

# The Meaning of Longing for the Tradition of “*Ngirup Cuko Pempek*” Palembang as Friendship Communication in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era

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## Abstract

This research aimed to construct the meaning of longing for the tradition of *ngirup cuko pempek* as a friendship communication for the people of Palembang in the Covid-19 pandemic era. This longing communication research is qualitative one. The object of research, namely the behaviour of longing for tradition *ngirup cuko pempek*. The research subjects are Palembang residents who often travel out of town. The research data used participated observation, interview and documents analysis obtained from informants. The data analysis technique used an interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The results of the research showed, 1) *Ngirup cuko* is the local wisdom and eating culture of Palembang citizens; 2) The meaning on the longing philosophy on *ngirup cuko pempek* shows love for the traditions identity of the region, kinship and togetherness, the friendship, as well as typically Palembang culinary promotion.

**Keywords:** longing on *ngirup cuko*, *pempek*, friendship communication, Covid-19

## 1. Introduction

Palembang is known as Pempek City. There is an interesting thing, pempek and the city of Palembang, both of which are inseparable, as pempek Palembang or mpek-mpek Palembang. Identity inherent in this unique culinary as if a right into a *trade mark* that is both legendary and ingrained for the community as part of the cultural area of South Sumatra Province.

People who come and go back to their city, must bring pempek as souvenirs. Even if Palembang people go to another city, surely their friends or family will ask them, “do you bring pempek?”. This question shows that this culinary attraction has a relational function, in addition to ethnic identity and regional culture. Pempek for the people of Palembang is not just a food that must always be there every day, but part of the hereditary culture. According to Palembang people's beliefs, if someone has tasted the pleasure of eating pempek, then he will be addicted and if he has visited Palembang City and drank Musi River water, one day he will come back again. Whether it's true or not still needs to be studied. This situation indirectly builds the image in society that eating pempek is identical to Palembang (Triwidayatsih, 2009).

The power of pleasure to cause addiction, also fosters a sense of longing for pempek. Effects of feeling the easement, pempek delicacy and a strong distinctive flavor of *cuko* that causes Palembang people never bored and actually hold this dish almost every time. Not unlike the Palembang people that often alternating leaving the cities or living overseas in other areas, this longing for Pempek was very difficult to be held.

Most of this longing were stated in statement, “*rindu ngirup cuko*”. In Indonesian, it means

longing to sip the *cuko*. The meaning is for someone who has felt the pleasure of eating pempek while sipping a thin gravy or sauce called *cuko*, so that his longing grows. This statement will be felt by a person when he takes time for going back to Palembang, search for or buy pempek in the city where he or she was.

In a social context, longing for eating pempek while *ngirup cuko* really exquisite when there are moments of gathering, whether with relatives, friends, colleagues to the relation of the nation state. In addition to the family gathering, wedding party, birthday party, social gathering, reunion, farewell and welcoming party, or eating pempek at the shop is always done together. Eating pempek in gatherings especially during religious holiday, Eid particularly, is difficult to be separated as a habit and community cultural identity, despite being faced with the Covid-19 pandemic.

It's already two times of Eid Fitr 2020 and 2021, Indonesia was still applying large scale social restriction policies (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar* - PSBB), Micro scaled PSBB, until prohibition on returning to one's home area. This policy becomes very difficult to carry out when travellers from South Sumatra want to return home. Even though that's when the longing to eat pempek while sipping *cuko* became a dream.

Usually when going home for Eid, the culture of community gathering as well as staying in touch or visiting family or relatives is always awaited. However, the Covid-19 pandemic, which has entered its second year, is feared to increase the risk of transmitting the Corona virus. WHO stated that the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world caused people around the world still express fear and panic in various behaviours. The positive confirmed cases and the death toll are increasing every day, covering more than 200 countries, where both figures, as of 20 April 2020, had exceeded 2 million and 100,000 cases, respectively (Salman, 2021).

The concern is increasingly clear for people who are elderly or vulnerable to infection. Therefore, the Ministry of Transportation stated that not going home for Eid is the government's option to suppress mobility in order to reduce the transmission and spread of the Covid-19 virus (Bureau of Communication and Public Information, 2021). This of course has an effect on face-to-face meetings, dining visits at shops or chatting together on important events for Eid al-Fitr, and other moments.

