

The power of local foods in the *Kebo-Keboan* traditional ceremony of Alasmalang, Banyuwangi, Indonesia: a philosophical study and cultural promotion

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Abstract

Food is an effective way for rural communities to introduce their culture. Therefore, they make various mobilization efforts to popularize their traditional foods. It comes as no surprise that the traditional ceremonies are held as a means of branding to promote these localities. This study was aimed to describe the local traditional foods presented at the *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony in Alasmalang, Banyuwangi district, Indonesia as a reflection of the culture within the Alasmalang community. The analysis focused on the philosophy of traditional foods to unravel the culture within the Alasmalang community. The data were collected through in-depth interviews to receive profound information. The data analysis was done using interactive methods. There were six variations of local foods found in the *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony, namely *Pecel Pitik*, *Tumpeng Putih*, *Tumpeng Kuning*, *Jenang Abang*, *Jenang Suro*, and boiled produce. All the local foods are made from local ingredients with local cultural beliefs lying within them. These foods reflect the religious, social, and environmental-loving culture of the Alasmalang community as well as a means of promoting local culture. The findings can serve as initiatives for cultural promotion elsewhere as well as an expansion in cultural studies

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in local food. Local food in Indonesia is generally made of basic materials such as edible tuber, sago palm, rice, and various spices, thereby containing adequate nutrition (Hutahayan, 2019). Nevertheless, some food is made with meat, fish, and local plants being its basic material. Indonesia is one of the South-East Asian states well-known for local food offered to foreign tourists (Hendijani, 2016). The introduction of local food to the global community also introduces the original culture, because tourists and educated ones understand an area's culture better through local food (Caber *et al.*, 2018).

The local meal is a kind of food consumed by the community since a long time ago (Alalwan *et al.*, 2017). Local food can also be defined as traditional food or ethnic food. Traditional food can be defined as the one deriving from ancestor inheritance over their knowledge on local ingredients (Yang and Lee, 2019) and as a media playing an important part in authenticating ethnical or national culture (Bardonea and Spalvěna,

2019). Traditional food is an important sign of the origin or the originality of community consumption in an area (Serrano-Cruz *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the knowledge on a type of certain food will result in knowledge on its preparing group (Laryea *et al.*, 2016).

Food is not only an edible object. But it is also a mechanism of giving destination experience and an alternative means of learning culture (Wijaya, *et al.*, 2017). Food is also defined as a metaphor to express cultural and ethnic identity (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Types of food most often searched for by researchers and enjoyers in the modern era are local ones. Local food is related to the one produced, consumed, and even sold in a certain area (Bianchi and Mortimer, 2015).

Local food is one of the local wealth in an area. Local food is something acceptable culturally to the people (Penafiel *et al.*, 2016). Local food is considered as one of the potential and quality product types (Balogh *et al.*, 2016) because it is prepared in a certain way and processed naturally (Fernández-Ferrín *et al.*, 2018). The original local food is also used as a preventive and

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alternative measure to heal the disease (Weerasekara et al., 2018). In addition, local food is produced easily because the basic ingredients used will be not far from the surrounding area because there is a close relationship between local food and its area (Boncinelli et al., 2017).

In cultural concept, local food projects the feeling of commonness. Preparing and choosing food are the people's ways of projecting the feelings of commonness and difference over the knowledge existing in other communities (Lee, 2017). The ability to unify the social community makes the local food always accessed and respected. Local food serving conducted together also affects the community psychically. Togetherness in preparing local food will result in dialogue that can make inter-individual fraternity bonds stronger in the community.

Culture affects the preference of meals significantly. The effect is reflected on the menus served in a traditional ceremony. Different areas will have different meals and beliefs and cultural values. For example, Yogyakarta typical food is *Gudeg*. *Gudeg* is a kind of food made of raw young jackfruit cooked slowly with gula aren (palm sugar), coconut milk, and other various spices (Fibri and Frøst, 2018). Another example is Sumatera Barat-typical food, *Rendang*. *Rendang* is a kind of food made of beef with various spices and coconut milk (Nurmufida et al., 2017). Those meals are almost surely served during traditional events.

In Indonesia, traditional ceremonies serve as one of the means to introduce local foods. The traditional ceremony is the one held in a place sustainably or hereditarily and containing belief, way of life, philosophy, and local wisdom values. As the ancestor's inheritance, the traditional ceremony will keep maintaining the existing values (Ruiz-Mallén and Corbera, 2013). Each of the traditional rites has its uniqueness as typical characteristics and is adjusted with the area's characteristics.

