

# ***Bancakan* and Its Potential as a Tourist Attraction**

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Keyword: Ritual, heritage, tourist attraction, culture, culinary

Abstract: *Bancakan* comes from Chinese word *ciak* which means eating. *Bancakan* then interpreted as eating together is one of the rituals carried out by Javanese. This ritual is carried on for generations. The preservation of *bancakan* needs to be done considering that at this time not all Javanese perform this ritual. Moreover, there are not many people who understand the philosophy of *bancakan* especially for young generation and millennials. The development of sustainable tourism is expected to make *bancakan* as sustainable heritage. The aim of this research is to see the potential of *bancakan* as tourist attraction. Data collection techniques used in this research were interviews, observations, and documentation. The respondents of this research were community representatives, traditional and religious leader in one of villages in Karanganyar Regency, Indonesia, that still carry out *bancakan* as part of cultural heritage. The study shows that the function of *bancakan* has changed from what was previously a means to spread the value of Islam, becoming a means for giving alms (sharing with other). The results indicate that *bancakan* has the potential to become a tourist attraction both for cultural and food tourism since *bancakan* is a ritual with the most important component is food. In carrying out this ritual, the local community has their own schedule throughout the year both individually and in groups, usually they use Javanese calendar. *Bancakan* is carried out with specific purposes symbolized by the various forms of rice served. Cone-shape rice symbolizes gratitude to God, flat-shape rice symbolizes a blessing to supernatural beings who have coexisted with human, and round-shape rice is a form of gratitude to ancestors.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

There are a bunch of research related to gastronomic and ritual. Research conducted in Hong Kong examines the gastronomic contribution in the quality of tourist experience and whether gastronomy returns to the tourist desirability due to gastronomy offered by the destination (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). The data collection technique used was a survey using a questionnaire. The technique of determining the sample used was sampling random. Data that has been collected was then analyzed with statistical descriptions. The results of the analysis show that gastronomy affects tourist perceptions of the destination. In addition, gastronomy also affects the desire to return to the destination.

Another study revealed the identity of food in relation to tourist destinations in Taiwan (Lin et al., 2011). There are two techniques used to measure food identity in tourism. The first technique used was by reviewing brochures and websites related to tourism. The second technique used was distributing

questionnaires to tourists. Data triangulation was carried out to test the consistency of findings using two different methods. From the analysis carried out, the two studies provided a better picture of food identity in relation to tourism in Taiwan.

Research in Italy provides an overview of tourism in rural areas, especially in agricultural areas (Lagravinese, 2013). He reveals that tourism activities in rural areas are more related to agriculture which brings additional income and increases concern for environmental and soil conservation (Lagravinese, 2013). The author describes agro-tourism in rural areas in Italy and then gives a picture of the case in Puglia about traditional agriculture that has changed by providing good facilities for tourists.

Subsequent research related to local culinary was conducted in Dili. This study aims are to identify traditional types of food, measure tourist perceptions of traditional foods, and formulate programs to develop traditional food as culinary tourism (Araujo, 2016). Data collection techniques were observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis

technique was SWOT matrix. The results showed that in Dili there are several traditional meals. Regarding the perception of tourists, researchers revealed that the quality and cleanliness of traditional food is fairly good. For services provided by restaurants, it also shows a positive response.

A scholar examines the transformation of rituals that are used as tourist attractions in Chiang Mai, Thailand (Porananond, 2015). This research uses historical and ethnographic writing methods to understand ritual transformation in the Songkran Festival. The results show that the occurrence of cultural transformation and trust at the time of the Songkran Festival was a result of the influence of tourism, the development of the market and added to the commodification, secularity and the decline of Buddhist beliefs by the local community.

Indonesia has an extraordinary natural and cultural wealth. From natural and cultural diversity, there are some that have been used as tourist attractions, but some have not yet been developed. Tourist attraction is any object, person, place, or concept that attracts people to get experience either geographically or through remote electric means, the experience can be recreational, spiritual, or otherwise (Stange and Brown, 2013). In other words, attraction is something that can draw people to visit a destination, it can be something to see, something to do, something to eat, something to buy, and something/ somewhere to live. Kuta Beach, Mount Bromo, and Komodo Island are examples of natural wealth that has been developed into a tourist attraction. While examples of cultural riches that have attracted domestic and foreign tourists are Ngaben, Lompat Batu, and Batik.

