

## Indexicality of apem cake at the Kirab Apem Sewu traditional ceremony in Sewu Village, Surakarta City, Central Java, Indonesia

\*Fidiana, R., Saddhono, K. and Anindyarini, A.

Sebelas Maret University, Ir. Sutami Street No.36, Kentingan, Surakarta, 57126, Indonesia

### Article history:

Received: 2 May 2022

Received in revised form: 3 July 2022

Accepted: 15 March 2023

Available Online: 23 May 2024

### Keywords:

Arachis,  
Dioscorea,  
Flour,  
Manihot,  
Menopause,  
Sugars

### DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.26656/fr.2017.8\(3\).236](https://doi.org/10.26656/fr.2017.8(3).236)

### Abstract

Traditional food owned by a community group is one of their cultural identities. These foods can be introduced through various techniques and activities, one of which is through traditional ceremonies or carnivals (Jv: Kirab). This study aimed to describe the meaning of traditional food, particularly apem cake served in Kirab Apem Sewu, a tradition in Sewu Village, Jebres, Surakarta City, Indonesia. The analysis in this study focused on the philosophical meaning of the apem cake. The data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews to obtain detailed information. The collected data was then analyzed using an interactive method, including data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. The apem cake used in Kirab Apem Sewu was prepared from high-quality ingredients, such as rice flour, *Saccharomyces* yeast, and brown sugar. Apem cake makers must also meet specific requirements, like being female and pristine, which means she must be menopausal or not menstruating at the time of production. Apem cake in the Kirab Apem Sewu tradition symbolizes an apology, freeing the soul from misfortunes, gratitude, and unifying religious communities. Besides apem cake, there are also complementary materials, mostly underground crops (Jv: *pala pendhem*), such as cassava, potatoes, sweet potatoes, elephant foot yam, peanuts, and other typical fruit, like Saba/kepok banana.

## 1. Introduction

Culture is a critical part of society. Almost every community group (ethnic, tribal) has a distinctive and unique tradition and culture, which sometimes is considered strange by people outside the group (Qurtuby and Lattu, 2019). Culture itself has various forms. Cultural diversity is shown through the many pieces of artwork themselves, such as values, norms, customs, and works of art (Syarifudin and Nurlatipah, 2015). One form of culture that develops in society is traditional food.

Indonesia, which consists of various races and ethnicities, has a variety of traditional foods. Traditional Indonesian food is mainly made from natural ingredients such as local grains, tubers, nuts, vegetables and fruits. The ingredients to make this traditional food are usually preserved from generation to generation from the ancestral heritage (Yang and Lee, 2019). In line with this, Rocillo-Aquino *et al.* (2021) revealed that traditional food is defined as food passed down from generation to generation, along with knowledge of its preparation techniques and raw resources (usually local),

and also how to produce it. The food is processed based on ways that have developed within community groups (Nurhayati *et al.*, 2014).

Traditional food is not only used to fulfil human nutrition needs. However, traditional food can be used as the identity of a particular community group. This is in line with Zhang *et al.* (2019), which explains that food, in its metaphorical definition, represents an expression of cultural and ethnic identity. Therefore, each particular community or ethnic group has its unique traditional food.

People also use traditional food as an essential element in certain traditions or ceremonies. Traditional food used in a tradition is made from local ingredients, processed with techniques according to people's beliefs, and can symbolize or reflect the social culture of a society (Pribadi *et al.*, 2021).

One of the traditions in Indonesia that uses traditional food as a complementary element in the procession is the Kirab Apem Sewu. This tradition is a series of activities as a form of gratitude to God

\*Corresponding author.

Email: [fidianariski@student.uns.ac.id](mailto:fidianariski@student.uns.ac.id)

Almighty. This event held in Sewu Village, Jebres, Surakarta, Indonesia. The area is right on the banks of the Bengawan Solo River, which has quite fertile land, and it was close to transportation facilities (mainly ships) in ancient times. The Sewu Village map can be seen in Figure 1.

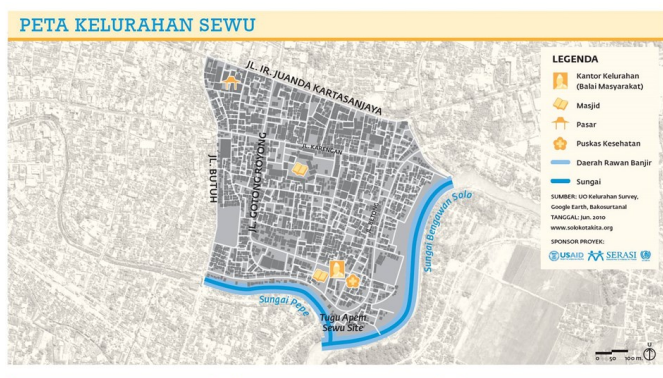


Figure 1. Map of Sewu village, Jebres, Surakarta City, Indonesia.

