



Exploring the Philosophical and Historical Values of Sotong Pangkong as a Malay Culinary Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

Sotong Pangkong is a traditional Malay culinary heritage that reflects local wisdom, cultural identity, and philosophical and historical values passed down through generations, yet it has not received much academic study. This study aims to explore the philosophical values, historical development, and cultural significance of Sotong Pangkong as a Malay culinary heritage. The study used a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design. Data were obtained through participant observation, in-depth interviews with traditional food vendors, cultural practitioners, community leaders, and local historians, as well as analysis of historical documents and related literature. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis through data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and triangulation to ensure the credibility of the findings. The results show that Sotong Pangkong functions not only as a traditional food but also as a cultural symbol that represents the values of togetherness, simplicity, gratitude, and harmony of the Malay community with the coastal environment. Historically, this culinary tradition evolved from the fishing community's tradition of preserving seafood to become a cultural identity and culinary tourism attraction. Furthermore, Sotong Pangkong plays a role in maintaining collective memory, strengthening social cohesion, and supporting the preservation of intangible cultural heritage amidst the challenges of modernization. These findings contribute to the development of gastronomic studies, cultural education, and policies for the preservation of traditional Indonesian cuisine.

Keywords: Sotong Pangkong; Malay Culinary Heritage; Philosophical Values; Historical Perspective; Cultural Identity



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INTRODUCTION

Traditional foods not only serve as a means of fulfilling nutritional needs but also represent a culture that embodies historical experiences, philosophical values, social identity, and the collective memory of a community. From a food anthropology perspective, food serves as a medium that connects humans with their environment, traditions, and value systems passed down through generations. Therefore, each traditional culinary dish reflects not only food processing techniques but also local knowledge, social practices, and cultural symbols that shape a community's identity. Amidst globalization, modernization, and the homogenization of consumer culture, traditional foods are increasingly gaining attention as part of intangible cultural heritage, possessing strategic value in maintaining the sustainability of cultural identity, strengthening social cohesion, and supporting the development of the creative economy and culture-based tourism (Andry Fitriyanto et al., 2026).

Within the Malay cultural landscape of West Kalimantan, Sotong Pangkong has developed into a culinary icon with historical and philosophical significance, particularly in Pontianak during Ramadan. This tradition not only presents a dish made from dried squid that is grilled,



beaten (dipangkong) until soft, and then served with a variety of traditional sauces, but also represents the adaptation of Malay coastal communities to geographical conditions and available marine resources. The drying and beating techniques of squid are a form of local innovation in maintaining the quality of food for longer consumption, while also demonstrating the community's ability to manage seafood sustainably. The presence of Sotong Pangkong, synonymous with Ramadan, also demonstrates the close connection between culinary traditions, community economic activities, and religious practices that shape a unique social space in Pontianak each year.

More than just a traditional dish, Sotong Pangkong contains philosophical values that reflect the character of the Malay community, such as togetherness, mutual cooperation, simplicity, and gratitude for the seafood that is a source of livelihood for coastal communities. The activity of enjoying Sotong Pangkong in the Ramadan market area is not only a gastronomic experience, but also a space for social interaction that strengthens solidarity between communities, brings together various ethnic groups, and strengthens local cultural identity in the multicultural society of West Kalimantan. This tradition shows that traditional food has a social function as a medium for passing on knowledge, strengthening social relations, and forming collective memory that is continuously reproduced through cultural practices across generations. Thus, Sotong Pangkong not only has economic value as a culinary tourist attraction, but also symbolizes the sustainability of Malay culture that is alive and continues to develop according to the dynamics of the times (Hidayat et al., 2024).

However, the development of globalization, lifestyle changes, the dominance of fast food, and the transformation of people's consumption patterns present new challenges to the sustainability of local culinary traditions. Shifting preferences of the younger generation have the potential to diminish the cultural significance contained in traditional foods if they are viewed solely as economic commodities. On the other hand, increasing attention to cultural gastronomy, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, and the development of tourism destinations based on local wisdom open new opportunities for the revitalization of the Sotong Pangkong tradition as part of the cultural identity of the West Kalimantan Malays. Therefore, exploring the philosophical and historical values of Sotong Pangkong is important not only to document the origins and development of the tradition, but also to understand its socio-cultural meanings as an effort to strengthen the cultural identity of contemporary Malay society while supporting cultural heritage preservation strategies in the modern era (Andry Fitriyanto et al., 2026).

Despite its popularity as a regional culinary icon, existing studies on Sotong Pangkong have largely focused on tourism promotion, culinary entrepreneurship, and local economic development, while its philosophical meaning, historical evolution, and cultural symbolism remain underexplored. This gap limits a comprehensive understanding of Sotong Pangkong as more than just a traditional food, overlooking its significance as a cultural artifact reflecting Malay values, collective identity, and historical adaptation. Furthermore, modernization, urbanization, and the commercialization of traditional cuisine have gradually altered the production process and cultural meanings attached to the dish, potentially weakening its authenticity and heritage value. Therefore, this study aims to explore the philosophical and historical values embedded in Sotong Pangkong and examine how these values contribute to the preservation of Malay culinary heritage in contemporary society.