Besides that, there is still a wealth of untapped natural and cultural resources to become a tourist attraction, especially the gastronomic and ritual as part of culture. One example of Indonesian culture originating from Java is "*bancakan*" or known to the general public with festivity. "*Bancakan*" is one of the rituals carried out by a part of the Javanese community and is still carried out until now from generation to generation. Javanese people have a special time when they have to carry out the ritual based on the Javanese calendar. Most of the goals of "*bancakan*" are carried out, namely, to ask for salvation and show gratitude to the Almighty. Not only the purpose, the traditional food used in the ritual has an important role because the food involved is not a food consumed daily by the Javanese people.

The goal of tourism according to Indonesian Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning tourism include

"preserving nature, the environment, resources and also promoting culture". The preservation of "*bancakan*", including food, needs to be done considering the development of the era and nowadays not all Javanese people carry out the ritual. The preservation of *bancakan* needs to be done considering that at this time not all Javanese perform this ritual. Moreover, there are not many people who understand the philosophy of *bancakan* especially for young generation and millennials. Based on this regulation, tourism can be used to preserve "*bancakan*". For that reason, it is necessary to conduct study about potential of *bancakan* as tourist attraction.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in Karanganyar Regency and focused on Kerjo District. This location was chosen because in this place there are various *bancakan* rituals that are carried out and involve traditional food as part of the traditional rituals of the local community. In addition, there has never been a study in this place that discusses the potential of *bancakan* as a tourist attraction. In order to collect the primary and secondary data needed, the data collection techniques are needed as follows: a. interview; the data taken is in the form of traditional food and its function in the "*bancakan*" ritual, b. observation; the data taken is in the form of the potential "*bancakan*" as a tourist attraction, c. documentation; the data taken is in the form of traditional food and its function in the "*bancakan*" ritual and its potential" as a tourist attraction. The respondents of this research were community representatives, traditional and religious leader in one of villages in Kerjo District, Karangrejo, that still carry out *bancakan* as part of cultural heritage. The researcher analyzed the collected data using qualitative descriptive data analysis techniques. The data obtained are sorted into groups of data that are needed and not needed based on their relation to the topic of the research. Data that is not needed will be dropped from this study and the required data will be organized into a pattern, category, and basic description unit and then give significant meaning to the analysis, then look for relationships between the dimensions of the description. This is done so that appropriate conclusions can be taken.

### 3 DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 *Bancakan*

*Bancakan* comes from Chinese word *ciak* which means eating. *Bancakan* then interpreted as eating together is one of the rituals carried out by Javanese. This ritual is carried on for generations. In the past, *bancakan* was a medium for Islamic leader in Java to gather people who were then given an understanding and knowledge about Islam.

Nowadays, the function of *bancakan* has changed from what was previously a means to spread the value of Islam, becoming a means for giving alms (sharing with other). This purpose of *bancakan* in line with the values of their religion. *Bancakan* is a media of charity as form of gratitude to God.

At each *bancakan*, there is rice decorated with side dishes beside there are always prayers offered to God. This ritual ends with a meal together, exchange food, or provide food to take home.

The data obtained from interview with local people representatives showed that each household of the present generation still perform *bancakan* as taught and passed down by previous generations. For example, they celebrate the birthdays of their family members through *bancakan* with internal family members. If it comes to the commemoration of important days such as the first day of the fasting month and Eid, representatives from each family will prepare decorated rice and gather with other neighbors to carry out the ritual, *bancakan*. However, they do not know the meaning of every detail of the ritual performed. This is even more for the younger generation, millennial, they are rarely involved in this ritual.

#### 3.2 The Potential of *Bancakan* as Cultural Tourism Attraction

ICOMOS (International Scientific Committee on Cultural Heritage) gave a definition to cultural tourism: an activity which enable people to experience the different ways of life, understanding the customs, traditions, the physical environment, the intellectual ideas and those place of architectural, historic, archeological or other cultural form from earlier times for the firsthand (ICOMOS, 1999).

Based on the interview with local religious leader there are many occasions the local people conduct *bancakan*. For example, of the occasion is in every first month the Javanese calendar, people commemorate their birthdays by giving alms as a

form of gratitude and hope that they are given the salvation of the world and the hereafter.

