

Batumbang Apam Tradition in Fall, Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency: Preservation of Local Culture in the Modern Era

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Abstract: The Batumbang Apam tradition is one of the cultural heritages of the people in Fall, Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency, South Kalimantan, which is still preserved today. This research aims to analyze the cultural values contained in the Batumbang Apam tradition and its preservation strategies in the midst of modernization. A descriptive qualitative approach is used by collecting data through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and literature studies. This activity not only reflects the spirit of togetherness and social concern, but also contains Islamic values such as almsgiving, gratitude, Islamic ukhuwah, and moral education through examples and good habits that are inherited from generation to generation. This activity involves extensive community participation, starting from the preparation of ingredients, the process of making cakes, to distribution to residents. This tradition reflects the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and social solidarity that are still strong in the local community. However, modernization brings challenges in the form of declining participation of the younger generation. This research recommends collaboration between local governments, educational institutions, and local communities to revitalize the tradition of Batumbang Apam to remain relevant in the modern era. The results of the study show that batumbang apam not only has cultural and social value, but also plays a role in strengthening the local identity of the people of Hulu Sungai Tengah.

Keywords: The tradition of batumbang apam, the local culture, cultural preservation, the younger generation, hulu sungai tengah.

1. Introduction

Local culture is an important identity for the Indonesian people, including the tradition of Batumbang Apam in Jatuh, Hulu Sungai Tengah (Shiddiq, 2025). This tradition reflects noble social values, such as solidarity, respect for ancestors, and mutual cooperation between citizens. However, globalization and modernization threaten the existence of traditional cultures. According to Hidayat (2022), traditions that are not recontextualized in modern life are at risk of being forgotten. The younger generation is faced with a choice between maintaining local culture or following more commercially attractive global trends. This is because hereditary traditions are often considered ancient, irrelevant, or even uninteresting when compared to popular culture that is widespread through social media and global products (Wei, 2024). Today's young generation lives in a very fast-changing digital era and is full of more modern and commercial lifestyle choices (Burstein, 2013). In these situations, they tend to choose activities or cultures that are considered "contemporary" and socially or economically beneficial, rather than maintaining traditions that they do not understand the meaning of in depth.

Therefore, traditions such as Batumbang Apam need to be reintroduced to the younger generation through contextual and educational approaches, for example by integrating these traditional values into educational curricula, extracurricular activities, or local culture-based character-building programs. Batumbang Apam is not just an activity of distributing cakes, but reflects noble values such as togetherness, mutual cooperation, gratitude, and alms all of which are also part of Islamic teachings (Alamsyah, 2024). By understanding the philosophical and spiritual significance of these traditions, learners can develop a positive attitude towards their local culture and feel a responsibility to preserve it (Pandey, 2024). The preservation of tradition is not only important from a cultural point of view, but also relevant in the context of education management which emphasizes the importance of character education, strengthening local identity,

and integrating Islamic values (Purwaningsih & Ridha, 2024). Therefore, appreciation of local traditions such as Batumbang Apam can be one of the strategies in facing the challenges of cultural globalization and identity crises experienced by the current young generation. A study from Haryono et al. (2025) emphasizes that traditional culture needs to be integrated into the education system and community activities in order to remain alive in the community. The Batumbang Apam tradition, with all its symbolism and social value, needs to be understood not only as a ritual, but also as a means of building social identity and solidarity. The Batumbang Apam tradition in Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency has a strategic role, not only as a cultural heritage that is preserved for generations, but also as an educational means that is rich in social, spiritual, and moral values (Situmorang et al., 2023).

Batumbang Apam, with all the symbolism in it from the process of mutual cooperation in making cakes, distributing evenly to the community, to the prayers that accompany the activity reflects noble values such as togetherness, care, gratitude, and almsgiving (Fadil et al., 2024). When interpreted more deeply, this tradition functions as a social mechanism to strengthen relationships between citizens, create a sense of belonging to the community, and build the collective identity of the Banjar people as a religious people and uphold Islamic values.