Based on this situation, the author is interested in researching the meaning of longing to drink *cuko* as a communication for the Palembang community in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study aims to find out the meaning of longing to sip *cuko* as a friendship communication between the people of Palembang in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Friendship Communication*

Communication is a social process in society. This social process is defined as the reciprocal influence between various shared lives (individuals, communities, organizations, etc.) (Vera & Wihardi, 2011). In fact, long before George Herbert Mead stated that communication is also the embodiment of interaction at the biological level, because without communication acts of togetherness will not occur (Mead, 1969). In addition, communication also arises because of the encouragement of needs to reduce a sense of uncertainty, act effectively, maintain or strengthen the ego (Barnlund & Harland, 1963).

In the context of human relations, individuals will be connected with the friendship of brotherhood or relatives who are connected by *nasab* or closest descendants. The value of friendship based on relatives or lineage has a very high value, because it has responsibilities both morally and materially (Istianah, 2016).

Friendship is a milestone that strengthens many things, ranging from unity, attention, affection, livelihood, making it easier for someone to enter heaven. If every individual is able to build good friendship, there will be many conveniences. Therefore, the vehicle for friendship must always be built and preserved (Istianah, 2016).

Therefore, in the context of friendly communication which is an element of conveying messages between sellers and buyers, the host of the serving provider and the guest who enjoys pempek are related to good intentions to mutually realize unity, concern, affection including the opening of space and time for livelihood.

## *2.2 Social Communication Theory*

Social communication is a process of interaction between a person or an institution through the delivery of messages in order to build integration or social adaptation. The process of interaction that occurs in social communication is shown by a person or community group conveying messages to other parties so that other parties can catch what is meant by the sender.

In practice, social communication also includes the socialization process that occurs between the interested parties. Thus, social communication in the social survival of a social group will be guaranteed. Through social communication is achieved social stability, social order, the transmission of old and new values that are glorified by a society. Through social communication, public awareness is fostered, trained, expanded. Through social communication social problems are solved through consensus. (Vera & Wihardi, 2011). The process of social communication can be done in several ways, including:

1. Through primary social contact, it is called "*interpersonal communication*" in communication, namely the occurrence of contact between two people who face each other and each party responds directly.
2. Through secondary social contact, namely contact between two people using intermediaries such as technological intermediaries. In this context, it can be understood that the study of communication cannot leave socio-cultural factors behind. In a cultural perspective, communication studies develop in a very broad realm or domain, this is in line with the character of communication science itself which is very heterogeneous and multidisciplinary and eclectic (Saleh, 2007).

## *2.2 Cultural Identity Theory*

Food is an expression of culture, while also producing culture (Setiawan, 2016). Identity becomes a stronger source for the meaning of human self than its role, due to the process of self-construction and individualization involved. In a simple sense, identity forms meaning and all identities are constructed (Utami, 2018).

One of the intended identities is the meaning of habits or cultures that become human experience. One of the human experiences is enjoying food or culinary offerings. Food is not only a biological need for humans to survive, it is also a social and cultural need for humans in a community or society. Food choices for food intake are shaped by social and cultural

factors that give food symbolic meaning. Cultural factors are part of the human experience that is always evolving and changing. Cultural identity is a reflection of historical similarities and cultural codes that make a group of people "one" even though from the "outside" they look different (Hall, 1993).

In the practice of communication, identity does not only give meaning to a person's personality, but furthermore it becomes the hallmark of a culture behind it. Cultural characteristics give identity to a group of people who identify aspects of culture that make a group of people different, including with aspects, namely communication and language, clothing and appearance, food and eating habits, time and awareness of time, appreciation and recognition, relationships, values and norms, sense of self and space, mental and learning processes, beliefs and attitudes (Mulyana, 2010: 58).

In the culture of *ngirup cuko*, a person will experience the behaviour that has been experienced and become a pattern of imitation from generation to generation. Although people will not automatically eat pempek by sipping *cuko* either with a spoon or directly in the bowl, this habit is already shared and is a characteristic of Palembang people. Sipping *cuko* as a cultural behaviour serves to give identity to the people of Palembang itself, including ensuring survival and increasing a sense of belonging to regional cuisine wherever they are.