The development of globalization, urbanization, and digitalization has brought significant changes to people's consumption patterns, especially among the younger generation, who are increasingly familiar with fast food, processed food products, and global consumption culture. This condition has led to a shift in preferences from traditional foods to foods that are

considered more practical, modern, and in line with contemporary lifestyles. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) confirms that the transformation of the global food system has affected the sustainability of local food and threatened the existence of traditional knowledge that has long been part of people's cultural identities (FAO, 2019). This phenomenon not only impacts the decline in traditional food consumption but also has the potential to eliminate cultural values, local knowledge, and social practices inherent in the process of producing, serving, and consuming traditional foods. More recent findings indicate that the sustainability of culinary heritage is greatly influenced by the involvement of the younger generation in inheriting local gastronomic knowledge through education, family, and cultural communities (FAO, 2024):(OECD, 2023).

In line with this, UNESCO, through the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, affirms that culinary traditions are an essential part of intangible cultural heritage, encompassing knowledge, skills, social practices, rituals, and cultural expressions passed down from generation to generation. A recent UNESCO report emphasized that preserving traditional food practices not only aims to maintain cultural diversity but also strengthens community identity, enhances social cohesion, and supports sustainable development through the preservation of local knowledge (UNESCO, 2023). Thus, traditional food is seen as a medium for transmitting cultural values, serving an educational function while strengthening a sense of belonging to a local identity. From a cultural studies perspective, food is understood not only as an object of consumption but also as a symbolic representation reflecting history, identity, beliefs, social relations, and even power structures within a society. (Tye, 2006) explains that food is a "cultural text" used by communities to communicate collective history, cultural values, and social identities that are passed down from generation to generation. This view is reinforced by (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2012), who stated that food is a medium that reflects the relationship between culture, environment, economy, and politics, making the study of traditional foods an important part of understanding the dynamics of social change in a society. Therefore, research on traditional culinary arts should focus not only on gastronomic aspects but also on the symbolic meanings and social functions contained within them.

Studies on traditional Malay food in Southeast Asia also point to increasingly complex challenges. Research by (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010) revealed that the modernization, commercialization, and standardization of the food industry have caused many traditional foods to change in form, taste, and even social function, potentially diminishing the cultural significance inherent in these dishes. More recent findings indicate that while developing gastronomy as part of the tourism industry can increase the economic value of traditional foods, it also risks shifting cultural authenticity if commercial orientations predominate over efforts to preserve local values (Ellis et al., 2018); (Kai-Sean Lee, 2023). Therefore, developing gastronomic tourism requires an approach that balances economic interests and cultural conservation. In the context of West Kalimantan, research on Sotong Pangkong is still dominated by studies that position it as an icon of Ramadan culinary tourism and a regional economic commodity. A study by (Sri Susilo, 2014), for example, focuses more on Sotong Pangkong's potential in supporting the tourism and creative economy sectors of Pontianak City. Meanwhile, recent research on West Kalimantan gastronomy tends to focus on culinary destination promotion, tourist preferences, and regional marketing strategies. Consequently, the philosophical, historical, and symbolic dimensions, as well as the cultural inheritance process embodied in the Sotong Pangkong tradition, remain relatively understudied. Yet, exploring these values is crucial for strengthening Sotong Pangkong's position as part of the Malay intangible cultural heritage, representing not only economic value but also the cultural



identity, collective memory, and local knowledge of the coastal communities of West Kalimantan. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by positioning Sotong Pangkong as a cultural expression imbued with philosophical and historical significance, thereby contributing to the development of cultural gastronomy studies and the preservation of Malay cultural heritage in Indonesia.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on food heritage by providing a comprehensive understanding of the philosophical and historical values embedded in Sotong Pangkong as a Malay culinary tradition (Tye, 2006). This research also enriches the discourse on intangible cultural heritage by demonstrating how traditional cuisine serves as a medium for preserving collective memory, local wisdom, and cultural identity (UNESCO, 2023). Furthermore, these findings are expected to support cultural preservation initiatives by documenting indigenous culinary knowledge that may be marginalized by modernization (FAO, 2019). Finally, this study provides empirical evidence that can inform policymakers, cultural institutions, educators, and tourism stakeholders in developing sustainable strategies to protect Malay culinary heritage while promoting cultural tourism (Smith, 2009). To address the limited understanding of Sotong Pangkong beyond its economic and tourism value, this study uses a qualitative cultural heritage approach that integrates historical inquiry and philosophical interpretation. Through in-depth interviews with traditional vendors, cultural practitioners, historians, and members of the Malay community, complemented by participant observation and document analysis, this study explores the development of history, symbolic meaning, and cultural values contained in Sotong Pangkong.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to explore the philosophical and historical value of Sotong Pangkong as a Malay culinary cultural heritage. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the cultural meaning, social practices, and the process of inheriting traditions in depth within the context of community life. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and developed through snowball sampling. Informants consisted of Sotong Pangkong traders, Malay cultural figures, representatives of the Tourism Office, and tourists who had experience related to the Sotong Pangkong tradition and were therefore able to provide information relevant to the research objectives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were used to explore the history, philosophy, and cultural meaning, while observations were made of the processing process and social interactions. Documentation in the form of archives, photographs, and literature were used as supporting data. Data collection was carried out through preliminary studies, field observations, semi-structured interviews lasting 45–90 minutes, and documentation during Sotong Pangkong sales activities during Ramadan. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis referring to (Braun & Clarke, 2022), through the stages of reading data, coding, grouping themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and interpreting results.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