By making Batumbang Apam part of learning practices in schools, cultural and religious messages can be instilled contextually and touch the real lives of students (Dewi, 2024). This is in line with the educational paradigm based on local wisdom, where culture is not only used as an object of study, but also learning methods and media that are able to shape the character of students. Therefore, it is important for education managers and stakeholders to design curricula and extracurricular activities that accommodate the values of local traditions such as Batumbang Apam, so that education is inseparable from the cultural roots of the community and remains relevant to Islamic values that are the foundation of social life in the area.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which is an approach that aims to understand social and cultural phenomena in depth through narrative explanations based on data collected from research subjects (Usman et al., 2025). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring the meaning, values, and role of the Batumbang Apam tradition in the life of the local community, especially in relation to education based on local wisdom and Islamic values. The research location is in Jatuh Village, Pandawan District, Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency, South Kalimantan. This location was chosen purposively because it is known as one of the areas that still maintains the implementation of the Batumbang Apam tradition consistently and comprehensively. In this village, the tradition is not only carried out symbolically, but also still actively involves various levels of society, so it is very relevant to be used as a study location.

The research subjects were selected purposively (purposive sampling), namely those who were considered to have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the Batumbang Apam tradition. The research subjects consist of: Religious Figures, namely community leaders who have in-depth knowledge of religion, history, symbolic meaning, and the transformation of traditions from generation to generation;

- a. The younger generation, as cultural heirs, is important to understand the extent to which these cultural values are understood, accepted, and continued by young people;
- b. Community leaders, including religious leaders and informal leaders, who have an influence in the preservation of culture and the cultivation of Islamic values in society.
- c. The selection of this subject is intended to obtain diverse perspectives from across generations and social positions in the community, so that the results of the research can provide a complete and in-depth picture of the position of Batumbang Apam as a local wisdom that is full of educational and Islamic values.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Meaning of the Apam Tradition

The Batumbang Apam tradition is a form of expression of gratitude to Allah SWT and asking for salvation. Apam, a traditional cake made from rice flour, is a symbol of blessing and togetherness (Fidiana et al., 2024). The results of the study show that the Batumbang Apam tradition is not just a routine cultural activity of the community, but contains a very deep symbolic, social, and spiritual meaning. This tradition has become an important part of the identity of the Banjar people, especially in Jatuh Village, Pandawan District, Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency.

Symbolically, the apam cake that is distributed in large quantities symbolizes blessings, togetherness, and gratitude to Allah SWT (Fajarni et al., 2021). The process of making it, which is carried out through mutual cooperation, represents the value of social solidarity and collective work of the community. Apam as a symbol of sweet food also means hope that people's lives will always be given halal sweetness (goodness), peace, and sustenance.

Socially, Batumbang Apam is an adhesive medium between residents. Every level of society both male and female, young and old is involved in the process. This activity is a space for interaction between residents that strengthens family ties, fosters a sense of social responsibility, and trains the community, especially the younger generation, to be involved in collective activities with educational and cultural value.

From the spiritual and Islamic side, Batumbang Apam is firmly rooted in Islamic values. This tradition is often associated with the commemoration of Islamic holidays such as the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH or Isra Mi'raj, and always begins or closes with a joint prayer and the recitation of prayers. In this context, Batumbang Apam is a manifestation of Islamic teachings on gratitude (gratitude to Allah), alms (sharing with others), and ukhuwah Islamiyah (brotherhood of the ummah). The free distribution of food reflects the spirit of sharing sustenance, teaches the importance of selfless giving, and strengthens the noble morals that are the foundation of Islamic education.

From the results of interviews with traditional elders and community leaders, it was revealed that Batumbang Apam is also used as a means of informal education for the younger generation. Children and adolescents are involved not only to help with technical implementation, but also to learn about cultural and religious values firsthand. Thus, this tradition has great potential to be integrated into the education system, both in the form of a local content curriculum, extracurricular activities, and project-based learning that emphasizes active involvement and character values.

Overall, the meaning of the Batumbang Apam tradition reflects the harmonious combination of the local wisdom of the Banjar people and the noble Islamic values. This tradition not only functions as a cultural heritage, but also as a means of character education that is contextual, relevant, and applicative for the development of cultural and religious-based education management.

3.2 Challenges in Conservation

The results of research in the field show that one of the main challenges in preserving the Batumbang Apam tradition is the low interest of the younger generation in this tradition. The younger generation in Jatuh Village and its surroundings tend to see the tradition as something old-fashioned, uninteresting, and less relevant to their modern lives. This is a concern because the sustainability of a tradition is highly dependent on cultural regeneration and the active involvement of young people.

