



Qanan: Food Processing in the Culture of the Tehit People in West Papua

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses about *qanan* which is a way to cook food that is typical for the Tehit tribe. Cooking patterns using *qanan* bark are not done every day, but only carried out on special rituals, for example traditional, religious and government events. The cooking begins with the preparation of meat, mixed with green spices and vegetables. The mixed ingredients that have been seasoned is arranged in bark that has been dialed into the inside then tied with a rattan strap and roasted on a flame. The baked cooking material was rotated until the wooden skin was black. The surface appearance of black bark is an indicator of cooked meat and vegetables. Furthermore, when the bark is opened, meat and vegetables are removed and ready to be served. We use qualitative research methods in this study with literature studies, observation and interviews as data collection methods. The results show the wealth of knowledge and local wisdom of the Tehit ethnic group in processing food traditionally by the method of wrapping food using bark which is known as *qanan*. The taste of the food processed with the technique has the aroma of bark combined with the addition of spices that seep into the meat and vegetables. In addition, hot steam from combustion causes food to cook quickly and not scorched and the process of maturation of food ingredients occurs evenly and delicious. The local wisdom of the Tehit people in the land of Papua is the wealth of Indonesia that must be maintained and preserved because the pattern of cooking Qanan is quite healthy since it does not use cooking oil. Patterns of local food processing in Tehit culture can be used as one of the strategies for overcoming cooking oil scarcity.

1. Introduction

The world views Indonesia as a very beautiful and unique country with its biodiversity and cultural diversity. Indonesia is a country that has various socio-cultural aspects since it is inhabited by multi-ethnic who spread from Sabang to Merauke. The multi-ethnic population of Indonesia with different cultures is an attraction for domestic and foreign

tourists (Winarno, 2021). The arrival of tourists certainly provides benefits for local communities to earn income from the economic aspect which is closely related to the cultural aspect. The community moves and seeks to preserve and develop local culture through a process of socialization to the younger generation. One aspect of Indonesian culture that is very attractive to foreign and local tourists is the variety of tasty local culinary with traditional processing systems (Ilham, et al, 2021; Sofyan, 2020).

Local cuisine of the archipelago from various ethnic groups in Indonesia is a form of culture as expressed by Koentjaraningrat (1990:186-188); the first form is an idea, the second form is an action or activity and the third form is the result of work (artifact). Humans try to develop ideas that are still abstract to meet the basic needs of life, namely food through concrete actions or activities, such as preparing a number of basic ingredients for cooking food that are abstract in their minds. Food ingredients, spices and equipment are prepared, then processed into ready-to-eat food. The tradition of food processing from ethnic groups in Indonesia is the embodiment of multi-ethnic and multicultural Indonesian culture that contains socio-cultural values for the people who support the culture (Harmayani, et al, 2019).

In addition, Montanari (in Setiawan 2016:117) argues that food for humans is a culture based on three considerations. First, food is produced by humans, because humans are not like animals that receive food naturally from nature: humans making their food by processing it first before consuming it. Second, the food process is carried out using technology, with fire coming from firewood, kerosene and or gas. Processed food results in the form of foods that are generally hygienic, because they are boiled, and or fried. Third, the food that is consumed or eaten by humans is made based on their tastes, so that humans are free to determine the food that is considered suitable for them to eat, or it can be said that the food is adjusted to the choice of taste that is preferred by the person who consumes the food. Furthermore, Montari also stated that here, everyone consumes food sometimes taking into account the nutritional content, safety, taste, time and so on (Kadir, 2022).

Furthermore, Christian Coff (2006:12) suggests human eating activity as a form of intimate relationship between humans and the environment and outside themselves. Coff also emphasizes that there are three stages of eating, starting with seeing, then smelling and tasting the food. Furthermore, Coff states that the thought of food is divided into three ways of thinking, namely: first, food as part of the social context in which food consumption usually occurs in a social setting and contributes to a person's identity or self-understanding and the social position of a particular person. Second, food has an aesthetic dimension, when it is cooked and served as a "ready-to-eat taste", and third is an intellectual activity used to rationalize food production and food processing scientifically and economically. Tyas (2017:2) reveals that traditional food or local food is one of the identities of community groups that is very easy to recognize. Each region of Indonesia has a culinary wealth that is the hallmark or identity of the area.