Sotong Pangkong as Malay Cultural Identity

Informants interpret Sotong Pangkong as a culinary icon that represents the cultural identity of the Malay community of West Kalimantan. More than just food, Sotong Pangkong symbolizes family togetherness, Ramadan traditions, and collective memories passed down from generation to generation. Through the experience of consuming it and the ongoing



practice of traditions, this culinary dish strengthens social bonds and serves as a marker of pride in local cultural heritage. Interviews indicate that Sotong Pangkong is understood as a symbol of Malay cultural identity, not simply a traditional food. This view was consistently expressed by traditional leaders, business owners, and the community, who linked it to history, togetherness, and Ramadan traditions passed down from generation to generation. The tradition of enjoying Sotong Pangkong during Ramadan serves as a means of cultural transmission that strengthens the collective identity of the Malay community. Field observation data further supports the interview findings. During the study, researchers observed that purchasing and enjoying Sotong Pangkong almost always took place in groups. As the time to break the fast approached, stalls filled with families, groups of friends, and members of the public gathered to choose, wait for the grilling process, and then enjoy the dish. The atmosphere created was not only one of economic transactions but also a space for warm social interaction. Conversations between buyers, jokes between traders and customers, and the habit of sharing seats show that the presence of Sotong Pangkong helps build social relationships within the community.

The researchers then conducted a thematic analysis of the interview, observation, and documentation results, yielding three main findings. The first finding indicates that Sotong Pangkong has become a symbol of Malay cultural identity, particularly for the people of Pontianak City and its surrounding areas. Nearly all informants associated this culinary tradition with pride in the local culture passed down through generations. The analysis revealed three main subthemes: a symbol of Pontianak's culinary heritage, family heritage, and coastal community identity. As a symbol of Pontianak's culinary heritage, most informants stated that when mentioning Pontianak City, one of the dishes that immediately comes to mind is Sotong Pangkong. This dish is considered a regional icon, possessing distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from traditional dishes from other regions. Its presence every Ramadan has created a strong cultural image, making it a must-try dish for both locals and tourists when visiting Pontianak. For locals, Sotong Pangkong is not only a dish to break the fast, but also a symbol of pride in the richness of Malay ethnic cuisine. This recognition shows that food can function as a marker of a region's identity as well as a medium for introducing local culture to the wider community.

As a family heritage, knowledge of Sotong Pangkong is more often passed down through the family environment than through formal education. Many informants recounted their experiences of being introduced to this dish as children through their parents and grandparents, who regularly took them to buy or make Sotong Pangkong during Ramadan. This tradition creates a strong emotional connection between food and family memories. Many informants reported that the aroma of grilled cuttlefish, the sound of smacking while serving it, and the habit of eating together are part of their childhood memories, which they still cherish to this day. This finding demonstrates that cultural inheritance occurs through everyday life experiences, thus preserving cultural values from one generation to the next. As a coastal community identity, Sotong Pangkong reflects the character of coastal communities, which are heavily dependent on seafood. Informants explained that the use of cuttlefish as a primary ingredient is not simply due to its easy availability but also a form of community adaptation to the surrounding natural resources. The relationship between community and the sea forms a distinctive cultural identity. For coastal Malay communities, seafood is not only a source of livelihood but also an integral part of social life, traditions, and culture. Therefore, the Pangkong Sotong represents the harmonious relationship between humans, the environment, and culture that has developed over generations. The following image shows the Pangkong Sotong during Ramadan in Pontianak City.



Figure 1. The presence of Pangkong cuttlefish during the month of Ramadan in Pontianak City, Research Source 2026

Based on Figure 1, it shows the atmosphere of selling Sotong Pakong in the month of Ramadhan 2026. Based on observations and interviews, there is cross-generational inheritance in the production and sales of Sotong Pangkong. Older people play a role in preparing, grilling and grilling cuttlefish, while the younger generation generally helps serve buyers and manage sales. Even though the regeneration process has taken place, the main role is still dominated by the older generation so that the sustainability of traditions faces challenges. Field documentation also shows that processing techniques, use of simple equipment, and family recipes are maintained as a form of preserving local knowledge. However, the younger generation's interest in continuing the family business is still relatively low because they prefer work in other sectors. The results of triangulation of interviews, observations and documentation show that Sotong Pangkong is not just a traditional culinary dish, but is a cultural heritage that contains historical, philosophical, social and educational values. Therefore, conservation needs to be directed not only at maintaining recipes and processing techniques, but also at regenerating business actors and passing on cultural values to future generations.