In carrying out this ritual, the local community has their own schedule throughout the year both individually and in groups, usually they use Javanese calendar except to celebrate independence day of Indonesia, they use international calendar. Unlike the international calendar, the Javanese calendar is the same as the Islamic calendar where the date change start after the sunset. That is why every *bancakan* is usually performed before the day changes on the international calendar.

There are two types of *bancakan*; ritual carried out together by the community and individually. *Bancakan* carried out together by the community are commemorate important days for community. Some *bancakan* carried out by community are to celebrate Independence Day, Islamic New Year, commemoration birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, 15 days before fasting month, the first day, 21st day, the last day of fasting month.

Every August 16th night before the celebration of Independence Day on August 17th, the local community also held *bancakan*. It's conducted to commemorate the services of the heroes who have died in fighting for independence of Indonesia.

To celebrate Islamic and Javanese new year, the community also carry out *bancakan*. This ritual is a form of gratitude to The Almighty for the fortune and bless receive in the previous year and the hope to get it more for the next year.



Figure 1 Local People Perform *Bancakan* in the Graveyard

Once a year to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, the community held *bancakan* in the graveyard, Fig. 1. It is done to make a pray for the prophet and the family who had passed away. Not only that, *bancakan* carried out at that place to remind of the death that would surely come so that people can people themselves; more diligently to worship and try to become a better human being. The place is also intended for the common interest

of working together to clean the tomb in addition to also being a place to meet other residents.

The most unique bancakan is the ritual held on Ruwah 15th (Javanese calendar) or 15th day before Ramadhan, the fasting month in Islamic calendar. This bancakan is held to remind the people that in 15 days fasting will be commenced. In addition, bancakan in 15th day before fasting month is a sign that pilgrimage time to the graveyard to pray for families who have passed away and clean their tomb before Ramadhan arrives. In this time, the household will carry out bancakan if there was a deceased family. The uniqueness of this bancakan is that community will move from one house to another to attend the rituals and pray for families who have passed away. Not only that, this ritual use savory rice where the aim is to pray to God to forgive the sins of the deceased family and accept all his good deeds and pray for the prophet Muhammad in order to get help from him in the hereafter.

In the month of Ramadan, local community carried out bancakan for three times, namely on the first day of fasting, day 21, and the last day. The first day was held a ritual to express gratitude that the community can face fasting month, at the same time they pray that the next month of fasting could run smoothly, there would be no obstacles. On the 21st day, a ritual was held to commemorate the descent of the Holy Qur'an. On the last day, the ritual was carried out by using two flat-shape rice; one is symbol of signifying gratitude to complete the fasting month for the whole month smoothly and hope that their body and energy would recovery quickly, and also hope that it can be face the fasting month in the following year. The next rice is a form of gratitude for the coming of Eid which is at the same time to ask forgiveness from God for the mistakes and sins that have been done by all family members.

In addition to previous examples of bancakan carried out jointly by the community, there are rituals performed individually. Bancakan performed by individuals are carried out to commemorate important days for the individuals or their family. The example of bancakan carried out by individual are celebration of birthday, memorial of day of death from family member, harvest time, and abundant fortune celebration such as a new motorbike or car.

At each harvest season, members of the local community carry out rituals individually. This is done as a form of gratitude for the harvest obtained because most people depend on agriculture. Not only fortune that is obtained at harvest time, people individually perform rituals even when they get

more sustenance in this case can buy a motorcycle or car as a form of sustenance that is received, they will perform the ritual.

The ritual is not only done for people who are still alive but also for families who have died. In Javanese tradition, there is a memorial to death which is done by holding bancakan that is on the 7th day, 40th day, 100th day, one year, two years, and the last is the 1000th day after death. The family will perform bancakan to pray for other family members who have passed away on the memorial of their death.