A traditional ceremony in Indonesia is inseparable from the presence of meal-offering (*sajian*). Food (meal) is considered a symbol of a social class's unity (Wijaya, 2019). Meal served is the local one in the area. Local food is a sign of a tribe's identity and its relationship with the culture owned (Yovani, 2019). A local meal is considered as local wisdom in decision making at the local level involving many groups in an area (Riptanti et al., 2018). That is why the meal is called a community's unique wealth (Sharif et al., 2016). The type of meal served is highly affected by the resources available in the area.

Local meals serving in a traditional ceremony proves

that Indonesia is a state rich in traditional meals. Even in Indonesia, the term *kuliner* (culinary) appears as an activity of tasting a variety of food and beverage (Saville et al., 2020). The local meal has a certain value in a community as it provides a framework to community and is connected to the culture (Ferguson et al., 2017). Therefore, each meal has different meanings in different areas (Walch et al., 2018).

One of the traditional ceremonies in Indonesia serving local meals in its procession is *Kebo-keboan* customary rite in Alasmalang. *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony is a village cleaning rite. The village cleaning (*bersih desa*) procession is a symbol of people's peaceful and harmonious life given by God the Only One (Dwiyanto, 2010). This traditional ceremony is held in Krajan village, Alasmalang Village, Banyuwangi, Indonesia. This area is a fertile one because Banyuwangi is well-known for its fertile soil (Prasetyo et al., 2018). It is this soil fertility that results in very abundant produce in Alasmalang. The map of Alasmalang village can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Map of Alasmalang. Alasmalang is located in Singojuruh Village, Banyuwangi, Indonesia. Alasmalang is marked with red colour.

In Indonesia, *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony is one of the cultural promotion media. As a traditional celebration as a festival, *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony introduces local culture to global society. It is accomplished, among others, through serving meaningful local meals to the people beyond their group (in this case invited guests and visitors). Local meal serving is one of the ways taken by Alasmalang people to popularize the local culture throughout the world.

Alasmalang people highly appreciate the produces yielded in their area. They considered produces as a great blessing from the Creator. The appreciation is manifested into, among others, local food serving in *Kebo-Keboan* traditional ceremony. The preparation of traditional meals is conducted mainly using local food existing in Banyuwangi but with distinctive characteristics. The food served is very meaningful. This article will discuss the typical food served in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony in Alasmalang along with its components and

meanings.

2. Materials and methods

This study was a descriptive qualitative research as it describes an object in-depth and in detail. This research was conducted through active observation. Active observation requires the author to participate directly in the activities being the object of research (Suwendra, 2018). The author's direct participation in the research object can optimize the understanding of the actual condition in the field.

This research took place in Krajan hamlet, Alasmalang village, Banyuwangi regency, Indonesia, for 3 (three) days. The participants of the research consisted of 3 (three) persons: a woman being the cook in ritual activity, a customary leader (*ketua adat*) as the leader of the ceremony procession, and a performer of the traditional ceremony. Data collection was conducted using in-depth interviews, combined with the recording/documentation technique. The interview was conducted for more than 3 (three) hours with each of the informants. This technique is intended to acquire in-depth information from the expert, related to the data needed in the research. The data of research results were reduced by sorting them by necessary categories.

Data validation was conducted using data source triangulation to validate the data. Triangulation was conducted by comparing the data coming from different informants or other relevant sources. The data analysis technique used referred to as an interactive analysis technique (Miles and Huberman, 1994). An interactive analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction to choose data needed. Data display was used to organize data in order to be more understandable. And finally, the conclusion drawing summarizes the result of the research.

3. Results and discussion

Kebo-keboan traditional ceremony in Alasmalang is a tradition considered as good and meaningful to Alasmalang people. This traditional ceremony is still held periodically until today. In the ritual procession, local food is a part of the procession. Local food is served in two events: *Barikan* and *Ijab Kabul*. Each food has a very important meaning. The local food served in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang is as follows.

3.1 *Pecel pitik*

Pecel pitik is one of the traditional food compulsorily existing in the *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang, Banyuwangi. *Pecel*

pitik is Osing community's typical food in Banyuwangi (Wahyuningtiyas et al., 2018). Generally, *pecel pitik* is a food made of chicken combined with *serundeng* (Hartatik, 2011). *Serundeng* is a relish made of grated coconut and spices (coriander, onion, garlic, palm sugar, tamarind water, *salam* leaf, and lemongrass) fried without oil until drying and brownish (Boga, 2013). *Pecel pitik* food in Javanese culture symbolizes what is done daily (*ucel-ucel*) intended to get goodness (everything is good) (Kholil, 2008).

Pecel pitik in Alasmalang village has typical characteristics. The chicken used in *pecel pitik Alasmalang* is the one with yellow legs and beak as the symbol of greatness. Chicken meat is then baked to result in a delicious aroma. *Serundeng* is made of grated coconut that is steamed first. The spices used for preparing *serundeng* are chili, onion, and garlic half-fried, candlenut, fried peanut, salt, sugar, *terasi* (condiment made from pounded and fermented shrimp or small fish) and squeezed lemon. All spices are ground finely. The fine spices were mixed with grated coconut to which warm water is poured. The baked chicken was then spiced typically and served along with rice arranged in a cone shape like *tumpeng*. The typical characteristic of *pecel pitik* in Alasmalang village is the presence of gravy on its spices.