Source: Wikipedia (2016).

Every year in November, the Kirab Apem Sewu is held with various agendas. This carnival is held to attract both local and foreign tourists and, of course, preserve tradition. Even today, the inscription and monument of the Kirab Apem Sewu have been built on the banks of the Bengawan Solo River. The Apem Sewu inscription can be seen in Figure 2. Meanwhile, Kirab Apem Sewu monument can be seen in Figure 3.



Figure 2. Apem Sewu inscription.



Figure 3. Kirab Apem Sewu monument.

As the name implies, the essence of this carnival lies in the apem cakes used in the carnival. Apem cake is a

typical Javanese cake made from the main ingredient in the form of rice flour. The cake itself consists of two types: baked apem cake, which is processed by baking, and steamed apem cake, which is processed by steaming. The apem cake used in the Kirab Apem Sewu is the baked apem cake. Apem cake manufacturing must go through several processes that cannot be missed. Starting from the selection of apem cake ingredients to the packaging process. The apem cakes can be seen in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Apem cakes.

The people of Jombang, East Java use apem cake as a mandatory dish at death rituals to ask God for forgiveness so that the souls of the dead are forgiven (Shofi and Maisaroh, 2020). Meanwhile, public trust in apem cake, which is considered a traditional food to bring blessings, has changed in several regions in Indonesia. The people of Jatinom, Klaten, Central Java who used to believe in the blessing of the apem cake used in the Apeman tradition in Jatinom Village now no longer believe in it (Immanuel *et al.*, 2018). One of the functions of apem cake in the Apeman or Yaqowiyu tradition is as a strategy for the spread of Islam (Islami and Ikhsanudin, 2014).

Based on some of these studies, some things become gaps for researchers to carry out this research, they are research on the meaning of apem cakes used in the Kirab Apem Sewu has not been carried out and research on the meaning of the apem cake was previously found in the death ceremony, not in activities such as carnival. The problem that will be investigated in this research is regarding the meaning of the apem cake used in the Kirab Apem Sewu, in Sewu Village, Surakarta. This study aimed to review the meaning of the apem cake used in the Kirab Apem Sewu. In addition, the author also reviews the requirements for making apem cakes, the process of making apem cakes, and complementary materials used in the carnival.

## 2. Materials and methods

This is a descriptive qualitative study that is used to describe an object in detail. This research uses an

ethnographic approach to describe human behavior, both as individuals and as members of a group influenced by their culture of origin/where they live (Draper, 2014). This research was carried out following systematic scientific procedures and focusing on its meaning (Rohmadi and Nasucha, 2017).

The research location is in Sewu Village, Jebres, Surakarta City, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis. The informants of this study consisted of three participants who were the makers of the apem cake used in the carnival. The three informants were chosen because they have been involved in the carnival for a long time. As apem cake makers, they have received training from the government, are active in activities within the Sewu sub-district, and are active as members of the PKK (Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/Family Welfare Empowerment). The informant selection technique was carried out using a snowball sampling technique or chain reference sampling. The first informant was obtained on the recommendation of the Sewu Village officer, the second informant based on the recommendation of the first informant, and the third informant based on the recommendation of the second informant.

Data triangulation was chosen to validate the data in the study, including interviews and document analysis. Interviews were conducted in-depth to obtain actual data related to the data needed in the research. In addition, analysis of documents sourced from document archives owned by the Sewu Village was also carried out. The data obtained from the analysis of documents and informants with one another are then compared to obtain accurate data.

The data analysis technique used is the latest interactive data analysis technique introduced by Miles *et al.* (2014), including data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. The data obtained from the interviews were then compiled in the form of transcripts. The data is then selected and focused in accordance with research needs which is also supported by data from the urban village document archive. The next step is the presentation of the data, the data that has been selected is then presented, which is in the form of points that are described using words. The next researcher draws conclusions based on these data. Drawing conclusions or verification is done by formulating the meaning of the results of the research that is expressed briefly and easily understood. This process is carried out repeatedly to review the truth of these conclusions.