From a communication perspective, a person's cultural identity is something that emerges when messages are exchanged, which are negotiated, co-created and reinforced or challenged when communicating. In other words, cultural identity is more sociological than psychological (Iskandar, 2004).

### **3. Research Method**

#### *3.1 Data Types and Sources*

In this qualitative study, researchers will identify and elaborate on the culture of *ngirup cuko* as a communication of friendship that has meaning for the community as well as lovers of pempek in shops or restaurants in Palembang City. Through qualitative research, the researcher treats the data obtained from interviews with informants as meaningful, so that they know the meaning contained in the culture of *ngirup cuko* pempek as a friendship communication.

#### *3.2 Data collection technique*

In addition, this study prioritizes primary data based on participatory and non-participatory observations to informants through in-depth interviews, and literature studies. The informants in this study consisted of (1) the Chairperson of the Pempek Palembang Entrepreneurs Association, (2) the Palembang people living in Bogor, (3) a private university lecturer who had just completed a doctoral program at UNJ, Jakarta State University, (4) the Palembang people in Bandung, (5) Palembang people, staff of the Indonesian Embassy in Jeddah.

Through this research, the writer finds and knows the cultural meaning of *ngirup cuko* as friendship communication. In addition, based on the information conveyed through interviews, the author also observed the experiences of five informants when socializing with people and social communities in Palembang and several other cities. The author also notes the opinions, feelings and activities of the informants in relation to the meaning of longing to sip *cuko* pempek.

### 3.3 Data analysis

This study used data analysis techniques developed by Miles Huberman which consists of three stages, which include data reduction, data presentation and conclusions.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

### 4.1 Research result

After conducting interviews with informants 1,2,3,4, and 5, then the research result as follows. The informant stated that the origin of pempek was from the *kelesan* language which was made by a native of Palembang. It is recorded that pempek began to be peddled in 1916, by people of Chinese descent who walked to sell *kelesan* from village to village. They sell a lot, especially in the palace area, now at the location of the Great Mosque and Palembang Old Mosque. The name Pempek comes from the name of the buyer to the seller of kelesan, they are usually called Empek (Ipul, 2018). Due to the nickname, "Pek, empek", over time it was used to refer to the food they were selling.

The relationship between the emotional side of immigrants and local residents (natives) which is an integral part of cultural acculturation (Rozalena, 2017). Historically, pempek is known as the 'kelesan' which is a grinder to smooth the fish meat. Called kelesan, this is also related to the way of making pempek. Kelesan as a tool for 'suppressing' or a tool for smoothing fish was originally made from hollow coconut shells. Fresh fish such as belida, gabus or other Musi river fish including mackerel are placed on a kind of mat that resembles a washing board and then pressed until a smooth texture. However, with the development of fish-refining technology, sellers choose a faster grinding machine or for a home scale, blend the fish with a blender machine.

The name pempek then became popular in Palembang, believed to be because pempek was previously sold by 'Apek', the name for an old man of Chinese descent. So, when Apek is selling it to the public, people will call it 'pek...pek', so that over time the word 'pek' turns into 'pempek'. Even though this story still needs to be explored again (Marbun, 2016).

Apart from fish, pempek has a mixture of ingredients such as taipoka flour or called sago flour for residents of South Sumatra. Other accompanying spices such as salt, garlic if you like or flavoring. Pempek material that has been blended then ready to be processed according to taste, ranging from various forms ranging from submarines pempek larger ones by stuffing a chicken egg, pempek telok (eggs with stuffing one or two spoons whipped egg off). There is also pempek lenjer which is long in shape, measuring about 5-30 centimeters.

In addition, forms with various shapes and fillings, such as curly pempek in the form of lumps of pempek noodle ingredients; pempek tofu stuffed with tofu, pempek pistol which contains stir-fried young papaya and threads on the edges, pempek adaan because it is made as is, round and fried immediately without boiling or steaming; Pempek skin made from fish skin and made flat round. In addition, the uniqueness of this pempek variation is also because of the way it is processed, roasted or burned over small coals or in Palembang language it is called pempek tunu. As for pempek lenggang, the unique combination of pempek dough with beaten eggs is combined in a container made of banana leaves and then baked over small coals.