Local people feel that if they do not carry out bancakan they will get disaster and bad luck such as plague and crop failure. On the contrary, by holding bancakan local people feel happy because they can give alms, share with others. This was stated because they did not have enough money that could be shared. By holding this ritual, people can give alms by giving food to others. Back to the aims of bancakan, sharing with others is intended to express gratitude for the blessings obtained and the hope that God will grant all wishes and favors obtained can be increased because people who are given food will pray for the giver.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that bancakan has fulfilled some elements of the definition of cultural tourism. This ritual is a custom and tradition of local community which is a symbol of their way of life that is why bancakan has potential as cultural tourism attraction

### 3.3 The Potential of *Bancakan* as Food Tourism Attraction

To see the potential of bancakan as food tourist attraction, we should know the definition of food tourism in the first place. The main refinement on food tourism is cultural anthropology which is a combination of authenticity, culture and motivation to represent the origin, history, place and language (Ellis et al., 2018). For that reason, it is necessary to study the themes of food tourism in bancakan.

Karim (Karim et al., 2010) said that the term culinary, gastronomy, and food tourism have similar meaning that tourist travel to a destination with the main purpose is to find food. Although bancakan is a ritual but the main media used is food that is rice decorated with side dishes.

Discourse of food as local identity represent a desire to retain imagined past of idyllic, rural, and non-capitalist systems unlike globalization (De Jong and Varley, 2017), (Halfacree, 2007). Authentication of local food can construct a unique



taste around specific destination to localize and can be a marketing strategy to promote the destination itself (Rebecca, 2000). Bancakan which used traditional local cuisine as media has a unique taste and forms depends on which traditional events it represents. Uniqueness and authenticity of bancakan can be recognized as local taste from Karanganyar.

The rice used in bancakan is plain or savory rice or combination of both with various forms adjusted to the specific purposes of each event. Cone-shape rice symbolizes gratitude to God, flat-shape rice symbolizes a blessing to supernatural beings who have coexisted with human, and round-shape rice is a form of gratitude to ancestors.



Figure 2: *Tumpeng*, The Cone-Shape Rice

Fig. 2 usually used to celebrate the birthday of a child. Javanese celebrate their birthday once in 35 days, based on their calendar. The cone-shape rice is symbol of mountain as a source of prosperity. Through this cone-shape rice, there is a hidden hope to get more abundant fortune. To decorate this rice, they used boiled side dishes such as blanched vegetable with coconut sauce, spicy steamed vegetable in banana leaves, sweet steamed red bean, and boiled eggs. They do not use fried side dishes for this cone-shape rice. This ritual is carried out in the house of people who are having birthday.

There is one thing that must be added if carrying out rituals for children that is to put money under banana leaves of cone-shape rice. The three components; cone-shape rice, boiled egg, sweet red bean, and the money are used as symbol of hope to keep the child in the peace/balance condition, can reduce self-desire and grow up into a good human being.

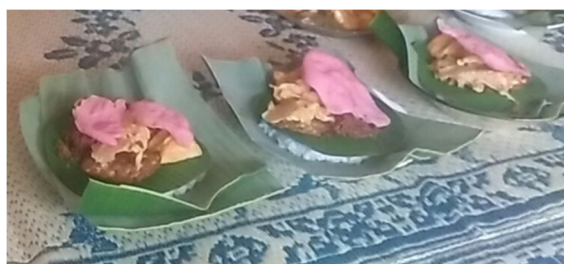


Figure 3 *Asahan*, The Flat-Shape Rice

Fig. 3 usually used to bancakan when the ritual is carried out together, not individually. This flat-shape rice is a symbol to hone the hearth and mind. It's mean that every household participate in the ritual. Usually, the ritual carried out in the house of community leader, graveyard, or other chosen place depend on the purpose of the ritual. This rice is decorated with some side dishes such as spicy potato with coconut milk, nut and red crackers, fried noodle, tofu, and tempe.



Figure 4: *Golong*, The Round-Shape Rice

Before, Fig. 4 used to commemorate the ancestor who run the village for the first time. Recently, this shape is also used to celebrate the head of household's birthday. The round-shape rice is a symbol of harmonious, it's also a hope to have a harmonious family. This rice is decorated with some side dishes, like the side dishes used to decorate the flat-shape rice. There is side dish to decorate round-shape rice but not to flat-shape rice is fried egg. This fried egg is a symbol of enlightenment, placing it in the round-shape rice is a form of hope for enlightenment.