The research location is Sewu Village, Jebres, Surakarta City, Indonesia. Data were collected through

in-depth interviews and document analysis with five participants: three women as apem cake makers, a traditional ceremony leader, and a village employee. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain actual data related to the data needed in the research. In addition, an analysis of documents sourced from document archives owned by the village chief was also carried out. The data that has been collected is then reduced according to the required categories.

### 3. Results and discussion

Kirab Apem Sewu is a traditional ceremony that is characteristic of Sewu Village. This carnival is held every November (solar calendar) or coincides with the month of Hajj every year (Islamic lunar calendar). This ceremony is carried out, primarily to preserve the apem cake which is an icon in the ceremony. Figure 4 shows the apem cakes used in the carnival.

The apem cake served is processed in such a way with predetermined ingredients and manufacturing processes. The ingredients, the manufacturing process, and the meaning of the apem cake contained in the Kirab Apem Sewu are as follows.

#### 3.1 Requirements for making apem cake

The requirements for making apem cakes are divided into two types: the quality of materials used and the requirements of apem cake makers. An explanation of the ingredients used in making apem cake is as follows.

The main ingredients used in making apem cakes include rice flour, palm sugar, and *Saccharomyces* yeast. These ingredients are exclusively used in the composition of the apem presented in the carnival. The apem makers once ever added coconut milk, but the result was that the apem cake was damaged. The following paragraphs describe the ingredients used to make Javanese/traditional apem cakes.

##### 3.1.1 Rice flour

Rice flour has been used to make various foods since ancient times, one of which is apem cake. Rice flour was chosen as the raw material for apem cakes for a significant reason. As the forerunner of rice as a staple food, the rice plant has been cultivated for a long time in Indonesia and is therefore easily accessible. The rice's taste, colour, and texture make it suitable for use as a food ingredient in baked goods such as cakes or bread (Wahyuningsih *et al.*, 2015). Rice contains fat, carbohydrates, protein, water, dietary fibre, and minerals that the body requires (Wulandari *et al.*, 2016).

### 3.1.2 *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*

The other material used to make apem cake is yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* is a common fermenting agent to make fermented food such as fermented cassava (tape). *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* in the manufacturing of apem serves as a sugar converter into carbon dioxide gas, which lifts and aerates the dough. This material is also used to produce everyday foods, such as noodles, vermicelli, pasta, soups, porridge, cereals, baby food, and bakery products (Shobana et al., 2013; Bangar et al., 2021).

This yeast is undoubtedly safe for consumption and does not act like a preservative. Yeast is rich in essential amino acids, fatty acids, dietary fibre, and minerals such as calcium. The compounds contained in yeast also provide a strong antioxidant potential (Mitharwal et al., 2021)

### 3.1.3 Palm sugar

Javanese sugar or palm sugar is made from palm sap which is traditionally processed to produce sugar that is sweet and has a slightly salty taste. Apem makers use brown sugar as a sweetener because the result makes apem a naturally sweet taste and a softer texture (Suprih, personal communication, April 3, 2022). This makes the apem cakes produced using palm sugar have a distinctive taste and texture. Palm sugar can be used as a substitute for sucrose because the food products produced have unique characteristics (Saputro et al., 2020).

These ingredients are ingredients for making Javanese apem cakes which are used in traditions or traditional ceremonies. Unlike the case with apem cake which is currently circulating in the community and has undergone various modifications. Apem cakes that are not used in certain ceremonies and are only consumed on a daily basis are usually processed in such a way, for example using granulated sugar, developer, and food coloring, in various shapes, and given various flavors. This is of course legitimate as a form of food development.

Meanwhile, the requirements for apem cake makers (people who make apem cakes) are as follows.

#### 3.1.4 *Apem cake maker must be a woman*

Apem cake makers are typically associated with women. Women have traditionally made the apem cakes used in the Kirab Apem Sewu. This is, of course, related to the culture of society since ancient times, in which women were expected to be capable of doing domestic work (BaKTI, 2020). Because of the habit of cooking in the kitchen every day, women are thought to be more

painstaking when making apem cakes than men.

The same thing applies to the Sandingan tradition in Gampingan Hamlet. Women have an important role in this tradition preparing for the things needed in the Sandingan tradition. These preparations include arranging tables and chairs, making two types of apem cakes, preparing side dishes, and preparing flowers (Putri et al., 2021). This shows that women do have a dominant role in preparing an event or tradition. However, the role of women is usually not visible in the implementation of a tradition, especially being a leader. It is undeniable that women are sometimes still considered as second-class citizens whose existence is not taken into account. The reality regarding the division of roles is mostly based on patriarchal culture (Maksum, 2016).