Pempek can not be done without a diluted sauce complement or called cuko by the people of Palembang. Cuko is made from a mixture of brown sugar/shell sugar, tamarind, garlic and

cayenne pepper. There are also those who add white vinegar to add acidity. Cuko is made by boiling. Delicious cuko has a strong aroma, consistency, spicy, sour and salty taste just right.

#### *4.1.1 Sipping Cuko as a Cultural Tradition*

The tradition of a culture carried out by a group of people in a particular area that is characterized by a system of beliefs held. In fact, tradition is also related to norms, values, behavior patterns or customs that can be inherited in the form of various aspects of life.

The tradition of *ngirup cuko* is a pattern of behavior that is shown as a cultural identity. *Cuko* is not only a complement to pempek, but is also a sign of habits in social life, such as respecting each other's meetings and banquets, understanding different customs and introducing traditions as heritage. Eating pempek feels very different without cuko, all informants stated.

*Cuko* is actually not the same name as vinegar for eating tamarind, only in the past, the seller or maker of this *cuko* was always added with acid to a mixture of water, brown sugar, ground chilies, salt, finely ground dried shrimp (*ebi*) and cooked ground garlic. However, the taste will change when the watery sauce is added with tamarind. In addition, even though the name is *cuko*, it does not mean that the taste of *cuko* is dominated by a sour taste. The following is the reason why *ngirup cuko* is a cultural tradition of the people of Palembang.

1. Local wisdom attached to the invitation to taste as an attitude of friendliness and kindness. The custom of *anjangsana* in the form of receiving guests is then treated with pempek as a tradition of preserving the legacy that has existed before. The host will maintain this heritage by inviting them to taste pempek while sipping *cuko*. The host welcomes and invites guests to taste pempek while sipping *cuko* and starting a conversation. Guests or people who come to family or community groups or formal groups in Palembang, South Sumatra, will be respected and served. The reception of the host and the special presentation of pempek is a symbol of hospitality and kindness. This impression will indirectly bring the relationship that exists after tasting pempek.
2. The allure of food and the behavior of eating pempek while sipping *cuko* is part of the idea and feeling of fulfilling staple foods. In the Palembang tradition, eating pempek is full of carbohydrates and protein, if people still have the space and time to eat it, it means that the friendship aspect is fulfilled between those who invite and those who are invited to eat pempek.

For example, for Palembang people, the break after waiting for work orders, and not mealtime, is usually interspersed with snacks. If they are bored with certain types of food, they usually ask to be replaced with pempek. This habit is a condition that is sometimes recognized as an expression of an irresistible desire or desire. The allure of the taste of pempek combined with cuko, according to the informant, is the same thing as fulfilling staple foods. Therefore, for the people of Palembang, in this situation they condition the situation in space and time so that the desires and desires can be realized immediately.

Statements that appear, such as, "*makan pempek, yok*", means that the invitation to eat pempek is straightforward and direct. Another statement that emerged was "*Caknyo makan pempek mak ini ari, lemak nian*", meaning that eating pempek now tastes very good/delicious.

There are two habits in the condition of eating pempek. First, eating pempek is a dish for guests; The second is deliberately looking for pempek by visiting shops or stalls in every corner of the city of Palembang. If the condition of eating pempek is because it is served by

guests, then both parties show the following behavior:

