

## Acehnese Traditional Food: The Potency of Community Economic Development in Lhokseumawe - Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Traditional food is a form of community culture that manifests its natural resources. It has various values; biological, economic, and social value. This study aims to analyze the potency of community economic development through traditional food based on public consumption. This research was conducted using a mixed-method approach through descriptive analysis. The informants were producers, sellers, and consumers of traditional Acehnese foods, which determined by a snowball. Researchers distributed questionnaires to 30 respondents who live in three districts, namely Banda Sakti, Muara Satu, and Muara Dua. The results showed that *Bhoi* and *Seupet* cakes are the most popular cakes consumed by people in Lhokseumawe. Therefore, the study highlights that these traditional cakes have the good economic potential to be developed.

**Keywords:** Traditional Food, Ingredients, Cake, Economy

### 1 Introduction

Traditional food is a form of community culture, which has not only nutritional value but also has social value, even economic value. Generally, the essential ingredients of traditional food come from natural resources owned by an area where it made and developed. Therefore, traditional foods differ from one region to another. Even if there is a common name, the image tastes different due to different ingredients and seasoning concoctions. Such differences are by the ingredients, experience, and culture of each region [1]. For example, curry goats from Aceh Besar, Aceh Pidie-Pidie Jaya, and Aceh Utara-Lhokseumawe are different colors and tastes. Such differences also apply to traditional pastry foods, such as Kue Adee or Bingkang. This traditional food has a high economic value in Pidie Jaya because it is already known as a souvenir for visitors from outside the region and province. Even though such likely cakes can also be found in coffee shops and shops in other districts, such as North Aceh and Lhokseumawe City, they are called bingkang.

The difference in taste and food names from each region can be used as an economic opportunity to empower the community's economy. Besides, Lhokseumawe City is one of the cities which is very strategically located to develop its exceptional food as a souvenir for visitors or passersby, because it is located in the middle of the East-West cross of the Banda Aceh-Medan road. This situation is possible in Lhokseumawe City as one of Aceh's traditional food promoters. However, until now, the City of Lhokseumawe has not identified its specialty cakes that can be used as a source of the economic community, such as *Adee* in Pidie Jaya and *Tapee Ubi* in Aceh Besar. Even many traditional Acehnese cakes scattered installs, supermarkets, and minimarkets in the area of Lhokseumawe City come from North Aceh. For example, "*SOMPRONG*" cake, and "*BANGKET*" cake.

This happened undoubtedly not because Lhokseumawe City did not have its special cake food. However, there were no efforts or actions that could encourage the development of traditional Lhokseumawe City as a very potential source for community economic empowerment. According to Febrina [2] community economic empowerment is strengthening ownership of the factors of production, distribution and marketing mastery, the community to get an adequate salary or wage, and strengthening the community to obtain information, knowledge, and skills. These must be carried out in multiple aspects, both from the aspect of the community itself, and aspects of the policy. Furthermore, Susanti [3] states that community empowerment can be done through five development strategies, namely, human resource development, group institutional development, Fostering public (private) capital, developing productive businesses, and providing appropriate information.

However, operationally, the economic empowerment of the community cannot be formulated in general. But it must be adapted to the characteristics of local problems because each region has its own culture, including traditional cakes, which reflect the social environment and its natural environment as a regional resource. Economists and agricultural scientists still dominate studies on the economic development of natural resources, and the emphasis is

on natural productivity and marketing. They pay less attention to the processing of natural resources as Aceh's traditional food, which has the potential economic value. For this reason, research is considered necessary, considering the lack of scientific studies of traditional Acehnese traditional foods in various districts/cities that see the potential for economic value to be developed as a source of economic income for the local community. This research conducted by a mixed-method involving 30 informants. The data was obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and questionnaires. Then the data were analyzed descriptively using an interactive model. The results showed that the bhoi and pulot cakes were the most popular cakes by the people of Lhokseumawe City.

## 2 Literature Review

Traditional food is one of the cultural assets of a community's heritage, which has characteristics, both taste and appearance. Sastroamidjojo [4] states traditional food is food that is available in one particular community and consumed since several derivatives, according to their tastes, do not conflict with religious beliefs and are formulated from food ingredients and spices available in that community. The characteristics are (1) The recipe obtained from generation to generation; (2) Processing using specific traditional tools; (3) The processing technique is also carried out to obtain a distinctive taste and appearance.

