

Preservation of Apem Cake as a Gastronomic Heritage at the Yogyakarta Palace

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Abstract: Yogyakarta is one of the number 2 tourist destinations after Bali, Yogyakarta has various types of tourism, one of which is gastronomic tourism. One of the gastronomic tours that is still being preserved in Yogyakarta is the Ngapem traditional tour which is held at the Yogyakarta Palace once a year before the month of Safar. The month of Safar is the second month in the Islamic or Hijri calendar which means quiet and lonely. However, this tradition had stopped for two years due to the co-19 pandemic, but now the palace is making efforts to re-hold the Ngapem tradition. Ngapem tradition is our gratitude for the blessings that have been given by God Almighty. This study aims to find out the history and philosophy of apem cake for the ngapem tradition in Yogyakarta and to find out the efforts of the palace in preserving apem cake. This research is qualitative research. Methods of data collection by in-depth interviews, observation and documentation to get an overview of the apem cake and the ngapem tradition. The focus of this research is in the Yogyakarta palace. The key informants in this study were cultural figures from the Yogyakarta palace, while additional informants were the Yogyakarta City Tourism Office and gastronomy experts. The results of this study indicate that the apem cake is a legacy of Ki Ageng Gribig, a descendant of Prabu Brawijaya, where he brought the cake back to the island of Java from a trip to the Holy Land. archipelago which then the cake is distributed to the surrounding community. The role of the government in preserving the tradition of ngapem is always to support the palace to hold a ngapem event every safar month or before fasting, where the apem cakes are made into gunungan which are paraded to the Gedhe Kauman Mosque and then distributed to the community after a ritual procession is held.

Keywords: *apem cake*, gastronomic tourism, preservation, Yogyakarta palace.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Yogyakarta is one of the cities in Indonesia where has quite growing tourism potential rapidly. This development is inseparable from the role of the government and the people of Yogyakarta. Tourist destinations in Yogyakarta have their own characteristics, including marine, culinary, museum, cultural, gastronomic and other tourisms. One of the tourist destinations mostly visited by many tourists, both domestic and international, is the Yogyakarta palace.

<http://publikasi.dinus.ac.id/index.php/uncle>

The Yogyakarta Palace is a cultural and religious center in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta Palace culture became a noble culture and inherited culture of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom. Yogyakarta Palace is a center for tourism activities as well as a center for culture and traditions that have been passed down for generations and is still being carried out by the people of Yogyakarta which can be used as a tourism potential and has its own charm for tourists from outside Indonesia (Melati, 2019). The tourists who come to Yogyakarta palace on average want to see the splendor of Yogyakarta palace. Besides that, tourists can also enjoy the typical culinary of Yogyakarta palace which are sold in restaurants around the palace such as *gadri* restaurants, *Bale Raos*, *Ndalem Ngabean* and others.

These typical palace dishes are usually only found in a few restaurants around Yogyakarta palace. The palace menu that is sold is generally the king's or Sultan's favorite dish, starting from the appetizer to the dessert. The restaurant serves typical food and drinks of Yogyakarta Palace, such as seperti *salad jawa*, *nasi blawong*, *daging lombok kethok*, *brongkos ayam asat*, *gudeg empal*, *nasi gurih*, *bistik Jawa*, *pandekoek*, *manuk enom*, *kolak kencana*, *wedang secang*, *beer Jawa*, and others (Nugroho & Putu, 2020).

Gastronomy is the reason for them to prepare and mobilize the need for foods and drinks, which include cultivators, fishermen, hunters, cooks and others. According to Santich B in Riski (2018) Gastronomy is a guide in various ways involving everything about food and drink. Gastronomy or cooking is the art or science of good eating. This study deals with descriptions of culture, history, and environmental conditions regarding to where, when, why and how. One of the palace dishes that is still preserved until today is a snack called *apem* cake.