Pecel pitik in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang, Banyuwangi is presented twice: in *Barikan* and *Ijab Kabul*. *Barikan* is a village ceremonial meal rite (Hefner, 1987). *Barikan* procession in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang was conducted on the day before the event. It was conducted after *Ashar* amid the intersection and along the roads of Krajan village, Alasmalang. The leader of *tasyakuran* is a religious leader. Meanwhile, *Ijab Kabul* is a procession before the beginning of *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony. *Pecel pitik* serving in *Ijab Kabul* procession is a meal for special guests such as regent, head of sub-district (*camat*), and head of the village, along with their rows. The appearance of *Pecel Pitik* used in this work is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. *Pecel pitik*. *Pecel pitik* is one of traditional food in Alasmalang, Banyuwangi made of chicken combined with *serundeng*.

3.2 Nasi tumpeng

Nasi tumpeng (tumpeng rice) in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang is served during *Barikan* procession. Generally, *tumpeng* is a food containing cone-shaped (white) rice encircled with side dishes (e.g. fish, egg, meat), vegetable, and some fruit slices (Boogert, 2017). The cone shape means the expectation of prosperous life close to the Creator (Dewi, 2019). *Tumpeng* stands for *tumapaking panguripan-tumindak lempeng-tumuju Pangeran* (please refer to the thought that human being should live toward Allah's way) (Gardjito and Erwin, 2010). Another concept states that *tumpeng* also stands for *yen metu kudu mempeng* (we should be sincere when we get out) (Lindayani et al., 2020). *Tumpeng* represents that human life should be intended for the Creator.

Nasi tumpeng presented during *Barikan* procession in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang is divided into two types. Firstly, *tumpeng* is served with white rice. White color symbolizes goodness or purity (Sengupta, 2016). The components of *tumpeng* are white rice, vegetables, boiled egg split into two, red-spiced rooster meat, *kering tempeh* (sweet and spicy deep fried tempeh) and *tahu bumbu merah* (red-spiced tofu). This *tumpeng nasi putih* represents the purity way toward the Creator.

Secondly, *tumpeng nasi kuning*. Yellow is the color symbolizing the winning of goodness over badness (Couacaud, 2016). The components existing in *tumpeng kuning* are *serundeng*, fried egg sliced in rectangular shape, *kering tempeh*, fried peanut, and noodle. *Tumpeng nasi kuning* symbolizes Alasmalang people who have been avoided unexpected evil and the village's prosperity.

Philosophically, *tumpeng* is divided into four levels. The higher the position the smaller is the shape, meaning to get closer to the Creator (God). The four levels in ascending order are *heneng*, *hening*, *huni*, and *hani* (Mustolehudin and Muawanah, 2017). The first level is *heneng* or sharia (Islam law). This level means that an individual should do his/her obligation as a human being (Masifah, 2016). *Heneng* is represented as many components in the bottom of *tumpeng*. The second level is *hening* (silence) or *tarekat*. This level represents away toward the heart (Makin, 2016). *Hening* in *tumpeng* is on the position of rice not encircled with a side dish and vegetable components but still have a large shape, meaning that there are still many dynamics in life.

The third level is *huni* or *hakekat* (essence). This level represents an individual at the level of awareness and understanding toward the truth or genuineness, the

Creator (Makin, 2016). At the third level, the shape of *nasi tumpeng* is getting smaller. An individual achieving this level can find the true way to him/her self, the way toward the Creator (God). The fourth level is *hani* or *makrifat*. *Makrifat* is the highest level meaning perfectness level (Fauziyyah et al., 2018). We can achieve it when we see God. This level is symbolized with the top of *tumpeng* as the culminating point. At this level, human beings submit their entire life to God or in other words, get close to God as the master of the universe. The appearance of *Nasi tumpeng* used in this work is shown in Figure 3.

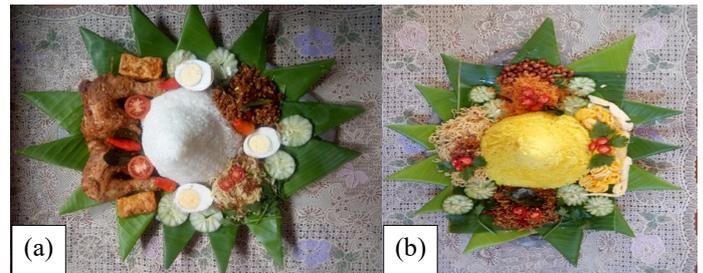


Figure 3. *Nasi tumpeng* in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony. (a) *Tumpeng nasi putih* symbolizes goodness or purity. (b) *Tumpeng nasi kuning* symbolizes the winning of goodness over badness.