Referring to the view above, when visiting the West Sumatra region, the typical Minangkabau cuisine in the form of rendang will be the target of tourists because of its taste so delicious. The uniqueness of the method of processing rendang is that it still uses Minang special concoctions and is cooked traditionally so that the taste is very distinctive to be enjoyed with hot rice and green chili sauce and jackfruit vegetables in soup. Fajarsari (2017:2) says that rendang is not only filling, nutritious and delicious, but rendang has a number of messages of social and educational values, because it shows ethnic identity by showing the origins of the Minangkabau ethnic group, ingredients, and the making process. In addition, there is a message of religious values and moral education. This is motivated by talking about food, not just fulfilling nutrition or energy that can be used as provisions for activities. However, there are historical traces of the background characteristics and cultural characteristics of the group where the food comes from, the food served is also different and contextual with activities, celebrations, and its profane or sacred realm. Because, food can be a symbol that has meaning behind it and contains the values behind it (Ilham, et al, 2021; Hatibie, 2020; Oktarina, 2013).

There is also a region called Yogyakarta, a place Having a unique culture with a variety of local foods. This city has always been a tourist destination in Indonesia because of the food. The *gudeg* menu is a special menu that is favored by tourists, especially foreign tourists, such as Europeans. *Gudeg* cuisine with the basic ingredients of young jackfruits which is processed into vegetables using traditional cooking tools, in the form of a pot made of clay known as *anglo*. The method of processing the *gudeg* menu is indicated to add to the taste of Indonesian culinary lovers. In a study conducted by Abadi and Aryanto (2015), it is stated that *gudeg* is a typical food of the people of Yogyakarta and Central Java which is usually cooked for several hours, a mixture of spices and teak leaves added to the dish during the cooking process is believed to be to make it brown. *Gudeg* is served and equipped with free-range chicken, eggs, tofu and krecek fried chili sauce and given thick coconut milk (*areh*) when eaten with rice. The *gudeg* menu is presented in 4 choices that consumers can enjoy, namely *gudeg basah*, *gudeg kering*, *gudeg Manggar* and *gudeg Solo*. *Gudeg Basah* is served with thin coconut milk (*areh*), dry *gudeg* is given *areh* or thick coconut milk, and *Gudeg Manggar* is a *gudeg* that uses coconut flower pistils, while *Gudeg Solo* is given *areh* or white coconut milk.

Next in Bali, tourists will enjoy one of the typical menus from the island of the gods in the form of *ayam betutu* which is spicy and tastes good served with hot rice. Culinary offerings from the island of the gods can be found in the writings of Purna and Dwikayan (2019: 276). In the paper, it is explained that the word *betutu* consists of two words meaning meat or fish, and the word *tutu* means burnt. The word *tutu* actually comes from the word *tunu* which also means "burned". *Betutu* is a typical Balinese food that is preserved for economic and tourism purposes, so they process the *betutu* chicken menu in various types of ways or techniques and give names according to the type of processing. For example, *Betutu Rama*, *Betutu Gilimanuk*, *Betutu Men Tempeh*, *Betutu Liku*, *Ayam Betutu Kedewataan*. Besides Bali, there is also local Indonesian food from North Sulawesi known as *Tinutuan* or "Manado Porridge". The food is made from green vegetables in the form of spinach, combined with pumpkin, corn cooked with rice. After cooking the food is served with dried fish and *sambal ruah* (traditional chili sauce).

Manado porridge is enjoyed while the porridge is still hot. The typical food was stated by Resty in the Indonesian Health Mediakom (2019). Resty wrote that Manado porridge is a healthy and nutritious food, in fact she also commented on the opinion of Professor from the Faculty of Human Ecology, Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), Akmad Sulaiman about Tinutuan or Manado Porridge is a food that is considered healthy and highly nutritious food because it contains vegetables that are rich in fiber and antioxidants, thus facilitating digestion. Sulaiman also emphasized that Beta Carotene and Lycopene in vegetables can be antioxidants that can help make skin smoother and are also very good for vision, so they can maintain eye conditions.

The other examples are Maluku and Papua which have distinctive local cuisine. The cooking menu and the types of ingredients are more dominated by sago (Ade, 2022). Sago trees grow in lowlands and marshy soils in Tanah Papua (Arif, 2019). For example, in the province of West Papua, South Sorong Regency, is a potential sago forest area. The area can be seen from Inanwatan District, Kokoda, Kais to Teminabuan. People in the area make sago a local food that is consumed every day. Processed food from sago can be in the form of grilled sago known as *sago forna*. Grilled sago is made from sago flour mixed with grated coconut, the material is then put in a sago press that has been heated, when it is nearing maturity, the center of the sago in the mold is sprinkled with brown sugar. When the sago is cooked, the part that is given the brown sugar becomes reddish brown because the brown sugar liquid is smeared on the inside and seeps into the sago. Grilled sago is generally consumed and enjoyed in the afternoon or early morning with hot milk coffee or tea according to everyone's taste.