Apem cake has its own uniqueness in the manufacture and ingredients so that it has a philosophy. This philosophy refers to the tradition that is celebrated every 29 *Rajab*. To commemorate the agenda of the *ndalem* event, previously started with the *ngebluk* and *ngapem* processions. This is where the existence of *apem* cake is firstly seen. The *ngebluk* process was led by the king's daughters and *Keparak* courtiers. Reporting from kratonjogja.id (2018) *ngebluk* is a ceremony of making dough which will later be cooked into *apem*. According to Sabandar (2021) *ngebluk* itself comes from the "bluk" sound that is generated when the *apem* cake dough is being processed. The *apem* cake dough that has been processed in *ngebluk* procession is then cooked into *apem*. The process of cooking the dough is done in the *ngapem* procession. The *apem* cake that is made also has certain specifications. According to Islami & Ikhsanudin (2014) there are two differences of *apem* cakes. First, the usual small sized *apem*. *Apem* is usually made by the empress and princess *ndalem* or daughter of Sultan HB X. Secondly, *apem mustaka* is large. *Apem mustaka* is made by Sentana Dalem, a woman who has already menopause. In the end, *apem mustaka* will be arranged according to Sultan HB X's height. The *apem* cakes will also be distributed to relatives, courtiers, and the Sultan's family. It is the same with the history during the *Wali Songo* era. In a Javanese view or philosophy, *apem* cake is symbolized as a symbol of asking for forgiveness or forgiveness for various mistakes that have been made, both mistakes to the creator and mistakes to others so that friendship is maintained (Kinanti, 2020). The distribution of *apem* cakes was carried out in the *Sugengan* Ceremony which was held at the Kencana Ward.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Tourist

According to Burkart and Medlik in Hadi (2017) tourism means the movement of people temporarily and in the short term to destinations outside the places where they usually live and work, and their activities while living in these destinations. Whereas, Prayogo in Azizah (2022) suggests that tourism can simply be defined as the journey of a person or group of people from one place to another making plans within a certain period of time, for recreational purposes and getting entertainment so that their wishes are fulfilled.

From the definition above it can be concluded that tourism occurs because there is a movement/travel of a person to another place and stays for a certain period of time with a certain purpose. The most important thing from the explanation above is that those who carry out tourism activities do not go for work or earn a living, but if they carry out tourism activities on the sidelines of their work then it can be called tourism.

Gastronomy Tourism

Gastronomic tourism is not just selling food and beverage products to tourists but also able to provide valuable experiences for tourists with the food and drinks they tasted or bought. So, it is not just tasting or buying, but also in the concept of gastronomic tourism, tourists can taste food and drink (Sari, Gadu & Mahsun, 2023). Then enjoy it while learning how to produce it. Gastronomic tourism is another way to enjoy tourist attractions and also to preserve its culture through some efforts in preserving culture in the field of food and drink or commonly called culinary tourism (Brillat-Savarin). Meanwhile, according to Hjalanger and Richards in Sufadkk (2020) tourism development in the culinary field is known as gastronomy, "culinary tourism, also referred to as gastronomic".

Preservation

Preservation, according to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI, Kemendikbud.go.id) comes from the word sustainable, which means remaining as it was before, unchanged, enduring, and eternal. Widjaja in Prayogi & Danial (2016) defines preservation as an activity or that is carried out continuously, directed and integrated in order to realize certain goals that reflect the existence of something fixed and eternal, dynamic, flexible, and selective. Basuki in Eliani & Rizki (2013) all activities that aim to extend the life (usability) of library materials and the information on it. This activity consists of two aspects, namely the aspect of physical preservation of documents, as well as the aspect of preserving the information they contain.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative research. The object of this study is *apem* cake as one of the gastronomic tourist attractions of the Yogyakarta palace with the research subjects was *Ruwahan* cultural carnival tradition, as well as cultural observers from the Yogyakarta palace and the Yogyakarta cultural service. In addition, the supporting informants are gastronomy experts and visitors/tourists who come and enjoy *apem* cake when the cultural carnival tradition is being held. This study aims to determine the meaning, history, and philosophy of