Furthermore, Nurhayati et al. [5] states the characteristics of traditional foods are; (1) Processed based on recipes or herbs that have been known and applied for generations in the community; (2) Raw materials are available in the local area; and (3) The processing method is carried out specifically according to the methods that have been developed. The main ingredients most widely used in its manufacture are cassava, rice flour, and sticky rice. The processing method categorized into four ways, namely: (1) steamed, (2) fried, (3) burned, and (4) boiled. Traditional foods can be developed with; (a) identification and inventory of traditional foods; (b) compiling traditional food profiles; (c) facilitation to foodservice associations such as restaurants, hotels, universities and the public in the dissemination of information, outreach, and promotion; (d) training for extension workers and program assistants; (e) encourage the development of traditional food centers; and (f) providing soft loans.

In consuming it, every person certainly has their own choices that are influenced by various factors. According to Marwanti [6], a person chooses certain foods to be influenced by the community environment, family environment, and self-drive. Traditional food has the meaning of daily folk food, both in the form of staple foods, distractions, or unique dishes that have existed for generations from the days of our ancestors. Furthermore, according to Geurts et al. [7], the determinants of one's choice of food consumption are the individual, social environment, physical environment, and the macro-level environment. At the individual level, habits are essential determinants of choices, whereas rational conscious choices only explain a small portion of consumers based on self-efficacy or perceived behavioral control. Therefore, social models and parenting styles seem to change children's eating behavior. Meanwhile, in the physical environment, food availability greatly influences food consumption. Furthermore, all these determinants act in the context of the macro environment, where food pricing and policies play an essential role.

Traditional foods are not only beneficial for the fulfillment of nutrition but can also be used as a source of income for local people. According to Meter [8], local food can be the best way to promote community economic development, because:

1. Everyone eats every day, so everyone can contribute to economic development. Local food can also build new social connections and new skills.
2. Local food can create livelihoods for those who already live in the community, and people will form stronger loyalty to the region by working together to build a local food business.
3. The local food trade will stem the flow of dollars from your area. People who know where their food comes from will eat more carefully.

4. The local food company group will recycle more money through the location of the food produced. As local companies trade with each other, they create a stream of dollars that will save money at home.

Next, what needs to be done is a coalition of community food security and local food. Thus, the presence of local food can meet several needs at once. Regions will build healthier agriculture, wider kitchens, and stronger processing factories, warehouses, distribution centers, brokers, and retail food stores, and more reliable food supplies if the people prioritize local eating food.

The same thing was said by Alteza [9] that the diversity of traditional food is a potential gold mine because it has strategic values for empowering the people's economy, reducing poverty and unemployment, exploiting natural resources, and preserving the nation's culture. According to Sariyanti [10], traditional cake traders in Makassar can produce an economy to meet their daily needs, including being able to buy some of the amenities of their household, even they can send their children to the university level. More than that, they also have savings in banks and gold deposits. Correspondingly, Lazuardi, and Triady [11] stated that culinary contributes 33% to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Creative Industries. This value is the biggest compared to other subsector contributions. In addition, culinary products contributed to the third-largest export value of the creative industry, which was 9.93% after the fashion industry and the handicraft industry. For culinary workers, it can absorb the second largest workforce after a fashion, which is around 3.7 million workers or contribute up to 31.48% of the total workforce in the creative industries. This is following the opinion of Martati, et al. [12] state that the leading productive economic endeavors that have an excellent opportunity to open employment are trade, home industry, services, and agriculture sectors. Most home industry businesses are food, such as the tofu-tempeh industry, various shrimp and fish chips/crackers, soy milk, herbal medicine, and cookies. The results of studies in Ukraine also show that the food industry seems to be a leader in terms of the number of brands on the market [13].

