



Rise and Survive

The Journey of Pemalang Culinary Specialties in Historical Perspective

Ilham Nur Utomo¹(✉) and Neilia Kamal²

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Profesor Kiai Haji Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Purwokerto, Indonesia

inurutomo@uinsaizu.ac.id

² Dinas Kebudayaan Kota Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstract. Culinary is a cultural product that also represents the identity of a community. Nowadays, Pemalang culinary specialties are increasingly recognized among the public. However, there's always good news wrapped up in bad news. Many people still do not know the historical background of these culinary specialties. The objective of this study was to explain the emergence of Pemalang culinary specialties and how these culinary specialties have survived to the present day. This study examines the types of Pemalang culinary specialties including Nasi Grombyang, Lontong Dekem, Sate Loso, and Bakso Daging Pak Miad. This study uses the historical method which is conducted chronologically, consisting of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The research results found that the emergence of Nasi Grombyang, Lontong Dekem, Sate Loso, and Bakso Daging Pak Miad has different backgrounds, although they are geographically in the same area. The adjustments made by these culinary specialties merchants are the key to why Pemalang culinary specialties, consisting of Nasi Grombyang, Lontong Dekem, Sate Loso, and Bakso Daging Pak Miad have survived to this day. These culinary specialties merchants make adjustments based on the need and availability of raw materials, such as adding menus and changes in the raw materials they used. The adjustments made by the food merchants did not reduce the public's interest in enjoying Pemalang culinary specialties. The great potential of Pemalang culinary specialties needs attention from the local government and innovation by culinary businessman, so that it can improve the economy and tourist attraction.

Keywords: Bakso Daging Pak Miad · Lontong Dekem · Nasi Grombyang · Pemalang Culinary Specialties · Sate Loso

1 Introduction

Culinary is a part of the culture that is passed constructively based on geographical background, historical experience, and needs [6]. Nowadays, culinary is not only understood as a cooking activity to make a dish to eat but also an economically profitable identity and tourism commodity. Culinary studies are also growing, with one being in the field of

history. The historical values of food are crucial because it relates to the socio-cultural background, identity, and legitimacy of the place where the food originated.

Local cuisine includes regional specialties and beverages from a particular region or country [8]. In Indonesia, various culinary specialties are often associated with rice, spicy, tasty, and sweet dishes that are mostly fried, with spices, chili sauce, and are guaranteed to be halal [15]. Such typical culinary is found in various areas, both urban and rural. Cuisine can be the identity of a nation, it is very important to know the history and development of traditional cuisine in each region in Indonesia [7]. One area with unique culinary delights that is interesting to study from a historical perspective is Pemalang Regency. Several Pemalang specialties can still be found and have easily, including *Nasi Grombyang*, *Lontong Dekem*, *Sate Loso*, and *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*. These cuisines have their unique taste and fans.

Culinary food is part of the culture, which [2] defines as “something” that lives, develops, and moves forward to a particular point. Culinary as part of culture is also passed down from generation to generation and constantly evolving [5]. Therefore, culinary food can undergo adjustment or development after going through the process within a certain period. Such a concept is relevant to culinary developments from a diachronic historical perspective. Thus, it is immensely interesting to study the typical cuisine of Pemalang in a historical context, particularly since the study of the history of the typical cuisine of Pemalang has not been widely researched by historians. This study is expected to be a lighter and enrich the treasures of local culinary history research, especially in Pemalang Regency.

2 Method

The method employed in this study was the historical method. Systematically, the steps in the historical method consist of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The sources used in this include were written sources including scientific articles, newspapers, and books. Furthermore, sources from interviews with historical actors or, in this case, relevant culinary sellers were used. These sources are then criticized, to get reliable sources. Then these sources are interpreted, and written chronologically.

3 Finding and Discussion

3.1 Nasi Grombyang

Sega Grombyang (*Nasi Grombyang*) is literally derived from the Javanese language *sega* which means rice, and *grombyang* which means swaying. These two terms represent the culinary content and form because *sega* is inseparable from gravy and meat. *Sega* with gravy and meat served in a small bowl or a container looks flimsy or swaying. The naming is certainly unique because it is based on regional languages, with each region having its peculiarities [14] *Sega Grombyang* was later better known by the public as *Nasi Grombyang*, which can be seen on the boards of every food stall that provides the current *Nasi Grombyang* (Grombyang Rice). This dish, in general, consists of rice,

buffalo or beef, thick gravy with spices, and a sprinkling of scallions, served with beef satay and innards.

