nio who first started to commercialise salty eggs to commoners as daily meals in 1959 [6]. In Chinese tradition, processing duck eggs into salty eggs is part of their local wisdom of preserving the duck egg which is easily rotten when it is taken on a long trip. The use of the salt solution to soak the egg prohibits a decomposing enzyme from activating the rotten process. Since then, the local wisdom goes on by processing salty eggs for the abundant duck egg, particularly the *Anas platyrhynchos domesticus* egg with a unique blue colour of the shell. In 2020, Brebes salty egg was established as a Non-Tangible Cultural Heritage by the Indonesian Education and Culture Ministry.

Telor Asin Pangon Masir Orange business was started as a home industry employing low-class society housewives as part-time workers who process duck eggs into salty eggs. It was established by Syarif Mujiharto, a police officer, and his wife, a former banker, in Slawi (Tegal District) in 2013. This small and middle business was then developed well by opening three branches in Adiwerna (Tegal District), Slerok (Tegal City), and Mejasem (Tegal District). This business is different from other salty egg businesses in Brebes or other areas around Tegal District and City as the young owner creatively develops aesthetic packaging and promotes the product differently from the other branches.

As a common salty egg packaging in the area, he packed six salty eggs into a small box and ten salty eggs into a medium box. However, the box is not a regular one with a picture of the salty egg, the kiosk, or the owner along with the kiosk address, the salty egg variant, and its price as it is commonly found on salty egg packaging in Tegal. The wrapping box is a plain and glossy orange box with the business name along with a Whatsapp number for online orders and Instagram accounts for promoting the business by putting the customers' pictures on it so that they can follow the account and put their picture on their feed as a free promotion for the business. This classy packaging makes customers choose this product as a gift for people they honour or care about.

The phrase 'telor asin pangon' or *pangon* salty egg refers to a boiled-made salty egg coming from a duck egg where the duck is 'diangon' or being grazed so that it only eats natural food like plants, worms, snails, or insects, not human-manufactured artificial food. Thus, the salty egg does not have the fishy aroma and it has a good taste with a

darker colour of the egg white after being processed into the salty egg. The word 'masir' refers to the high content of oil on the yolk that makes it turn into a rough texture like sand after being processed into the salty egg. Therefore, the local people called it 'masir' or sandy.

Like any other salty egg, Telor Asin Pangon Masir Orange process the salty egg with three variants with the same steps. First, clean the duck eggs thoroughly and soak them in clean water for two minutes. Remove the bad eggs which were floating on the water's surface. Clean the duck egg carefully using sandpaper. Make sure there is no crack on the egg's shell. Dissolve salt into clean water and then soak the eggs for 10 to 12 days.

Another way to make a salty egg is by mixing wood ash or smooth-mashed brick with water into a paste. Mix the dough with salt and then cover the duck eggs with the dough up to 3 cm thick. Let it sit for 14 days. Clean up the eggs and boil or steam them with low heat for an hour. Besides the original boiled or steamed salty egg, nowadays people develop another variant of salty egg such as smoked, grilled, 'pindang', or 'rendang' seasoned salty egg with various flavours such as hot, spicy, or garlic flavours which were made in similar ways by adding flavour and change the final step of the salty egg processing.

3 Conclusion

From the result and discussion in the previous chapter, the researcher found out that Tegal local people have local wisdom reflecting their way of thinking and way of life. They were using the available and abundant local natural resources found in the area that can be creatively processed into a more long-lived and profitable dish such as tempeh and duck egg. It is done to keep local crops and farm products and to improve the local people's economy. They also keep traditional cuisine as part of their tradition which improves the local people's prosperity as it is used in the tourism industry to attract tourists who are interested to taste the traditional culinary object.

This research shows that if the people who possess a culture make an effort to keep their culture, the culture will not be easily endangered, substituted, or extinct. Instead, it can be inherited, passed, and even spread to the world. The way people maintain their culture by preserving traditional cuisine should be supported with additional effort such as community service by scholars. It is done to help the business owner promote their product in social media using three languages, the local, the national, and the international language to reach the local, national, and international customers.

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