Based on the description, it can be said that traditional food or also known as local cuisine, besides functioning as a fulfillment of nutritional intake and preservation of culture, it is also very potential for the economic development of a region. However, there is not yet one research that maps the economic potential of traditional food in Lhokseumawe City, and there is not yet one document from the Regional Government that describes the economic potential of traditional food in Lhokseumawe City. This is different from other regions, for example Aceh Barat Daya, explaining that the types of food industries that are superior are black chips, raft chips, regular sweet potato chips, spicy-sweet potatoes, spinach chips, Tempe chips, onion cakes, onion rengginang, peanut braids, peanut peeks, peanut peeler yellow, nutmeg cakes and nutmeg syrup (Office of Investment and One Stop Integrated Services, 2017).

### **3 Research Methods**

This study used a combined qualitative and quantitative approach with descriptive analysis methods. The research subjects were food makers, sellers and buyers/connoisseurs of traditional specialties in Muara Dua District, Lhokseumawe. The informants were determined by a snowball. To obtain authentic data, researchers used three types of data collection methods, namely:

1. Non-participatory observation, in which researchers observed directly the symptoms, events, or conversations caused by the subject without involving the researcher in their activities.
2. Depth-Interview, researchers interviewed 30 informants, by openly and structuring questions through questionnaires.
3. Study of documents, researchers collect books, journals, and pictures related to research.

Furthermore, the data obtained were analyzed using an interactive model, which phasse as follows:

- a. Data reduction, the data was reduced, summarized, selected main cases focused on matters relating to the study problem.
- b. Presentation of data, the data was presented in tabular form to facilitate obtaining an overview of the answers to the research problem.

- c. Conclusion and verification, the data was systematically arranged to interpret, to find the meaning of the data, and then concluded it.

#### 4 Level of Consumption of Acehese Traditional Cakes and Economic Potency in Lhokseumawe City

Acehnese traditional cakes can be categorized into two types, namely cookies and wet cakes. Therefore, an explanation of the level of public consumption is presented based on these two types, which are seen in the perspective of producers/traders and consumers. The types of wet cakes that still exist in the city of Lhokseumawe are *dodol*, *wajek*, *meuseukat*, *timpan baloen*, *timphan*, *rhom-rhom boh*, *bu silee lukat*, *pulot*, *lapeh cake*, *apam u*, *pancong cake*, *adee*, and *halwa*. While dry cake are *bhoi*, *kipang kacang*, *ukheu u*, *bu gring*, *kueh bangket*, *boh usen*, *bada reuteuk*, *nyap*, *keukarah*, and *kueh seupet*.

Wet cakes are usually sold as breakfast at coffee shops and in places selling morning snacks and at markets. The cake is made every day because it does not stand along. According to sellers and producers, the highest level of consumption of wet cakes is *pulot*. As shown in the following table.

**Table 1. Wet Traditional Cakes and Community Consumption Rate**

No	Wet Cakes	Consumption Rate (%)
1	<i>Dodol</i>	30
2	<i>Wajek</i>	30
3	<i>Meuseukat</i>	30
4	<i>Ruti Jala</i>	45
5	<i>Timphan Baloen</i>	50
6	<i>Timphan</i>	50
7	<i>Boh Rhom-Rhom</i>	45
8	<i>Bu Lukat Silee</i>	25
9	<i>Pulot</i>	65
10	<i>Kue Lapeh</i>	55
11	<i>Apam U</i>	20
12	<i>Kue Pancong</i>	50
13	<i>Adee</i>	50
14	<i>Halwa</i>	20

Seen from the percentage above that *pulot* cake, *kueh lapeh*, *timphan*, *timphan baloen*, *kueh pancong*, and *adee* have the highest level of public consumption. This shows that the cakes are the favorite public cakes. They are not included high prices of processed products, but rather simple and relatively simple cakes. The example is *pulot*; it is made from sticky rice, which is kneaded coconut milk and burned. However, these cake enthusiasts more than other cakes that are equal to 65%.

Unlike the case with wet cakes, pastries have a dry and durable texture; pastries can be made once a week or even a month in stock, which is why pastries are more widely distributed in the home market, mini markets, and supermarkets in Lhokseumawe. The following is a table of consumption levels for traditional Acehese cookies in Lhokseumawe City.