When tracing the origin of the creation of *Nasi Grombyang*, we can refer to the information conveyed by Warso and Waridin. Warso is a third-generation *Nasi Grombyang* seller who helped his brother sell *Nasi Grombyang* in 1966 and eventually began selling on his own in 1978 [1]. Similar to Warso, Waridin has been selling *Nasi Grombyang* since 1978 [6]. Therefore, it is certain that *Nasi Grombyang* existed in Pemalang before 1960 as there were already *Nasi Grombyang* sellers in the 1960s and 1970s, one of whom was the third generation.

Initially, sellers peddled *Nasi Grombyang* by walking around and occasionally stopping at strategic locations. The locations of the *Nasi Grombyang* sellers are scattered in the Pemalang District, particularly in the Pemalang Square as a center for food sellers to gather in the 1960s-1970s. In peddling their wares, the cooking and selling utensils used were still simple, including a large cauldron as a sauce container, a rice holder covered with a red cloth, and a *teplok* lamp for lighting [13].

The *Nasi Grombyang* sellers who have survived from the past to the present, as well as the new sellers, demonstrate that there are some differences in the raw materials used, as well as the cooking and selling equipment. First, the primary raw material for *Nasi Grombyang* has shifted from buffalo meat to beef. Second, how to peddle *Nasi Grombyang*, which used to be around, is now done permanently in the form of kiosks or tent stalls. Third, the adjustment of cooking or selling equipment that is more modern.

3.2 Lontong Dekem

The popularity of *Lontong Dekem* (Dekem Rice Cake) on Pemalang's culinary map cannot be compared with *Nasi Grombyang* which now can be found in several cities outside Pemalang Regency. However, *Lontong Dekem* has many enthusiasts, particularly the local Pemalang community. There are two versions of stories regarding the origin of the naming of *Lontong Dekem*. First, the name *Lontong Dekem* is derived from the word *lontong* which means food from rice wrapped in banana leaves, and *dekem* which means submerged [3]. Second, it is based on the early existence of *Lontong Dekem* sellers and buyers under a banyan tree in Pemalang Square. *Lontong Dekem* sellers at first peddled their wares under a banyan tree by sitting on the ground in a corner or *ndekem*.

One bowl of *Lontong Dekem* includes sliced lontong, sliced duck meat, fried bone crumbs, noodle crackers, spring onions, and gravy. As a complement, *Lontong Dekem* can also be served with chicken satay consisting of two varieties, including chicken *ampelati* satay with a sprinkling of serundeng and chicken satay with broth. Before serving, the *Lontong Dekem* sauce is boiled in a clay cauldron or barrel [11]. The use of clay cauldrons is considered capable of producing a distinctive taste.

When traced back historically, the beginning of *Lotong Dekem's* existence cannot be separated from Sahari's role. He is a *Lontong Dekem* seller who started selling in 1950. According to Kasirin, Sahari's son, his father sold *Lontong Dekem* under a large banyan tree in Pemalang Square. In 1966, Kasirin continued the *Lontong Dekem* business following his father's death. Kasirin had moved to Sirandu and the stall is now located on Jalan R.E. Martadinata, north of Pemalang Square.

Over the past seventy years, *Lontong Dekem* has undergone several changes in order to meet the needs of buyers and sellers. One of them is the selling method, which was previously stuck under a banyan tree and is now located in a stall, complete with tables and chairs. Besides, the *lontong*, which was previously jumbo in size, is now medium in size. The use of jumbo-sized rice cakes can still be found in 2010 [11]. This adjustment is considered natural because it adapts to the needs and conditions of sellers and buyers with the aim of maintaining the existence of *Lontong Dekem*.