Local food in the form of sago in Papuans is still one of the various types of local food owned by the people on the island of New Guinea which is often referred to as the Land of Cenderawasih. Ethnic groups in Papua consist of 250 ethnic groups, various ethnic groups, cultures, and languages are indicators of the diversity of local food and processing methods which also vary from one ethnic group to another in the Land of Papua (Arif, 2019). Papuans in the La-Pago and Mee-Pago cultural areas are familiar with the culture of food processing in the form of burning stones, while the ethnic Sentani in the Tabi area cook food in the form of grilled fish which is processed in *sempe* (clay pot), papeda wrapped in papeda leaves (*finuqu*), as well as a number of typical dishes of Lake Sentani. As for the people in the southern part of Papua, the Marind Anim tribe who inhabit the Ha-Anim cultural area also has a special dish in the form of *Sago Sep* which is wrapped and burned (Kadir, et al, 2022). Even other ethnic groups scattered in the Saireri and Bomberai cultural area also have local food and the way of processing the food also varies. For example, the Biak tribe knows how to process food using hot stones, which they call *Barapen*.

Likewise, the Tehit ethnic group in the Domberai region has a variety of local foods, both basic foods containing carbohydrates from sago, taro, bananas, petatas, cassava and corn (Haryanto, 2015). While protein sources are meat and fish, shrimp, crab, sea shells and so on. The Tehit people also grow vegetables, such as *gedi*, spinach, mustard greens, long beans and others. They also know unique ways of processing food, such as food that is burned, baked, stuffed in bamboo, and wrapped in leaves, even wrapped in bark (*qanan*).

Indonesia's cultural wealth that needs to be maintained and preserved so as not to be lost by the currents of modernization and globalization of the world today (Flassy, 2020). The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze in depth the traditional food of the Qanan in the culture of the Tehit people in South Sorong Regency.

2. Method

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection techniques used are literature study, observation, in-depth interviews with informants who are considered representative such as traditional leaders, women leaders, and youth leaders. In this study, a camera was also used to take pictures of the food process using bark in the Tehit community. Then, data analysis was carried out through the stages of data categorization, data exposure and data interpretation. At the stage of data categorization, data is collected and sorted according to the categories that become the findings in the research. Then from this category, the description of the data exposure is developed to the interpretation stage.

3. Result

The Tehit indigenous people have food processing techniques or traditional ways of cooking food. The technique uses the media of leaves, bamboo, and bark. The use of leaves, bamboo, and bark has been passed down from generation to generation. Currently, it seems that the tradition of cooking food in the Tehit culture is shifting. This can be seen since the existence of cultural contacts with other ethnic groups both from Papua and ethnic groups from outside Papua, such as the people of Bugis-Makassar, Ambon, Sangir, Batak, Toraja, Java, and Timor. The processing of local food for the Tehit people has shifted, so it is necessary to conduct a study to determine the extent to which there has been a shift in traditional values in the culinary culture of the Tehit in order to preserve cultural values and local wisdom in processing local cuisine as part of saving Papuan culture. There are several steps in cooking with bark which are discussed below.

- **Wood Type**

The Tehit people for generations have known the type of wood used to cook pork, deer, cassowary, fish and vegetables wrapped in bark. There are several types of trees whose bark is used as a cooking medium or *qanan*, such as *ndaon* trees, *mbesen* trees and *ihin* trees (all of them are local names). These three types of trees usually bear fruit, and are eaten by animals so that they reproduce through animals. In general, the three types of trees have different sizes, for example the *mbesen* tree has an average height of 1-1.55 meters and the leaves are dense and wide. The *ndaon* and *ihin* trees can reach 5-10 meters in height with medium leaves. The trunk color of *mbesen* and *ihin* is brown and green, while the trunk of the *ndaon* tree is white, so it is often referred to by the Tehit people as *ndaon elek* or the white *ndaon* tree. The type of bark used for cooking *qanan* is the bark of the *ndaon* tree. The trunk is slashed first, according to the size of the bark needed. After that, the bark is peeled slowly so there is no damage. If the *qanan* is cooked on that day, the bark can be rolled up and tied with a *glimit* rope (a type of forest rope) and then brought to the house or cooking area (Picture 1).