There are several factors that significantly affect this condition:

- a. **The Influence of Modern Lifestyle**
The entry of modern lifestyles through television, the internet, and social media has made the mindset of the younger generation shift from collective values towards individualistic and consumptive ones. Local cultural activities that require physical involvement, cooperation, and discipline such as Batumbang Apam are considered tiring and do not provide instant satisfaction like digital entertainment. As a result, their participation in customary activities is declining.
- b. **Urbanization and Social Mobility**
Many of the young generation of villages continue their education or work in big cities. This process of urbanization broke their attachment to local cultural roots. Traditions such as Batumbang Apam become foreign because they no longer experience them directly in daily life. In addition, there is a perception that progress is synonymous with "leaving the village culture" and strengthens the distance between the younger generation and their traditions.
- c. **Lack of Cultural Education in the Education System**
The lack of integration of local culture into the formal education system is one of the main reasons why the young generation does not understand the values and meanings behind the Batumbang Apam tradition. Cultural activities are often only introduced ceremonially, without deepening their philosophical, historical, and religious values. A curriculum that is too oriented towards academic achievement and does not provide space for local content makes traditional culture less of a proper place in the learning process.
- d. **The Role of Social Media That Is Not Optimal**
Although social media has great potential as a means of cultural preservation, the reality is that most of the younger generation is more interested in using these digital platforms to access and share global popular cultural content (such as K-pop, TikTok trends, or other western cultures). Local cultures such as Batumbang Apam are very rarely brought into the digital space, either by the village government, schools, or the young generation themselves. As a result, its existence loses competition in the fast-paced and visual world of information. The implication of this challenge is the strengthening of the cultural distance between generations, which threatens the sustainability of Batumbang Apam in the future. If not immediately addressed with a strategic approach to education and cultural management, there is a possibility that this tradition will only become a historical memory without active actors in the field.

Therefore, concrete efforts are needed in education management, such as the integration of local culture into the curriculum, the involvement of the younger generation in preservation activities through digital technology (for example, creating educational content on social media), and strengthening the role of families and communities in cultural heritage. According to Susilawati (2024), challenges in preserving local culture do not only occur in one specific area, but are a common phenomenon in various indigenous communities and traditional communities in Indonesia. This phenomenon reflects a change in value orientation among the community, especially the younger generation, as a result of modernization, globalization, and the rapid development of information technology. Local traditions that were once an integral part of daily life are now starting to be displaced by popular culture and the instant lifestyle offered by digital media.

In the context of the Batumbang Apam tradition, this challenge is reflected in the lack of participation of the younger generation, the low digital documentation, and the lack of innovation in the form of preservation that suits the needs of the times. This tradition is still widely carried out conventionally, without transforming methods or media that can reach the digital generation. Susilawati (2024) emphasized that to answer this challenge, a creative and contextual approach is needed, which is able to connect traditional values with the reality of today's life. A creative approach not only means modifying the physical form of cultural activities, but also involving:

- a. Repackaging of traditions in educational and digital formats, such as documentary videos, cultural vlogs, or narrative content on social media;
- b. Intergenerational collaboration, where traditional elders play a role in the source of value and knowledge, while the younger generation plays a role in designing media and cultural delivery strategies;
- c. Cultural integration in formal and non-formal education, by making tradition as teaching material for local content, learning projects, or extracurricular activities;
- d. Active involvement of educational institutions, village governments, and digital communities, in designing preservation programs based on technology and creative media.

Thus, the challenges faced are not permanent obstacles, but rather opportunities to revive traditions through new ways that are more interesting and relevant. This creative approach must also adhere to the essence and noble values of culture, so that the transformation carried out does not eliminate the spiritual, social, and philosophical meaning of the tradition itself.

3.3 Conversation Strategy

The proposed strategies include:

- a. Integration of Traditions in Education: Incorporating the values of Batumbang Apam in the local curriculum.
- b. Cultural Festival: Making Batumbang Apam an annual festival involving tourists.
- c. Utilization of Digital Media: Creating documentaries, vlogs, and creative content about Batumbang Apam to attract the attention of the younger generation.
- d. Cross-sector collaboration is the key to the success of this preservation.

4. Conclusion

The tradition of Batumbang Apam in Jatuh, Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency, is a cultural heritage that is rich in social meaning. This tradition teaches about mutual cooperation, solidarity, and respect for ancestors. However, the challenges of globalization demand more creative conservation efforts. Synergy is needed between local communities, local governments, educational institutions, and the media in revitalizing this tradition. Education-based approaches, cultural digitalization, and festivalization can be strategies to maintain the existence of Batumbang Apam in the modern era. Through collaborative efforts, local culture can stay alive and become a strong source of identity for the people of Hulu Sungai Tengah.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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