Ngapem tradition in Yogyakarta and to find out the palace's efforts to preserve *Ngapem* tradition. The sample in this study was *apem* cake using the purposive sampling method with criteria 1) the researcher could see directly the implementation of *ngapem* tradition. 2) Knowing the procedure for processing *apem* cake. The data collection techniques were carried out by in-depth interviews to reveal the existing facts, observation, documentation, and literature studies, to concoct, finalize, and locate theoretical sources/other relevant data regarding the preservation of *Ngapem* tradition as a gastronomic tourist attraction. The data obtained will be analyzed with the theory of Milles and Hubberman (2014), where this analysis consists of data reduction, data presentation and data interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Apem cake

Apem cake, a typical Indonesian food that can be found in several regions in Indonesia, for example Yogyakarta, is round cake and made from rice flour and coconut milk. The cake is usually accompanied by tea in the morning. In addition, in Javanese society, the cake is often used at religious events such as *slametans* and *garebeg maulud* at the palace. To make *apem* cake is very simple, it uses firewood and a small clay pan to make *apem* cake.

According to the informants, there are 2 versions of the process of making this *apem* cake, the first one is using the traditional method and the second one is using the modern method. The traditional method of roasting uses firewood or charcoal and uses a small frying pan made of clay. Meanwhile, the modern way of using pans is made of stainless and uses a gas stove as a heater. The following are pictures of traditional and modern processing of *apem* cake.



Gambar 1: Apem cake baking Traditional Process

Source: Instagram @kratonjogja



Gambar 2: Apem cake Baking Modern Process

Source: website Kendari kita.com (2022)

In addition, *apem* cake is now rarely found in both traditional and modern markets. This is due to the lack of public interest in this food. According to the informants, in the Yogyakarta palace, this *apem* exists almost every day because *apem* cake is used as an offering and also used as a complement to some events such as *nyadran*, *ruwahan*, *lebuhan* and *jumenengan* commemorations. Apart from that, apem cakes are also made for breakfast for Sultan and the royal family.

History and Philosophy of Apem Cake

Apem cake is one of the traditional cakes that is still maintained until today and is still served at various events. Even though, it is known as a Javanese thanksgiving cake, some people say that this cake originates from India. According to the informants, in India *apem* cake is called as "Appam", in which this cake is the same as in Indonesia. Besides that, the word *apem* comes from the Arabic word "afuan" or "afuwun" which means forgiveness. The Javanese simplified the name as "Apem" so that in Javanese philosophy *apem* cake is a symbol of forgiveness or begging for forgiveness from mistakes.

In addition, according to gastronomy experts, the *apem* cake is believed to have originated from Ki Ageng Gribig, the descendant of Prabu Brawijaya who returned from a trip to the holy land with *apem* cakes. The cake which is distributed to the community then becomes a culture and habit at thanksgiving. *Apem* cakes are often available in thanksgiving events, welcoming to the fasting month until death event. According to the informants in West Java, *apem* cake is interpreted as togetherness and repels of bad luck. This cake will be distributed to neighbors and they will eat together. In contrast, in Yogyakarta palace, *apem* cakes are usually made for "grebeg maulud" event, an event held before the fasting month of Ramadhan and 1 Shawwal. It will be made or arranged in a giant tumpeng which then after the ritual, the *apem* cakes will be distributed among the people who present at the event.

Preservation of Apem Cake at Yogyakarta Palace

Preservation of traditions in Indonesia, especially in Yogyakarta, really needs to be done so that future generations know that Yogyakarta has many traditions inherited from their ancestors. one of these traditions is "Garebeg Maulud" which is held once every year. The purpose of "Garebeg Maulud" is to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad which is held every 12th of Rabiul Awal. In this event, *apem* cake is a must-have dish, because of its philosophically, *apem* is a symbol of begging forgiveness from the Almighty. Making *apem* itself has several stages starting from "Ngebluk Jeladren" or making the dough. After the dough has been made, the dough will be cooked in a small pan that is special for making *apem*. After that, they are arranged in the form of a giant tumpeng which will then be brought to Gedhe Kauman Mosque and then distributed to the public. According to the informants, this ritual makes *apem* cake preservation so that it is better that people of Indonesia know about it because with this ritual, people will know the existence of *apem* cake.

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