#### 3.1.5 *Apem cake maker in a pristine condition (not menstruating)*

The belief associated with the apem cake maker is that the woman must be in a pristine condition or is not menstruating. Apem makers were previously required for women who were already menopausal. This is because the apem cake represents a request to God, and the person who asks is a person with a well-established soul (Mujihandoko, personal communication, April 3, 2022).

The belief that apem makers cannot make apem while menstruating persists to this day. If this taboo is broken, the process of making apem is usually impacted. For example, the apem cake is damaged in shape, or the taste becomes a little sour (Rezeki, R.S., personal communication, December 14, 2021).

### 3.2 *The process of making apem cakes*

Apem cakes used in the Kirab Apem Sewu must undergo several processes. Apem cake makers should also not be chosen arbitrarily. Apem cakes must be made by residents who have received training from the local government. Apem cakes are produced together or in groups. Therefore, apem cake production symbolizes togetherness and intimacy (Feriyananti et al., 2022).

Before making apem cakes, the local government held training to make apem for representatives of women from each neighbourhood unit in Sewu Village. This training is designed to ensure that the resulting apem cake has the best quality later. The things conveyed in this training started from what materials were used, how the process of making apem, how to decorate the apem that had been made, and how to do interesting packaging tricks. The women who receive this training will later make apem cakes for the carnival.

Next is the production of apem cake. The making of

apem started one day before the carnival procession. The women in charge of making apem will prepare the ingredients needed such as rice flour, palm sugar, and *Saccharomyces* yeast. After all the ingredients are collected, the apem cake dough is made. The rice flour that has been provided is then made into a dough using plain water with a mixture of palm sugar and *Saccharomyces* yeast. The ingredients are stirred until completely mixed and not lumpy. The dough should not be too runny or too thick. After the dough is finished, the dough is not processed on the same day but is left for one night to expand. This process can also be replaced by drying the dough in the sun for about an hour. If the dough is not allowed to stand or dried in the sun first, the texture of the apem cake will become tough.

The dough that has been allowed to stand is then processed by baking it using a round mould. In ancient times, apem cakes were baked one by one using a small frying pan. This is done to practice human patience and patience. Currently, apem cakes are baked on a baking sheet which is usually made up of seven pieces, making the procedure even faster.

The processed apem cake is then left to cool down first. The apem cakes are then packed into a plastic bag for each piece when cooled down. Each end is then roped into being tied to the *jodang* (wooden box). When ready, each community unit deposits apem cakes to the village, as many as 100 pieces. In the end, the apem cakes even-numbered a thousand and were ready to be decorated for the carnival. This number is adjusted to the name of the carnival, Kirab Apem Sewu which means a thousand apem. The number of apem cakes used varies from one tradition to another, according to the characteristics of the tradition itself. For example, in the Sandingan tradition in Gampingan Hamlet, the apem cakes used must be a pair or multiples of them with a round and conical shape (Putri *et al.*, 2021). This is of course different from the apem in the Kirab Apem Sewu, which are all around.

The process of making apem cakes in the tradition by frying turns out to be different from the apem cakes used in other traditions. One of them is the Ngalap Berkah Paringan Apem Kukus Keong Emas tradition in the Pengging area, Boyolali. This tradition of fighting over food uses apem cake which is processed by steaming and packaged using coconut leaves (young coconut leaves) (Priyatma, 2013). The difference in the process of making apem cake is of course based on their respective traditions and shows the diversity of society in processing food.

### 3.3 The meaning of apem cake in Kirab Apem Sewu traditional ceremony

The apem cake which is the main component in the Kirab Apem Sewu is full of meaning. These meanings are passed down from the ancestors and preserved to this day by the people of Sewu Village. The following is the meaning of apem cake in the Kirab Apem Sewu.

#### 3.3.1 As an apology

Initially, the elders of Sewu Village used apem cakes to gather blessings from Sinuwun Pakubuwana X on the banks of the Bengawan Solo River. The elders used apem cake which means sanepan, meaning asking for forgiveness or apologizing. In addition, the name apem is associated with the Arabic word *afwan*, which means sorry (Julianto *et al.*, 2021). The Javanese people then called it apem because, in ancient times, the Javanese people had difficulty pronouncing the letter "F" (Immanuel *et al.*, 2018).