Philosophical Values in the Sotong Pangkong Tradition

Furthermore, the process of holding cuttlefish carries a philosophical meaning that has been passed down through generations. Informants explained that the act of beating cuttlefish is not done haphazardly, but rather requires skill, precision, and patience to soften the texture of the cuttlefish without damaging its shape. This process is seen as a symbol that every good product requires effort, perseverance, and respect for nature. Several informants also linked the process to the lives of fishing communities who are heavily dependent on the sea. They interpret each stage of processing as a form of respect for the sustenance obtained from their catch. In their view, food is not simply an economic commodity, but the result of hard work that should be treated with gratitude. This philosophical meaning is further evident when Sotong Pangkong is consumed with family or relatives. The act of eating becomes a space for social interaction that strengthens the values of mutual cooperation, togetherness, and mutual respect. Thus, cultural values are not only present in the final product but are also reflected throughout the entire processing and consumption process. Furthermore, the process of holding cuttlefish contains philosophical values of hard work, patience, gratitude, and respect for seafood. Thus, Sotong Pangkong not only has a consumptive function, but also becomes a means of cultural education that instills life values and strengthens the identity of the Malay community of West Kalimantan.



The second finding shows that the community interprets Sotong Pangkong not only through its taste, but also through the life values embodied in the processing and consumption traditions. The values embodied in the tradition of making Sotong Pangkong include hard work, patience, gratitude for seafood, and togetherness during fast-breaking. Hard Work. Informants explained that the process of holding the cuttlefish requires effort, precision, and skill to ensure the cuttlefish's texture is soft without damaging its shape. This activity is seen as a symbol that every good result is achieved through earnest effort. This meaning is often associated with the lives of fishermen who must face natural challenges to earn a living. Therefore, the process of processing Sotong Pangkong is understood as a reflection of the work ethic of coastal communities who uphold the value of hard work. Patience. In addition to hard work, the process of processing Sotong Pangkong also embodies the value of patience. Informants said that each stage, from drying, grilling, to holding, requires time and precision. Small mistakes can affect the quality of the food's taste and texture. For the community, this process teaches that success is not achieved instantly, but requires perseverance and patience. This value is indirectly passed down through cultural practices repeated in daily life. Gratitude for Seafood. Most informants view seafood as a gift to be cherished. They explained that processing Sotong Pangkong is a form of respect for the sustenance provided by nature. This view demonstrates a spiritual connection between the community and the coastal environment. Processing and enjoying seafood is done with gratitude because the community recognizes that their lives are highly dependent on the sustainability of marine resources. Togetherness at Iftar. Field observations show that Sotong Pangkong is almost always enjoyed with family, friends, and relatives when breaking the fast. The activities of purchasing, waiting for the grilling process, and eating the food are carried out in a warm atmosphere full of social interaction. This tradition demonstrates that Sotong Pangkong functions not only as food, but also as a medium for strengthening relationships between families and the community. This value of togetherness is what gives Sotong Pangkong a strong social significance in Malay culture. These findings can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Philosophical Values in the Sotong Pangkong Tradition

No	Philosophical Values in the Sotong Pangkong Tradition	Explanation	Philosophical Values
1	Hard Work	The process of holding cuttlefish requires effort, precision, and skill to soften the cuttlefish's texture without damaging its shape. Informants related this process to the lives of fishermen who must face natural challenges to earn a living.	Reflects the work ethic of coastal communities that good results can only be obtained through serious effort, perseverance and skill.
2	Patience	The drying, baking, and roasting stages require time and precision. Small mistakes can affect the taste and texture of the food.	Teaches that success is not achieved instantly, but through a process that requires patience, perseverance, and caution.
3	Gratitude for Seafood	Informants view seafood as a gift to be cherished. The processing of Pangkong cuttlefish is understood as a form of respect for the bounty provided by nature and demonstrates the community's spiritual connection to the coastal environment.	Reflecting gratitude to God for marine products and awareness of the importance of maintaining the sustainability of natural resources as a support for the lives of coastal communities.



4	Togetherness when Breaking the Fast	Sotong Pangkong is typically enjoyed with family, friends, or relatives when breaking the fast. The process of purchasing, waiting for the grilling process, and eating takes place in a warm and social atmosphere	Shows that Sotong Pangkong not only functions as food, but also as a medium that strengthens social relations, mutual cooperation, and solidarity in Malay culture.
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Historical Value and Transformation of Sotong Pangkong

The historical journey of Sotong Pangkong is based on the collective experiences of the community. Informants explained that in the past, fishermen faced limitations in storing their catch due to the lack of refrigeration technology. To maintain the quality of the cuttlefish, they processed it into dried cuttlefish, which was then pounded to make it more tender for consumption. This simple practice emerged as an adaptation to coastal environmental conditions and the community's economic needs. Over time, this practical function underwent a cultural transformation. Sotong Pangkong was no longer seen simply as a way to preserve seafood, but evolved into a traditional food eagerly awaited during Ramadan. Informants recounted that the atmosphere of Sotong Pangkong vendors in the afternoon has become part of the childhood memories of many Malays. The aroma of grilled cuttlefish, the sound of wooden sledgehammers beating on the cuttlefish, and the bustling crowds of customers create a cultural experience passed down across generations. These findings demonstrate that culinary history is not static, but rather continues to evolve in line with social dynamics. The transformation of Sotong Pangkong from a fishermen's survival strategy to a cultural symbol of Ramadan demonstrates the Malay community's ability to maintain traditions while adapting to changing times. This process makes Sotong Pangkong a cultural heritage with both historical value and social significance that remains relevant today.

