

# **Halua: Traces of Gastronomy and Symbols of Social Status in the Langkat Sultanate Palace during the Colonial Period**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Halua, a traditional Malay confection made primarily from cane sugar, fruits, vegetables, and spices, is not just a dessert in the culinary tradition of Langkat Malay. During the Langkat Sultanate, this dish played a more complex and nuanced role, particularly in the socio-political context of the colonial era. This study aims to trace the gastronomic traces of Halua as a symbol of social and political status in the Langkat Sultanate Palace. This study aims to analyze Halua's position in the culinary hierarchy and palace protocol during the colonial period, uncover the symbolic meaning of Halua as a marker of social status and a tool for legitimizing the sultanate's power, and analyze how sociopolitical contestation during the colonial period influenced culinary representation in the palace. This study used critical historical methods with a food anthropology approach. Primary data were obtained from colonial archives, sultanate manuscripts, memoirs, and in-depth interviews with sultanate heirs and traditional leaders. The data were analyzed qualitatively through source criticism, heuristics, verification (external and internal criticism), interpretation, and historiography. The study shows that Halua was not a dish that could be consumed freely by all social classes. The complexity of its ingredients (such as lime, cloves, and nutmeg), its sweetness, and the complexity of its production process made it a luxury commodity. In the palace context, Halua was served at official state events, aristocratic weddings, and traditional ceremonies as a symbol of the luxury, hospitality, and glory of the Langkat Sultanate. Serving it to Dutch guests or colonial officials was also a political and diplomatic strategy to showcase the sultanate's natural wealth and cultural sophistication. This study concludes that during the colonial period, Halua functioned as a cultural capital and a tool of power representation. Its existence reflected strict social stratification and became a medium for maintaining the cultural identity and authority of the Langkat Sultanate amid the political pressure of the Dutch East Indies colonial government. This research makes an important contribution to understanding culinary history not only as a practice of consumption but also as a reflection of the social, economic, and political dynamics of an era.

**Keywords:** *Halua, Gastronomy, History, Cuisine, Langkat Sultanate*