This meaning is also associated with the story of Ki Ageng Gribig, who introduced the Javanese apem cake to the people of Java. This apem cake was made to substitute the cake that Ki Ageng Gribig brought from Arabia. Ki Ageng Gribig also explained that humans must always apologize and forgive. This will purify the human heart, allowing it to gain physical and spiritual strength (Arwansyah, *et al.*, 2017).

Apem cake by the people of Sewu Village is then used to represent an apology to God Almighty and fellow humans for mistakes that the people of Sewu Village may have made. Therefore, the apem cake used in the Kirab Apem Sewu is made with quality ingredients and a process that cannot be done arbitrarily to maintain the quality of the apem cake. The hope is that the community is free from mistakes that have been made and no longer cause problems among each other.

Not only used as an apology for the living, apem cake in other traditions is also used as an apology for the dead. The people of Jlatren, Sleman, Yogyakarta use apem cake as one of the equipment in the death *slametan* tradition. Apem cake in this tradition means apologizing on behalf of someone who has died for his mistakes towards living people represented by his family (Annisa and Wardana, 2019). In line with this, the apem cake is also used as a symbol of apology for the ancestors at the grave alms or *bancakan* ceremony in Kudus, Central Java (Indrahti *et al.*, 2018). Apem cakes in this tradition are served together with the apostles. Fauziyah *et al.* (2021) also expressed the same thing, that the apem cake has a meaning as a human apology for his mistakes in the megengan tradition in Kedungrejo Village, Sidoarjo.

### 3.3.2 Free the soul from misfortune

Apem cake is believed to be a weapon to free the soul from evil omens. The evil omen can be in the form of disease, bad luck, life's suffering, and hunger. Apem cake has the meaning of togetherness and prayer to reject evil influences that can drive away bad luck (Shofi and Maisaroh, 2020). This does not only apply to the people of Sewu Village but also to the general public. On the day of the carnival, several people usually come to ask for the apem cake used in the carnival. The person believes that the apem used in the Kirab Apem Sewu can cure certain diseases. In addition, some believe that the apem used in this carnival can be used as a business counter.

Many Indonesian people believe that foods that are complementary to a tradition can protect a person from calamity and disease. As was done by the people of Lebong Regency, Bengkulu Province who held the Kedurai Apem tradition. This tradition aims to reject reinforcements and use four kinds of apem cakes as complementary ingredients (Rosalina, 2021). It is different with the people of Ampelgading Village, Malang. Even though they both hold a tradition of salvation to reject reinforcements, the Ampelgading people use ketupat and serabi as complementary ingredients (Lestari et al., (2022). These traditions are proof that Indonesian people still believe that some traditional foods can be a medium for rejecting food reinforcements.

### 3.3.3 Symbol of gratitude

Apem cake is a cake that symbolizes gratitude for the blessings given by God. Humans always have a way of expressing their gratitude to God for all the sustenance and blessings provided. Blessings are, of course, manifested in various forms. The community also believes that the current apem cake contains blessings (Amaliyah, 2015). Apem cakes in traditional ceremonies or traditions are usually in the form of mountains which symbolize the prostration of gratitude to God (Sholihah et al., 2019). *Gunungan* which has a conical tip is what shows the relationship between humans and God Almighty.

The people of Sewu Village want to show gratitude to God with their full beliefs. Gratitude for all the blessings given and as a reminder of the ancestors' services who have cleared the land in the area. Therefore, in the Kirab Apem Sewu, there is a procession of distributing Apem cakes to the general public as a form of community gratitude. The highlight of the apem carnival is called rebutan apem or scramble for apem cake which the general public can follow, and

this is where the gratitude of the people of Sewu Village can be seen. In this procession, it appears that there is harmony between humans and their God and humans with each other.

The meaning possessed by this apem cake is also in line with the meaning of tumpeng rice which is usually used in several traditions in Indonesia, *nasi tumpeng* in the form of a *gunungan* symbolizes the harmonious relationship between humans and their God and each other (Hafidz, 2017.) One of the traditions that uses rice tumpeng is the Megengan Tradition in Kedungrejo Village, Waru-Sidoarjo (Fauziyah et al., 2021). This shows that the Javanese people often represent their gratitude in various forms of certain traditions or ceremonies.

### 3.3.4 Unifying religious community

Apem cake in Kirab Apem Sewu has a meaning as the unity of religious people. The people of Sewu Village consist of various religious adherents. Apem cakes that are round and flat symbolize the unity of the people of Sewu Village. Apem cakes can also be accepted in all religions and faiths believed by the people of Sewu Village (Rezeki, R.S., personal communication, December 14, 2021; Mujihandoko, personal communication, April 3, 2022).