Observations also revealed intergenerational inheritance in the production and sale of Sotong Pangkong. Parents are responsible for preparing, grilling, and serving the cuttlefish, while younger generations generally assist with serving customers and managing sales. Although the regeneration process has been ongoing, the older generation still plays a key role, thus challenging the continuity of the tradition. Field documentation also shows that processing techniques, the use of simple equipment, and family recipes are maintained as a form of preserving local knowledge. However, the younger generation's interest in continuing the family business remains relatively low, as they prefer employment in other sectors. The triangulation of interviews, observations, and documentation indicates that Sotong Pangkong is not simply a traditional culinary tradition, but a cultural heritage with historical, philosophical, social, and educational value. Therefore, its preservation needs to be directed not only at maintaining recipes and processing techniques, but also at regenerating entrepreneurs and passing on cultural values to future generations.

The third finding illustrates the long journey of Sotong Pangkong from its inception to becoming one of West Kalimantan's culinary icons. This finding developed into three sub-themes: the tradition of preserving fishermen's catches, its development into Ramadan culinary delights, and its transformation into a gastronomic tourist attraction. The Tradition of Preserving Fishermen's Catch. Informants explained that in the past, fishermen utilized drying techniques to maintain the quality of cuttlefish when the catch was abundant. After drying, the cuttlefish were beaten to soften their texture for consumption. This practice demonstrates the ability of coastal communities to adapt to the limitations of storage technology in the past. From this practical need, a processing technique was born that later developed into the culinary identity of the Malay community. Evolving into a Ramadan Culinary Delight. Over time, the function of Sotong Pangkong has evolved. Initially merely a way to preserve seafood, the dish has now become synonymous with Ramadan. Nearly all informants noted that the presence of

Sotong Pangkong vendors signifies the arrival of Ramadan in Pontianak. This transformation demonstrates that a culinary tradition can evolve with social change without losing its cultural roots. Ramadan serves as a momentum that solidifies Sotong Pangkong's presence as an annual Malay tradition.

Transformation into a Gastronomic Tourism Attraction. In recent years, informants observed that Sotong Pangkong has become increasingly popular with tourists from outside the region. Many visitors come specifically to sample this culinary delight as part of a cultural tourism experience. This transformation demonstrates that Sotong Pangkong no longer merely holds cultural value but also contributes to the development of the creative economy in coastal communities. This traditional culinary delight serves as a source of income for business owners and a means of promoting Malay culture to both national and international audiences. The above findings can be illustrated through the following concept map.