1. Opening with a conversation, such as a statement or question with meaning that shows closeness, cohesiveness or emotional connection. Here are some statements and questions that are commonly asked interpersonally.
2. "*Payo kito makan pempek dulu.*" The question is the same as the statement, "*Ayo.. kita makan pempek terlebih dahulu*" This statement will always be delivered first by the host or invitee. This invitation from the invitee or host is a language of invitation and is deliberately conveyed to strengthen interpersonal and group relationships.
3. Statements and questions at the banquet served by the host, then the statement that comes up is not from the party invitees but fellow tasters of pempek by asking the question "*pempek apo yang lemak, ye?*" If pempek is served in various forms, then the question that often arises is any pempek that tastes good. In addition, there are also other statements, such as, "*Cak mano, makan pempek kito be, apo?*" It means, "*kita akan makan pempek saja?*". This statement shows that if there are many choices of food served, and pempek is one of them, then Palembang people or people who like pempek will prefer this special culinary. Even though in a big party or banquet, enjoying pempek will always be accompanied by cuko, but for those who are used to sipping cuko, of course this habit is never abandoned.
4. Asking the origin of pempek, such as, "*Bikin dewek, ye?*", this question means whether this pempek was made by the owner of the house or by the inviter. Another statement, "*beli dimano pempeknyo?*" This question shows the guest owner or visitor where to get or buy pempek from. These two examples of questions are an impression of closeness or cohesiveness among fellow citizens of the city or outside the city of Palembang. The nature of these questions and statements is a matter of course and does not indicate anything demeaning or positioning one party. In addition, the impression of being more intimate and getting to know each other is also increasingly felt.
5. Generally, residents or tourists who come to Palembang are looking for pempek with categories of delicious, delicate, affordable and hygienic prices. Some information states that if you are looking for pempek, you will see the condition of the stall or shop where you sell, hygienic or not. There are also those who deliberately buy from pempek vendors, either sold on bicycles or with large aluminium baskets or using plastic baskets, which in Palembang language is called *rago* or known as *pempek rago*. Second, the price of pempek will be a determining factor for the materials used. Third, the color of pempek is still fresh or not.
6. It's a bit difficult to give an opinion on which pempek is the best in Palembang. Because each of our tongues have different taste preferences. However, I prefer to eat healthy pempek or homemade pempek. In addition to the guaranteed taste and cleanliness, the quantity of pempek you can get can be more.

#### 4.1.2 The Meaning of Longing Ngirup Cuko

The meaning of longing to sip *cuko* can be revealed if you don't eat pempek for a few days, then the feeling of longing will come to eat pempek again. Then what if they go out of town or abroad?

1. Philosophy of fanaticism

The philosophy of fanaticism is related to the longing to drink enough pempek which shows a love for regional cultural identity. The hallmark of this cuko taste is the antidote to passionate desires and desires or the sometimes-unbearable longing to eat pempek.

The fanatical philosophy of the people of Palembang and all of South Sumatra is also evident in the behaviour of sipping cuko with fans who love this food. This heavy love will be shown by its power to inhale cuko 2:1. That is, 2 is cuko in a bowl that is doubled, while 1 is for a small piece of pempek.

Heavy love fans also show the effect of inhaling cuko continuously without drinking water interspersed. The suggestion of sipping cuko on someone who eats pempek will show the behaviour of continuing to pour cuko until the pempek served on the table runs out or is sold out.

## 2. Valuable rating

The combination of flavours from these various ingredients makes pempek connoisseurs have their own judgment on the taste of delicacy. In fact, the informant stated that when eating pempek, apart from commenting on the level of elasticity of the pempek dough and its taste, they also commented on the cuko. I don't know where to eat pempek, but the impression of this cuko is always the object of comments and judgments. For example, if cuko looks thicker, darker in color and spicy enough, it will always be associated with the name or brand of the shop.

The mention of the name of this shop becomes a trade mark. The statement that appears is, "*Lemak cuko pempek A* (a certain shop brand) or "*pempeknyo enak tapi cukonyo keenceran*". This impression and message of judgment is automatically embedded in the minds of pempek connoisseurs, resulting in a memory that makes them yearn to eat back to a place that is considered satisfying on the tongue and stomach.

## 3. Togetherness and kinship

In the context of social interaction, the people of Palembang and generally South Sumatra use pempek as a medium of communication for kinship and togetherness, pempek as a symbol of meetings that mark incidental and routine activities. For example, togetherness on special days, such as religious holidays, birthday celebrations, class promotions, graduations and even promotions or whatever is fun. In fact, to complete the crowd-funding activity to break the deadlock of thinking, open up ideas, channel fatigue, to make the atmosphere more relaxed. In addition, there will be a custom in Palembang, which according to the informant, eating pempek is part of the challenge, testing success or competing with each other, so who wins or succeeds will treat them to eating pempek.