Picture 1: Bark extraction (Source: Author, October 2020)

- **Food Processing Using Bark**

The food ingredients are arranged in a bark that has been given a base of leaves. After that, add vegetables, meat and *woro* leaves (a type of leaf that has a fragrant aroma using for flavoring the food). The bark that has been filled with the food is rolled up to close, then tied with a rattan rope. The next step is burning the bark rolls over the flames until they are cooked. *Qanan* is then opened and laid out on a plate to be served. The technique of processing the *qanan* as an icon for processing the food of the Tehit people is only carried out at times during the implementation of traditional rituals that are considered important, for example when people make dowry payments, welcome mothers and babies from the delivery room, or also at the inauguration of a new house and various other activities such as welcoming government, church and customary guests who come to the village. *Qanan* is a Tehit culture that is considered prestigious, because it is only served at important moments.

One example of *qanan* cuisine here is cooking pork. First, put the wave leaves on the base of the bark, then followed by vegetables such as papaya leaves and *woro* leaves (food fragrance leaves). After that, add the pork and the vegetables. The pork has previously been mixed with spices such as shallots, garlic, salt, pepper, lemongrass and ginger. The process of adding vegetables and pork is done alternately until they run out (Picture 2).



Picture 2: *Gelobak* leaves, vegetables and meat are arranged in the bark. (Source: Author, October 2020)

Next, the bark is tightly closed and then tied with a rope so it does not open. After that, the *qanan* is ready to cook by roasting it over a fire (Picture 3)



Picture 3: The *qanan*/bark is closed and tied with rope.
(Source: Author, October 2020)

The procedure for cooking *qanan* is generally done by several people, so that several others prepare vegetables, meat and spices wrapped in bark. In addition, there are also several other people in charge of making fires. The bark which already contains meat and vegetables is lifted by 2 people and pressed over a fire and cooked (Picture 4).



Picture 4: Cooking process with bark/*qanan*.
(Source: Author, October 2020).

During the process of cooking *qanan*/bark, people generally pay attention to the quality of the firewood because it greatly affects the flame to keep it stable. Meanwhile, the *qanan* on the fire must be considered to be turned on both sides alternately with the intention that the food in the bark can cook evenly. The process of cooking *qanan* takes 1-2 hours, but back to the quality of the flame, if the fire is good, then the *qanan* will cook quickly. If all sides of the *qanan* are black, the flame will be reduced, so that the bark does not burn. After that, the *qanan* or bark containing food is removed from the fire and then opened while it is still warm (Picture 5).



Figure 5: The *qanan* is lifted and opened.
(Source: Author, October 2020)

Usually when opening the *qanan*, two containers are prepared for meat and vegetables. Next, the vegetables will be removed first and put in a separate container from the meat since the top layer in the *qanan* is vegetables, followed by meat (Picture 6).



Picture 6: The food is prepared by removing it from the bark/*qanan*.
(Source: Author's Primary Data, October 2020).

When the meat in the *qanan* or the bark has been removed, the food is ready to be served (Figure 7).



Figure 7. The food is ready to be served.
(Source: Author's Primary Data, October 2020).

This meat and vegetable dish in bark or *qanan* can be eaten with taro, cassava, *petatas* and bananas that are baked or boiled, and can be enjoyed by everyone, both male and females at all ages from children to adults.

4. Discussion

Qanan is a food processing pattern with a technique of wrapping meat and vegetables that have been seasoned and then put into the bark and burned actually contains several benefits, including the knowledge system of the Tehit people in classifying tree species that can be used as a medium for cooking, even the tree bark is strong enough to resist the heat of the flames. In addition to knowledge of trees, the Tehit people also have knowledge of the types of animal meat that can be cooked with the *qanan* technique. They know that hard meat will quickly soften when cooked with steam from the bark roasted over a fire.

Therefore, they cook pork, cassowary and deer by using the *qanan* technique so that it cooks quickly and the meat will be tender. They also know the types of leaves used as cooking spices such as lemongrass, ginger, and *woro* leaves. When arranging meat and vegetables in a bark container, it is started by putting *papeda* leaves on the first layer or as a protective base, because when exposed to heat, the leaves will not soften and crumble, instead, the leaves remain fresh so it is very suitable as a protector for cooking.

They put papaya leaves on the second layer since will be absorbed by the papaya leaves, so they put papaya leaves followed by the meat in the third layer, after that it is covered with *woro* and papaya leaves on the top meat, as a cover or last layer. Thus the papaya leaves will absorb the fat of the meat, so the meat is softer and less fatty when consumed.