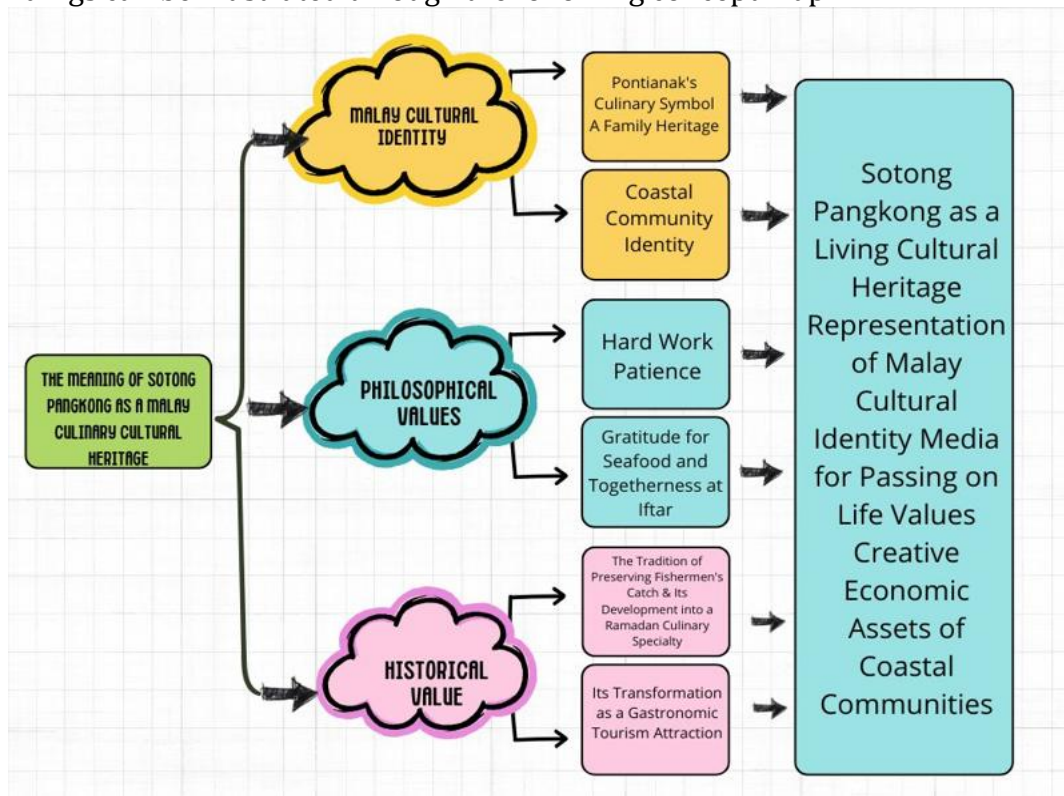


Figure 1. The meaning of Sotong Pangkong as a Malay Culinary Cultural Heritage

Overall, the three findings and their resulting subthemes demonstrate that the meaning of Sotong Pangkong has undergone dynamic development. Initially, this culinary treat served as a solution for fishing communities to preserve their catch. However, through a long historical process, Sotong Pangkong has transformed into a symbol of Malay cultural identity, a medium for transmitting philosophical values, a means of connecting social relationships during Ramadan traditions, and a creative economic asset supporting the development of gastronomic tourism. Thus, Sotong Pangkong is no longer understood solely as a traditional food, but rather as a living cultural heritage that records history, reflects the values of coastal communities, and holds strategic potential to support cultural preservation and economic development based on local wisdom.

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the view that traditional food is a form of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), serving as a representation of social identity, collective memory, and a

mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of cultural values. In the context of the Malay community of West Kalimantan, Sotong Pangkong is not only seen as a culinary product consumed during Ramadan, but has also evolved into a symbol of the coastal community's historical relationship with the marine environment, trade activities, and communal traditions passed down through generations. Thus, the primary value of Sotong Pangkong lies not solely in its taste, but also in the local knowledge, processing skills, and accompanying social practices.

These findings are in line with research (Lukmanulhakim, 2022); (Elmustian Elmustian et al., 2024) which explains that traditional Malay food is a medium for intergenerational cultural transmission through informal learning processes within families and communities. In this study, it is emphasized that the sustainability of traditional culinary depends on community participation in maintaining cooking practices, serving, and the accompanying cultural narratives. This perspective is consistent with the UNESCO living heritage concept which views cultural heritage not as objects, but in social practices that are continuously reproduced by the community. Therefore, the existence of Sotong Pangkong cannot be understood only as a food product, but as a cultural practice that lives through the social interactions of the Malay community. This view is further reinforced by (Balan et al., 2025) research on traditional Sarawakian cuisine, which demonstrates that traditional foods serve as symbols of cultural identity, collective memory, and social cohesion in multiethnic communities. Balan asserts that the experience of consuming traditional foods always involves emotional, historical, and identity dimensions, making food a medium for building a sense of belonging to a community. The results of this study demonstrate a similar pattern. Informants do not explain Sotong Pangkong solely based on the composition of ingredients or cooking techniques, but rather consistently relate it to Ramadan experiences, the lives of coastal communities, and decades-long interactions between vendors and buyers. This demonstrates that the cultural value of a food emerges through ongoing social experiences.

Nevertheless, this research expands previous studies by identifying philosophical dimensions that have not been widely discussed in Malay gastronomic literature. Most previous research emphasizes the social function of traditional food as a cultural identity or tourist attraction. This research found that the process of roasting cuttlefish itself has a symbolic meaning which is understood by the community as a representation of hard work, patience, perseverance, and respect for marine products. The activity of beating cuttlefish until they are flat is not perceived simply as a technique to soften the texture of food, but is also interpreted as a metaphor for the lives of fishing communities who have to struggle with the dynamics of coastal nature. This finding is interesting when compared to the perspective of (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2012), who stated that food always contains symbolic meaning that reflects human relationships with the social and ecological environment. According to them, the food production process is often more important than the final product because it contains inherited cultural values. In the context of Sotong Pangkong, cultural meaning emerges through the activity of pangkong, not just through the food itself. Thus, this study demonstrates that culinary symbolism can be inherent in the production process, not just the final product.

On the other hand, there is debate in the literature regarding the position of traditional foods in the era of modernization. Some researchers believe that globalization threatens the sustainability of traditional foods because changes in people's lifestyles have led to a decrease in the consumption of local foods. Research by (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010) shows that the younger generation tends to choose fast food over traditional foods because it is considered more practical and in line with modern lifestyles. Similar findings have been reported by various studies in Southeast Asia, indicating that changing consumption patterns have shifted the position of traditional foods from daily necessities to ceremonial consumption. However, the

results of this study show a slightly different phenomenon. Although modernization has influenced people's consumption patterns, Sotong Pangkong has survived due to a process of cultural adaptation. Vendors have begun using social media as a promotional tool, improving product displays, offering a variety of chili sauces, and packaging culinary experiences as part of cultural tourism. This means that modernization does not necessarily lead to the loss of tradition, but can instead become a new mechanism for maintaining the sustainability of cultural heritage if communities are able to innovate without losing their authentic value.

This view supports (D. J. (Ed.). Timothy, 2015) argument regarding heritage tourism, namely that cultural heritage will survive if it can adapt to the needs of contemporary society. Timothy explains that the success of a cultural heritage is not determined by the ability to rigidly maintain its original form, but rather by the community's ability to negotiate the balance between preservation and innovation. In this context, the success of Sotong Pangkong lies not in changing the recipe or cooking technique, but rather in the community's ability to present a historical and philosophical narrative that appeals to modern tourists. However, there are also criticisms of this adaptation process. (Smith, 2009) using the concept of Authorized Heritage Discourse, explains that the commercialization of cultural heritage often leads to a simplification of cultural meanings to make it more accessible to tourists. From this perspective, there is a risk that the philosophical narrative of Sotong Pangkong is used solely as a marketing strategy without being truly understood by the community or tourists. If this occurs, cultural values could shift to mere economic commodities.