Another unique thing about the principle of kinship and togetherness is the meaning of the integrated processing of pempek itself, namely tapioca flour, fish, spices and cuko. This cohesiveness is also the result of creativity that is enjoyed not only by the people of Palembang and South Sumatra, but also by the national and international community.

## 4. Friendship Braid

The meaning of longing to breathe cuko can be felt by the information in participant and non-participating observations. Information expressing longing for pempek and the behaviour of *ngirup cuko* is shown as an expression of establishing friendship.

a. Dialog opener

The relationship that is shown from the longing to *ngirup cuko* is as a sign of opening dialogue when meeting or staying in touch. The form of the message expressed, either in the form of questions or statements, such as, "*apa kabar orang Palembang, bawa pempek nggak?*" Palembang people will happily answer "*ada*", "*bawa*", or "*tenang, makan pempek kita*". However, if the pempek is not brought, the person usually replies, "*Iya nih, kebetulan lagi tidak bawa, nantilah dikirim lewat paket ya?*" This opening language is not only a moment of friendship between individuals, but also with family groups, communities, even at the government level, to foreign countries. The opening statement of this dialogue also states another way to please other people or their longing for pempek. In addition to the space and time factors in sweet memories when eating pempek together.

b. Mandatory souvenirs

This mandatory souvenir symbol is seen when guests from outside the city of Palembang come or visit and are invited to eat pempek at their favorite shop. The choice of this shop according to the informant was chosen because of the taste, proximity to the place, hygiene, the name of the shop, and a more cozy or intimate feel. The atmosphere that is built in the meeting between the tyan house and the guest will chat with each other and open a conversation with a focus on pempek. The host will be declared, "*Pake cuko nyo*" (do not forget to eat pempek with *cuko*) or "*sambil diirup cukonyo lebih enak*" (eating pempek, while sipping *cuko* is more tasty or delicious).

c. Fanatic behavior

The meaning of fanaticism is often shown by informants during formal and informal meetings, both local and international. This signature dish is sure to be served to all guests. In fact, just to remember his longing for the city of Palembang, there are behaviours that are shown by increasing the portion of food on the plate or secretly wrapping pempek to take home.

d. Supplies to travel outside the area

Pempek is included in the category of food that does not last long and requires re-cooking efforts to make it more enjoyable after being taken during the trip. However, technological developments have made pempek ready to be packaged using a vacuum machine or made dry pempek. This diluted or *cuko* sauce, which is easy to sour, can now be made in powder form. Therefore, without any reason, the informant when traveling outside the city of Palembang could not do without bringing pempek. Pempek made by Palembang people for South Sumatrans in general. Their behavior is to bring pempek as provisions for the road and give gifts to friends, relatives, or anyone else in order to further strengthen the ties of friendship. Going for Hajj or Umrah, pempek is one of the food supplies that are brought. When meeting with friends or relatives in Mecca or Jeddah from South Sumatra, they serve pempek made in that country.

5. Promotion of Palembang's culinary specialties

Pempek was originally a food for home, but in its development, it has turned into a modern culinary icon with various variants of innovation. Pempek has also become a culinary tourism choice for city residents and tourists visiting Palembang. On various occasions, Pempek has also become a medium for promotion and communication of Palembang people's friendship.

When Promotion is related to citizens who often upload activities and social media. Indirectly, Palembang people propagate or promote that Palembang is synonymous with pempek. The viral local celebgram on Instagram helps promote pempek which can become a commodity: both for the media players and for the business people of the product. This is also supported by reviews and the activeness of the comment column which adds to the confidence of netizens in cyberspace.

#### 4.2 Discussion

In the view of ordinary people, any food eaten in the daily life of a person or group shows the contribution of information conveyed by the food or snack in the form of messages, whether one's cognition, affection or conation. Culinary or food is a form of ethnic identity or a symbol of the nation/tribe through ethnic cuisine that has special taste characteristics, such as mpek mpek (Rozalena, 2017).