Even the knowledge of the Tehit people in processing food in the form of meat wrapped in bark is actually very healthy, because without using oil, the food has a taste of the aroma of bark and leaves and contains protein that is healthy for one's body. Cooking techniques like this if we look closely, are actually part of the steamed food although it is not using water, but with hot steam directly from flame.

The values of local wisdom from the *qanan* cooking technique are intended to teach the younger generation of Tehit to protect the forest, so that certain trees which have been used for generations as cooking utensils should not be lost or cut down. Thus, cultural conservation in preserving nature. Even other values that can be taken from food processing using bark which are only carried out on traditional, church and government events, show that the Tehit people use the plants in the forest regularly and sustainably, so that the trees are maintained. They view the forest as a home for all living things, including humans, so it is preserved as a legacy from the ancestors of the Tehit people. This shows that the cooking technique using the *qanan* is the local wisdom and the hallmark of the tribe. The knowledge system on how to cook develops from the result of interaction and reflection as well as adaptation to the surrounding environment that strives to maintain the balance of nature with an exploratory pattern of use for subsistence needs (Hijang, et al 2018; Kadir, 2021). It is because the cooking technique is only done at certain times. Maintaining and preserving the *qanan* cooking technique is one of the efforts to maintain the ethnic identity of the Tehit tribe itself and try to coexist with the forest ecosystem with a maintained utilization pattern.

Food using the *qanan* technique is part of the identity of the Tehit tribe since the food made has existed and colored the life journey of the various generations of the Tehit tribe. Research from Ruhulestin (2020) also shows that sago is part of the identity of the Sentani Tribe since sago has been consumed as a food for the main carbohydrate source (grilled sago). Kadir, et al (2022) also show the same thing that the management of sago *sep* in the Malind tribe which will only be cooked during the death ritual ceremony shows the same thing that the food is identical to the identity and culture of a tribe, especially if the context is in Papua. It is because every food contains socio-cultural historical values for the community where the food originates (Bachtiar, et al, 2017; Mustamine, et al, 2022).

Besides that, the value of loving the forest is passed on to future generations, but on the other hand, the technique of cooking with bark should be practiced and socialized to the younger generation of Tehit, so that they can love culture and later can practice it in their lives. Another interesting thing about the pattern of cooking meat with the technique of wrapping it in the bark shows that even the Tehit people are familiar with modern cooking culture, they still practice the technique of cooking with bark as a noble value of the Tehit culture.

5. Conclusion

Qanan is a healthy food cooking pattern, because it only uses hot steam from inside the tightly closed bark, so that the food cooks evenly. The Tehit people culturally have known the classification of cooking from generation to generation, especially using bark, so they do not depend on cooking oil, so when there is a shortage of cooking oil in Indonesia, the impact is felt in Papua, the Tehit people do not make a fuss or protest and so on, because they can eat by cooking food with a *qanan* or bark pattern.

The use of bark from the *ndaon* tree actually shows that the Tehit people have extraordinary knowledge in classifying poisonous and non-poisonous plant species,

which are used as a medium for cooking meat. Knowledge of this type of plant is in a form of local wisdom values passed down from generation to generation, so that they continue to preserve the forest, especially the trees that can be used as a medium for cooking.

The technique of cooking on the bark is a cultural treasure of Papua, Indonesia which can be held in traditional, religious, and government rituals to show that the Tehit people also know the distribution of menu offerings at special celebrations, so that the cooking pattern on the bark or *qanan* is a special menu because only presented at the important moment. *Qanan* or cooking on bark media is only served in traditional rituals, religions, and government activities, of course it shows us that every day, the Tehit people consume fish more than meat, so that animals and plants will multiply and provide benefits for the Tehit people. Thus, this becomes a form of nature and animal conservation that can provide benefits for the survival of the Tehit people and humans in general in Papua and Indonesia.

As a conclusion, this study shows that the tradition of local food processing as one of the cultural treasures of Papua, should be maintained and preserved through (in)formal education in the form of a local content curriculum for children at the elementary school and university level. It is hoped that the South Sorong Regency Government and the West Papua Provincial Government can promote local food utilization programs from each tribe in the Doberai Papua cultural area as one culinary tourism for domestic and foreign tourists so that it can increase the income of local communities in Papua, Indonesia.

Conflicts of Interest: The writing team declares that there is no conflict of interest in the writing of this article.

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