The results of this study show that this risk has not fully occurred. Based on interviews with traders and cultural figures, narratives about the history, philosophy and process of pemangkongan are still conveyed directly to tourists as part of the cultural experience. Therefore, the commercialization process that occurs is more accurately understood as cultural revitalization rather than cultural commodification. Economic activity actually becomes an incentive for people to maintain traditions because cultural sustainability provides economic benefits while increasing pride in local identity. The findings of this research strengthen the argument that traditional food is not only understood as a consumption product, but also as a medium for transmitting cultural values, forming collective identity, and a source for developing a creative economy based on local wisdom. Various studies in Indonesia during the 2020–2025 period show that traditional culinary delights have an educational function because they are a means of passing on knowledge between generations, introducing local history, social norms and people's philosophy of life. Apart from that, traditional food also acts as a symbol of cultural identity that differentiates one community from other communities amidst globalization. Preserving local culinary delights is even seen as a strategy to maintain national identity while strengthening community cultural resilience(Abror et al., 2024).

On the other hand, studies on the development of a local culinary-based creative economy also show that traditional foods have increasingly significant economic value through the development of tourist villages, MSMEs, culinary festivals, and digital marketing. Culinary products are no longer positioned merely as economic commodities, but as cultural representations that can enhance the competitiveness of tourist destinations. Thus, the cultural value embodied in traditional foods becomes a source of differentiation for tourism products while strengthening authentic tourist experiences. Synergy between the government, communities, MSMEs, and the tourism sector is a key factor in maintaining the sustainability of a local culinary-based creative economy (Novilla Ramayani et al., 2025). However, a review of various national studies shows that the focus of studies is still dominated by the inventory of traditional food types, identification of culinary tourism potential, marketing strategies, or creative economy development. Most studies position traditional foods as cultural objects that

need to be preserved or as regional economic assets, while the symbolic meanings inherent in food preparation have received relatively little attention. Yet, the cooking process is a social space where the transmission of values, local knowledge, beliefs, and life philosophies of the community, passed down from generation to generation, occurs. As a result, the intangible cultural dimension is often understudied in previous studies (Abror et al., 2024).

This study offers a unique contribution compared to previous research because it not only inventories or examines the culinary tourism potential of Sotong Pangkong but also uncovers the philosophical dimensions at each stage of Sotong Pangkong's preparation. The processing process, from ingredient selection to presentation, embodies the values of patience, hard work, togetherness, and the harmonious relationship between the Malay community and the coastal environment. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that Sotong Pangkong's appeal lies not only in its taste but also in the cultural narrative and authentic experiences tourists gain through interactions with traditions, culinary practitioners, and the Ramadan atmosphere in Pontianak. Theoretically, these findings broaden the study of cultural gastronomy by positioning Sotong Pangkong as a living heritage, allowing its preservation to focus not only on recipes and cooking techniques but also on the philosophical values, collective memory, and cultural identity of the Malay community of West Kalimantan (Fransiska Modhe Dua, 2025).

Thus, compared to previous research, this study's main contribution lies in three aspects. First, it demonstrates that the cultural significance of Sotong Pangkong lies not only in the food product, but also in the process of making it a symbol of coastal community life. Second, it demonstrates that historical narratives play as important a role as taste in constructing gastronomic experiences. Third, it confirms that the sustainability of traditional foods in the modern era depends not only on the preservation of recipes but also on the community's ability to communicate cultural values to younger generations and tourists. One new pattern emerging from this research is the transformation of Sotong Pangkong's function from a traditional food to a medium for cultural diplomacy through gastronomic tourism. Previous literature generally viewed traditional foods as cultural identity or local tourist attractions. However, this research demonstrates that traditional foods can also serve as a means of cross-cultural communication, introducing tourists to the history, philosophy, and character of the Malay people.

This finding demonstrates a shift in tourist orientation. Most informants revealed that tourists come not only to taste Sotong Pangkong, but also to learn about its history, the reasons for the process of making it, and the food's connection to Ramadan traditions in Pontianak. Thus, the culinary experience has evolved into a cultural experience. This phenomenon can be explained through (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Experience Economy theory. According to this theory, modern consumers no longer purchase products alone but seek experiences that convey emotional meaning. In the context of this research, the primary value of Sotong Pangkong no longer lies solely in the food product, but rather in the experience of witnessing the making process, hearing historical stories, interacting with vendors, and experiencing the atmosphere of the Ramadan culinary scene. Therefore, cultural experiences become a source of added value that increases the appeal of traditional culinary delights.

Other findings indicate the emergence of a digital cultural pattern. Businesses have begun using social media to document the pemangkong process, tell the history of Sotong Pangkong, and introduce the identity of Malay culinary arts to a wider audience. This digitalization has transformed the traditional oral tradition of cultural transmission into a combination of direct transmission and digital communication. This demonstrates that social media can be an instrument for cultural preservation when used to strengthen authentic narratives, rather than simply promote products. Another trend is the growing connection between gastronomy and the creative economy. Traditional culinary arts are no longer understood solely as a food sector,

but have become part of a cultural economy ecosystem involving MSMEs, local governments, cultural communities, and the tourism sector. These findings support the concept of a creative economy, which positions cultural heritage as a source of economic innovation without eliminating its traditional values.

