

**Symbolisms of life-cycle events in Javanese culture:  
An analysis of linguistic expressions depicting rituals and ceremonies in  
the Kebumen Regency of Central Java**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the use of linguistic expressions in folklores and oral narratives that symbolize the meanings of rituals and ceremonies among the peasant community in the Kebumen Regency of Central Java. More specifically, we focus on life-cycle events such as birth, circumcision, engagement, marriage and funeral ceremonies. Our database comprise of retellings of myths and legends and personal narratives. These oral narratives were collected from six villages in the Kebumen Regency in Central Java, namely, Ambar, Aya, Karang Gedung, Mirit, Pertanahan and Purwo Sari. We analyze the lexical choices and the use of homonyms, metaphors and personification in our data to determine how peasants in the Kebumen Regency community use linguistic forms to depict their beliefs, values and worldview. Our analysis reveals several major themes that frequently recur in the oral narratives of the peasant communities. These themes include longevity, prosperity, fertility, lasting unions, and forgiveness.

The themes of each life-cycle event are often reinforced through multiple symbolisms. For example, during marriage ceremonies, various symbolisms are used. These include the selection of two *pisang raja* ('royal banana') plants with ripened fruits to symbolize an auspicious wedding day. The wedding ceremony itself is referred to as *kacar kucur*, which means '(rice) pouring', where the groom gives both cooked and uncooked rice (i.e. *nasi* and *beras* respectively) to the bride, an act that represents his promise to provide for the family. An important part of the wedding ceremony is the breaking of an egg by the groom to symbolize that the bride will now no longer be a virgin and is ready to bring new life to the family. This activity is referred to as *ketemu* 'the meeting (of the gametes)'. Note in both cases the use of both linguistic and physical symbolism to mark significant life events.

In this paper, we examine these and other symbolisms, and we highlight how the use and preservation of select linguistic expressions contributes to the expression and transmission of the values and worldview of the people of the Kebumen Regency in Central Java.

(340 words)

**Symbolisms of rice-farming culture in the Kebumen Regency  
of Central Java**

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.... rituals and ceremonies related to the rice farming activities of the Kebumen people.

**Symbolisms of coconut-farming culture in the Kebumen Regency  
of Central Java**

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... rituals and ceremonies related to the coconut farming activities of the Kebumen people.