3.3 Jenang

Jenang is one of the traditional food in Java. *Jenang* is usually served in *mitoni* rite (Machmudah, 2016). *Mitoni* is an activity commemorating seven-month gestation (Lis, 2014). *Jenang* in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession is served during *Ijab Kabul* procession. There are two types of *jenang* used: *Jenang Abang* and *Jenang Suro*.

Jenang abang is made of red sticky rice mixed with coconut milk. Despite mixing, the color of *jenang* remains to be red. The red color symbolizes the color of blood used to frighten (Hutchings, 2003). *Jenang abang* represents Alasmalang people's bravery to expel evils bringing disaster to the village.

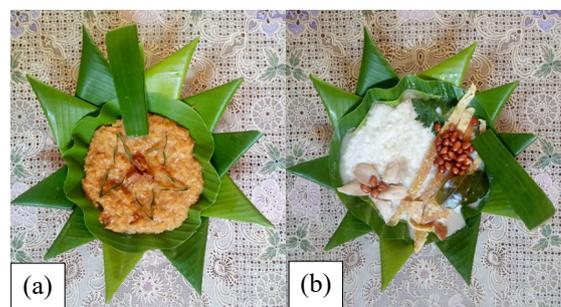


Figure 4. *Jenang* in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony. (a) *Jenang abang* symbolizes Alasmalang people's bravery to expel evils bringing disaster to the village. (b) *Jenang suro* symbolizes the cleanliness of village from any epidemic and disaster.

Jenang suro is a traditional food served on *Suro*

month by Javanese people. *Suro* is the first month in Javanese calendar (Cochrane, 2009). *Jenang suro* is served because the *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang is held on *Suro* month. *Jenang suro Alasmalang* is made of white rice made porridge mixed with *opor ayam*, fried egg sliced in rectangular shape, and fried peanut. This meal symbolizes the cleanliness of the village from any epidemic and disaster. The appearance of *Jenang* used in this work is shown in Figure 4.

3.4 Boiled produces

Kebo-keboan traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang elicits local government officials such as regent, head of sub-district (*camat*), and head of the village, along with their rows. To welcome and to be familiar with them, some meals are served to them, including the village produces. The produces served are cassava, corn, purple edible tuber, and small potato (*kentang jembut*). All produce is served by boiling them without spice. This food symbolizes the abundant produce of Alasmalang village. The meals served by boiling them without spice are intended to be the purity of Alasmalang Village's farming products. The appearance of *Boiled produces* used in this work is shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Boiled Produce in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony. The boiled produce symbolizes produces is very abundant in Alasmalang village.

The four kinds of local food aforementioned symbolically represent culture and life in Alasmalang village. *Pecel pitik* as typical local food is served as the manifestation of Alasmalang people's love and pride of the local culture they own. The serving of *tumpeng*, *jenang abang*, and *jenang suro* with rice being their basic material is the manifestation of the utilization of the largest produces by Alasmalang community, rice (paddy). In addition, *tumpeng* reflects strong religiosity in people's life. Meanwhile, *jenang abang* and *jenang suro* reflect Alasmalang people's bravery in protecting their areas from any disasters by conducting activity of cleaning the village. The boiled produce symbolizes that not only rice or paddy is abundant in Alasmalang but also produces such as edible tuber, potato, cassava and others maintained naturally are abundant in this village.

Local food served in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony procession in Alasmalang represents the concept of unique traditional food. Generally, local food in Indonesia appears based on local cultural concepts of acculturation with foreign culture. Local food in *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony resulted from the utilization of local resources given by God and the community's life philosophy. The cultural effect of this local food explains that local resource will be a great power if it is processed with highly philosophical local wisdom. In addition, local food values are very meaningful as they can be the competitive advantage to show off its glory in the global community.

4. Conclusion

The local foods served by the *Kebo-keboan* traditional ceremony in Alasmalang, Banyuwangi, Indonesia includes *Pecel Pitik*, *Tumpeng Putih*, *Tumpeng Kuning*, *Jenang Abang*, *Jenang Suro*, and boiled produce. All of these traditional foods are made from local ingredients that are treated with the cultural beliefs of the Alasmalang community. Each food reflects the culture of the Alasmalang people. *Pecel Pitik* and *Tumpeng* reflect the religious nature of society. *Jenang Abang* and *Jenang Suro* symbolize social culture. The boiled produce reflects the environmental-loving nature of the Alasmalang community. The results of this research serve as the foundation to preserve the culture and optimize local cultural resources for the success of the next generation.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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