**Table 2. Dry Traditional Cakes and Community Consumption Rate**

No	Dry Cakes	Consumption Rate (%)
1	<i>Bhoi</i>	80
2	<i>Keukarah</i>	80
3	<i>Bada Reuteuk</i>	35
4	<i>Boh Usen</i>	20
5	<i>Kue Bangket</i>	25
6	<i>Ukhee U</i>	70
7	<i>Kipang Kacang</i>	50
8	<i>Nyap</i>	45
9	<i>Bu Grieng</i>	60
10	<i>Kue Seupet</i>	75

The table shows that many Acehnese cookies scattered in the city of Lhokseumawe found that *keukarah* cakes, *bhoi*, *kueh seupet*, *ukheu u*, and *bu grieng* are the most popular cakes for the community. These cakes are in high demand by people from various olds, adult, young, and children. This is because of sweet tastes and durables. Besides, *Bhoi* and *Keukarah* are also used for social interaction during the wedding party moment. Both cakes are often brought to the bride and groom's family when they are delivered.

Referring to this percentage, it can be seen that traditional cakes, both wet and dry, are high interest to the public for its taste and processing are simple. *Pulot* and *dodoi*, for example, *pulot* manufacturing process is much more comfortable and more straightforward than *dodoi*, as well as the manufacturing process, *dodoi* is much more complicated the manufacturing process and the manufacturing costs are also more expensive than *pulot*. They are sweet and delicious.

Furthermore, according to consumers, the highest consumption level of traditional dry cakes is *bhoi* cakes by 26% and *keukarah* by 20%, *kueh seupet* and *bu grieng* 18%, *ukhee u* for 16% and 15% for cake. Among the lowest levels of community consumption of dried traditional cakes are *kipang kacang* by 5% and *bada reuteuk* by 6%. This shows that the level of consumption of traditional Acehnese food based on the seller / producer and consumer point of view are the same. This means that *bhoi* and *keukarah* have a high level of consumption for the community. In addition, *pulot* is also a high consumption of snacks among the people.

Then, comparing to modern cakes, people prefer traditional cakes for their family to consume. The reason is tasty, affordable, and natural and free of preservatives. This shows that people still love the taste of their traditional cakes in the midst of the proliferation of modern cakes. This confirms that the people of Lhokseumawe City in choosing food still consider health. According to them, traditional cakes are much more guaranteed health because the ingredients used are natural ingredients without preservatives.

This fact also explains that it can be that attractive packaging does not always affect consumer choices, because in general traditional cakes are supported with very simple plastic, or with banana leaves, but the cake has its own charm, namely taste and safety for health. Thus, the results of the study indicate that opinions that so far have considered packing as a way of attracting consumers' attention are less relevant.

Based on the consumption level, it was found that Acehnese traditional cakes that have good economic potency are *pulot*, *timphat*, *adee*, *pancong* cakes, *bhoi*, *keukarah*, and *seupeet* cakes. This potency is not only based on the consumption of local people but also people outside Aceh. According to Zulkifli and Hayatul, Acehnese special cakes are not only interested in the Acehnese people. They are used as dishes during Aceh's wedding and adat

events, but Acehese traditional cakes are also in demand by people outside Aceh. In fact, they often receive orders for cakes from abroad, which are used as souvenirs from Aceh. In addition, it coupled with the sales turnover ranging from IDR 100.000 to IDR 1.000.000 per day. It depends on the number of cakes sold. Nevertheless, according to them, the profits ranged from 20% to 30% of sales. This shows that Acehese traditional cake has excellent potential for the economic development of the people in Lhokseumawe City.

#### 4 Conclusion

In general, the Acehese traditional food of the Lhokaseumawe City is almost the same as typical cakes in other regencies on the East-West coast, which are dominated by Acehese ethnicity. While the level of public consumption of traditional food (cakes) are bhoi and pulot cakes ranked first, followed by Kue Seupet, Nyap, and Keukarah. Thus, these cakes have good potency for community economic development. Besides that, the level of public consumption is also relatively stable and functional.

However, they do not become a souvenir for visitors to Lhokseumawe City. Thus, it is expected that the Aceh Government, particularly the Lhokseumawe Municipal Government, will empower businesses to develop Acehese special cakes in Lhokseumawe City by encouraging business operators to produce cakes that are different in taste with other regions. In addition, the Government also needs to provide a sales center that is centered on Jalan Medan-Banda Aceh, which is easily accessible by visitors or visitors to Lhokseumawe City.

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