Currently, there are three main reference places to buy *Lontong Dekem* in Pemalang, including *Warung Lontong Dekem* of Pak Kasirin, Pak Drajat, and Pak Da'an. The three stalls are open from evening to night. In 2014, *Lontong Dekem* could be found in Pekalongan, at Mrs. Jamilah's food stall who also sells *Nasi Grombyang* [10]. However, the popularity of *Lontong Dekem* is different from *Nasi Grombyang* which already has many customers from outside Pemalang Regency.

3.3 Sate Loso

Different from *Nasi Grombyang* and *Lontong Dekem* which are identical to the sauce, there is another unique Pemalang culinary specialty, namely Sate Loso (Loso Satay). The main ingredients used are buffalo or beef covered in red bean sauce. *Sate Loso* originally used buffalo meat, but due to the difficulty of obtaining this meat, it has now shifted to beef. In terms of taste, it tends to be savory and slightly sweet. *Sate Loso* is now served together with *Soto Loso/Loso* Soup, which contains meat, young bones, and bean sprouts.

Some people believe that *Sate Loso* has been around since the Dutch colonial period. The name *Sate Loso* is derived from the name of its creator, Mbah Loso [9]. For generations, *Sate Loso* cuisine has been preserved and served to customers. However, the generation after Mbah Loso has made changes, both in terms of raw materials and the variety of complementary foods served with *Sate Loso*. On the other hand, the existence of *Sate Loso* complements the archipelago's culinary diversity in the form of satay.

Sate Loso restaurants can be found throughout Pemalang District, including *Sate Loso* of Pak Mul, *Sate Loso* of Pak In, and *Sate Loso* of Pak No. These three restaurants are located in Pemalang District, which is easily reached by private vehicles. Currently, *Sate Loso* can only be found in Pemalang. Therefore, everyone who wants to eat *Sate Loso* must come to Pemalang.

3.4 Bakso Daging Pak Miad

Bakso Daging Pak Miad (Pak Miad's Meatballs) is a typical Pemalang culinary with its own uniqueness. *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s dish contains no meatballs, unlike other meatball dishes. *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s soup is dark in color and tends to be thick with sliced young tomatoes and a sprinkling of yellow crackers, as well as white noodles (vermicelli). They are made with sliced beef as the main ingredient. One bowl of *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s is served with two separate plates of rice cake and crackers. This kind of presentation later became the specialty of *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s.

The name *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s is based on the originator, Miad. Miad comes from Pekalongan and married Duriyah who later settled in Taman District, Pemalang

Regency [12]. According to Kusiyati, the second-generation successor to *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s, Miad has been selling meatballs since 1965. The making of spices and cooking activities at that time was carried out independently and simply by Miad. Miad's selling location has shifted several times. Originally located in Banjaran Village, it is now located in Jebed Utara Village, which Kusiyati took over after Miad died in the 1990s.

Now *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s are growing in terms of sales as they are getting better known and getting more and more customers. Meanwhile, in terms of presentation, several adjustments have been made, including the use of soy sauce containers that were previously placed in a plate or bowl, are now placed in a bottle, and so on. Kusiyati as the second generation is more than capable of continuing Miad's business, particularly regarding its consistency. *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s are no longer just a daily culinary dish for the people of Jebed Utara Village. More than that, it is part of tourism commodities such as *Nasi Grombyang*, *Lontong Dekem*, and *Sate Loso*, which can entice tourists to eat them. Therefore, culinary deserve to be included in the creative industry subsector because it is motivated by Indonesia's unique cultural heritage of food products, which is essentially a source of excellence for Indonesia [4].

4 Conclusion

Historically, the typical cuisine of Pemalang has its uniqueness. The beginning of the creation of *Nasi Grombyang*, *Lontong Dekem*, *Sate Loso*, and *Bakso Daging Pak Miad*'s did not happen at the same time. *Nasi Grombyang* existed before 1960, *Lontong Dekem* in 1950, *Sate Loso* since the colonial period, and *Bakso Daging Pak Miad* in 1965. This special culinary is egalitarian because it is freely sold and consumed by people of all backgrounds. The resilience of Pemalang's culinary specialties is driven by the flexibility factor or adjustments made by the relevant sellers. These adjustments include aspects of the use of raw materials, selling and presentation methods, and selling locations. These adjustments are acceptable to the community and do not lead to significant problems.

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