To celebrate the birthday of family member, whether children or the adult, the household also serve red and white porridge as symbol of Indonesian flag to complete the round-shape rice with the side dishes. The number of round-shape rice served is adjusted to the day of birth based on Javanese

calendar. There are 35 days a month and five days market (*Legi, Pahing, Pon, Wage, Kliwon*), Table 1.

Table 1: Number of Round-Shape Rice Based on The Day of Birth

Day of Birth	Calculation		Total
<i>Jumat Legi</i>	6	5	11
<i>Setu Pahing</i>	9	9	18
<i>Minggu Pon</i>	5	7	12
<i>Senen Wage</i>	4	4	8
<i>Selasa Kliwon</i>	3	8	11
<i>Rebo Legi</i>	7	5	12
<i>Kemis Pahing</i>	8	9	17
<i>Jumat Pon</i>	6	7	13
<i>Setu Wage</i>	9	4	13
<i>Minggu Kliwon</i>	5	8	13
<i>Senen Legi</i>	4	5	9
<i>Selasa Pahing</i>	3	9	12
<i>Rebo Pon</i>	7	7	14
<i>Kemis Wage</i>	8	4	12
<i>Jumat Kliwon</i>	6	8	14
<i>Setu Legi</i>	9	5	14
<i>Minggu Pahing</i>	5	9	14
<i>Senen Pon</i>	4	7	11
<i>Selasa Wage</i>	3	4	7
<i>Rebo Kliwon</i>	7	8	15
<i>KemisLegi</i>	8	5	13
<i>Jumat Pahing</i>	6	9	15
<i>Setu Pon</i>	9	7	16
<i>Minggu Wage</i>	4	4	8
<i>Senen Kliwon</i>	3	8	11
<i>Selasa Legi</i>	7	5	12
<i>Rebo Pahing</i>	8	9	17
<i>Kemis Pon</i>	6	7	13
<i>Jumat Wage</i>	9	4	13
<i>Setu Kliwon</i>	5	8	13
<i>Minggu Legi</i>	4	5	9
<i>Senen Pahing</i>	3	9	12
<i>Selasa Pon</i>	7	7	14
<i>Rebo Wage</i>	8	4	12
<i>Kemis Kliwon</i>	6	8	14

**Note:**

*Senen*: Monday                      *Jumat* = Friday  
*Selasa*: Tuesday                      *Setu* = Saturday  
*Rebo*: Wednesday                      *Minggu* = Sunday  
*Kemis*: Thursday

*Bancakan* using round-shape rice to celebrate birthdays are intended to commemorate and pray for ancestors who are the roots of present and future generation to be born into the world. Not only that, the main aim is to pray for the people whose birthday is celebrated in order to be given the health and safety in the world and after life.

From the explanation above, *bancakan* used food as a medium to express gratitude and convey hope. Based on the definition of food tourism where the main purpose of tourists is food, then this ritual has the potential as a culinary tourism attraction.

Food tourism is about cultural anthropology through understanding the interaction of tourist with medium of food (Ellis et al., 2018). Food function as metaphor for construction and expression of ethnicity. Eating traditional food is a cultural experience thus authenticity cannot be separated from destination.

Expansion desire of tourist to seeking new experience in tourism can be opportunity to develop new attraction and interaction of tourist based on food from tourism perspective in place. As food represents traditions, stories, and symbol as in *bancakan*, it can be a key attraction for tourist. Food can serve as a unique image for branding a place and can motivate behavioral intentions to visit a place (Tsai and Wang, 2017).

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Local communities in Kerjo district carry out *bancakan* in groups and individually. In carrying out the ritual there are mostly based on a fixed schedule and based on the Javanese calendar, for example Islamic New Year, commemoration birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, 15 days before fasting month, the first day, 21st day, and the last day of fasting month. However, there are some *bancakan* that are carried out incidentally, do not have a fixed schedule, for example is a ritual for additional favors such as motorcycles and new cars.

Based on the discussion above, *bancakan* has the potential to become a tourist attraction both for cultural and food tourism since *bancakan* is a ritual with the most important component is food. Through *bancakan*, it can be seen the identity, perspective, and belief system of the local community. Both cultural and food tourism are expected to preserve *bancakan* as heritage that have been carried out by the ancestor and are expected continue by millennials and the next generation as their way of life in the form of custom and tradition.

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