Conceptually, the results of this study support the theory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) developed by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2023); (UNESCO, 2003). In the ICH perspective, cultural heritage is not merely an artifact, but a living cultural practice that is passed down through knowledge, skills, oral expressions, rituals, and community participation. The research findings show that the existence of Sotong Pangkong fulfills all of these characteristics because it is passed down through cooking practices, the process of holding food, historical stories, and Ramadan traditions that are still maintained by the Malay community. However, this study also expands the concept of ICH. UNESCO literature generally emphasizes the process of intergenerational cultural inheritance, while this study shows that this inheritance now takes place through new mechanisms in the form of social media and gastronomic tourism. Thus, the process of cultural transmission is no longer limited to families or local communities, but has expanded to tourists as part of the cultural learning process. From the perspective of Cultural Identity Theory (Phinney et al., 2001) and (Li, 2015), the research findings indicate that traditional food is a symbol of collective identity that distinguishes one group from another. Sotong Pangkong represents the identity of the Pontianak Malay community due to its ties to the history of trade, coastal life, and Ramadan traditions. This identity is not constructed through abstract symbols, but through social practices that are repeated annually.

Furthermore, the research data also reinforces the Food Heritage theory, which explains that culinary heritage encompasses raw materials, cooking techniques, symbolic meanings, local knowledge, and the relationship between humans and the environment. The process of preparing cuttlefish provides a concrete example that food processing techniques can embody cultural philosophies passed down across generations. Furthermore, the research findings open up a dialogue with the Heritage Commodification theory. Some literature assumes commercialization will diminish cultural authenticity. However, field data shows that commercialization is not always synonymous with cultural degradation. In the case of Sotong Pangkong, economic activity actually strengthens the community's motivation to maintain cultural practices because these traditions provide both social and economic benefits. Thus, the relationship between cultural preservation and the economy is mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive (Timothy, 2015).

The integration of theory and data also shows that the concept of gastronomy can no longer be understood solely as the study of food. Gastronomy must be viewed as a cultural system that connects the natural environment, history, identity, philosophy, social practices, and the creative economy. In this context, Sotong Pangkong is an example of how a single culinary product can become a meeting point for cultural heritage, Malay identity, coastal environmental sustainability, and cultural tourism development. Overall, the synthesis of theory and field findings yields a conceptual model that suggests that Sotong Pangkong develops through a dynamic relationship between history, philosophy, cultural practices, collective identity, tourism experiences, and digital innovation. This model demonstrates that the sustainability of culinary heritage is determined not only by the ability to maintain traditional recipes, but also by the community's ability to construct authentic cultural narratives, transmit knowledge to the next generation, and utilize technology and tourism as preservation tools. Thus, this research makes a theoretical contribution by expanding the study of Malay gastronomy from a culinary product perspective to a more holistic approach, namely as a living cultural system that integrates the dimensions of history, philosophy, identity, the

creative economy, and cultural diplomacy. This research identified four main findings. First, Sotong Pangkong is a symbol of Malay cultural identity passed down through generations. Second, the tradition of pemangkong embodies philosophical values such as hard work, patience, gratitude, and togetherness. Third, historically, Sotong Pangkong evolved from a strategy for preserving fishermen's catches to become a culinary icon of Pontianak and a Ramadan tradition. Fourth, preserving Sotong Pangkong requires business regeneration, product innovation, cultural documentation, and the use of digital media to maintain its relevance amidst modernization. These findings strengthen Sotong Pangkong's position as a Malay culinary heritage, possessing historical, philosophical, social, and economic value, while enriching studies on gastronomy and intangible cultural heritage in Southeast Asia.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Sotong Pangkong is a Malay culinary cultural heritage that has historical, philosophical, social, and educational values. Thematic analysis identified three main findings: Sotong Pangkong as a symbol of Malay cultural identity, embodying the values of hard work, patience, gratitude, and togetherness, and undergoing a transformation from a seafood preservation technique to a Ramadan culinary icon and gastronomic tourism attraction. These findings confirm that traditional culinary can be a medium for culture-based education to strengthen character, local cultural identity, and awareness of cultural heritage preservation. Furthermore, this study enriches the study of cultural gastronomy by demonstrating that traditional food functions as a medium for transmitting history, cultural values, and community identity. The research results can be used by teachers as a source of learning based on local wisdom, by the government as a basis for preserving cultural heritage and developing gastronomic tourism, and by business actors to strengthen cultural narratives in culinary promotions while supporting the regeneration of the Sotong Pangkong tradition. Therefore, the government needs to strengthen the program for preserving Sotong Pangkong as a cultural heritage, while educational institutions are expected to integrate traditional culinary into local culture-based learning. Business actors need to develop cultural interpretations in culinary presentation, and further research is suggested to examine Malay culinary comparatively or use a mixed methods approach to broaden understanding of its contribution to cultural preservation and sustainable tourism.

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