Apem cakes are often found in various religious ceremonies. As seen in the Punggahan tradition in Bendono Village, Semarang Regency. This ceremony is carried out by Muslims in order to welcome the month of Ramadan (Ramadhani and Abdoeh, 2020). Hindus in some traditions also use apem cake as a complement. For example, at a Hindu wedding ceremony in Sidorejo Village, Banyuwangi, the apem cake is considered a symbol of female and male ancestors who are always respected (Kananda et al., 2018). These traditions certainly reinforce the fact that apem cakes can be accepted and utilized by the Indonesian people without being limited to certain beliefs.

## 3.4 Other complementary foods

In addition to the apem cake, the Kirab Apem Sewu also uses food ingredients in the form of agricultural products called *rowotan*. The apem cakes, which are arranged on top of the *jodang*, are then supplemented with produce, such as cassava, potatoes, peanuts, suweg, sweet potatoes, and banana kepok. The following are complementary materials in the Kirab Apem Sewu.

### 3.4.1 Cassava (*Manihot esculenta*)

One of the complementary ingredients used in Kirab Apem Sewu is cassava. Cassava is one of the crops in the

form of tubers that can be found in almost all parts of Indonesia. The produce used in this carnival is mostly in the form of food taken from the ground or referred to as underground plants (Jv: *pala pendhem*). One of them is cassava. Cassava can be seen in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Cassava.

### 3.4.2 Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*)

The next complementary ingredient is potatoes. Potatoes are a popular underground tuber around the world, including in Indonesia. Potatoes themselves can be processed into a variety of foods. Potatoes can be seen in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Potatoes.

### 3.4.3 Peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*)

Peanuts are also used as complementary ingredients in Kirab Apem Sewu. Peanuts are also included in underground plants. Peanuts are used as a complementary material for the carnival because it is an agricultural product that symbolizes soil fertility in Sewu Village. Peanuts can be seen in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Peanuts.

### 3.4.4 Elephant foot yam (*Amorphophallus paeoniifolius*)

The next complementary material which is categorized as an underground plant is elephant foot yam. The part of the plant that is taken for the carnival is the tuber. Currently, elephant foot yam is still easy to find in some parts of Indonesia. Elephant foot yam is safe for consumption. The processing methods also vary, for example by steaming. Elephant foot yam tubers can be seen in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Elephant foot yam.

### 3.4.5 Sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*)

Sweet potato is also used as a complement in the Kirab Apem Sewu. The sweet potato part used in the carnival is the tuber. Sweet potatoes are easily found around the Sewu Village area. Sweet potato tubers can be seen in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Sweet potato.

### 3.4.6 Saba/Kepok banana (*Musa acuminata x balbisiana*)

In addition to using complementary materials derived from underground crops (Jv: *pala pendhem*), the people of Sewu Village also use kepok bananas as a complementary material for the carnival. This type of banana can be used or processed into various types of food, for example, boiled or processed into chips. Saba/Kepok banana can be seen in Figure 10.

The complementary materials used in this tradition are in the form of local foods originating from crops in the Sewu Village area. These food ingredients symbolize gratitude to God Almighty for the abundance of crops produced in the Sewu Village area. The process is also

unique, in a way boiled or steamed without seasoning. This is done to maintain the authenticity and purity of the produce itself. Javanese people are used to processing crops for use in the tradition by boiling or steaming to maintain the purity of the produce (Pribadi *et al.*, 2021). The process of processing food by boiling or steaming leaves a distinctive taste which of course has been done by humans since ancient times.



Figure 10. Kepok banana.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aims to explain the meaning of the apem cake used in the Kirab Apem Sewu. Apem cake is the main element used in the *Kirab Apem Sewu*. Apem cake is processed from quality ingredients using several processes. Apem cake itself has several meanings that the people of Sewu Village believe to this day, such as a symbol of apology, freeing the soul from misfortune, a symbol of gratitude, and a unifying religious community. Besides the apem cake, the community also uses several complementary ingredients for the carnival, such as cassava, potatoes, elephant foot yam, peanuts, sweet potatoes, and kepok banana. The advantage of this research is that it focuses on the formulation of the problem, which focuses on the meaning of the apem cake used in the Kirab Apem Sewu. The meaning of apem cake in this carnival has never been studied before. As a reference for further research, this research is still limited to the meaning of apem cake and has not analyzed the apem cake visually. It is hoped that the results of this research can be a means to introduce one of Indonesian culture.

#### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all parties involved in the preparation of this manuscript.

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