During the communication process, someone who is in his role as the host or who initiates the conversation will be invited to taste the pempek dish. Verbal and non-verbal statements that occur in social interactions include:

##### 1. The emergence of a change of atmosphere

Changes in atmosphere due to mutual understanding of the cultural identity inherent in each. Both parties, individually or in groups, within the scope of kinship or official, the atmosphere can change. This situation conditions the impression of being stiff, tense, relaxed and fresh because of the smell of cuko or watery pempek sauce. By suggestion, the informant felt the pleasure of eating pempek because it changed the stiff atmosphere to be relaxed with several conversations that helped stiffness, open-mindedness and brighter eyes. In the context of friendship communication, it shows, the meaning of longing to breathe cuko pempek is a manifestation of opening up a better relationship.

##### 2. Sending messages in social interaction

Social interaction that occurs when someone eats pempek in their community shows the delivery of messages or information in the form of attitudes or emotions. "*The transmission of information, ideals, attitudes or emotions from the one person or group to another (or other) primarily through symbols*" (McQuail, 2011). That is, communication is the process of delivering messages or information in the form of ideas, attitudes or emotions from a person or group.

In the longing to sip *cuko Pempek* tradition, the social communication process is recorded through primary and secondary social contacts. Primary social contact is the moment of meeting of pempek buyers and sellers who are in retail shops, traditional shops, angkringan or street pempek vendors, either with carts, bicycles, aluminum baskets, or rago.

Communications that occur around the content of ordering statements and buying and selling questions, opening dialogues when chatting or gathering, both with the media and meet directly with health protocols. When in the shop or at the market, pempek buyers or guests always practice the 3 M, keep their distance, wash their hands, and wear masks. The shop provides hand washing water and soap and in front of the shop it is written "*wajib memakai masker*". However, in street pempek vendors, informants say they only use masks and keep their distance, and most buyers buy wrapped or eat on the spot using a fork without forgetting

the culture of sipping *cuko* directly on a bowl or plate.

The tradition of longing to sip *cuko pempek* which can be analysed based on secondary social contact is through secondary social contact, namely contact between two people using intermediaries such as technological intermediaries. In this context, it can be understood that the study of communication cannot leave socio-cultural factors behind. In a cultural perspective, the study of communication develops in a very broad realm or domain, this is in line with the character of the science of communication itself which is very heterogeneous and multidisciplinary and eclectic.

### 3. The process of negotiating identity

Tradition *missed ngirup cuko* based on the theory of cultural identity shows how mas y rakat Palembang using the communication process to establish and negotiate the identities and relationships of their cultural group in a certain context. Based on the meanings that appear on the surface, one of them is identity in philosophy, values of togetherness and kinship, friendship and promotion of Palembang 's culinary specialties expressed in communication meetings.

The tradition of sipping *cuko* makes Palembang people always miss eating pempek while sipping *cuko*. Statements that appear as individual messages, either as parties who serve or provide pempek with its *cuko* are part of aspects of cultural identity, including:

- 1) communication and language shown from several statements when opening the conversation when meeting, when conditioning the state of eating before and after eating pempek;
- 2) food and eating habits of pempek or sipping *cuko*, whether purchased or made by yourself, constitute a cultural identity, which is a regional heritage that existed during the acculturation period;
- 3) time and awareness of time conditions pempek eating in a state of longing without being limited by space and time;
- 4) appreciation and acknowledgment shown in the hospitality or the impression of kinship and togetherness from the host and guest also applies between the buyer and the buyer;
- 5) the relationships that occur lead to the realization of friendship at every face-to-face or online meeting;
- 6) the values and norms that emerge are the result of the treasures of social life;

The attitude that emerges after letting go of the desire to eat pempek while sipping *cuko* is a relaxed attitude and an attitude of being happy to return to enjoying pempek and wanting to repeat eating, although not always following the tradition of *sipping cuko* .

Adjustments during the Covid-19 pandemic show that when at the host's place or at the shop, keep your distance from each other and immediately return to wearing masks. In addition, for services in shops or retail classes, traders activate social media, enter the marketplace and facilitate the delivery of pempek by involving online pick-up and drop-off application services.

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