



Linguistic and Symbolic Meanings in Ethnic Communities: A Case Study of Tedhak Siten Traditional Ceremony

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Abstract Ceremonies, rituals, and symbolism are integral to preserving Javanese culture. Symbolism, deeply woven into traditional ceremonies, reflects the essence of Javanese philosophy and cultural values, as well as life guidelines, particularly evident in the *tedhak siten* ceremony. This article, thus, aims to delve into the linguistic and symbolic intricacies of the traditional ceremonial processions, *tedhak siten*, and its elements, such as *ubarampe*, embodying parents' heartfelt prayers and aspirations for their children. This qualitative research adopts an ethnolinguistic approach, employing observation, interviews, and literature studies to reveal that these ceremonies constitute a vital part of the Javanese life cycle, specifically in the birth phase. Employing Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the results of this article show that the ceremony exhibits hierarchical structures, collective participation, gender balance, and structured processes. Ultimately, the *tedhak siten* ceremony signifies the Javanese community's prudence, portraying acceptance, introduction, and fervent hopes for a prosperous life for the child.

Keywords: Symbolism, Symbolic meaning, Tedhak Siten, Life cycle ceremony, Javanese

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1. Introduction

The Javanese tribe, constituting approximately 40% of Indonesia's population, is the largest ethnic group in the country, primarily hailing from East Java, Central Java, and Yogyakarta (Wasino et al., 2021). A majority of Javanese people, around 95%, adhere to Islam (Hermawan et al., 2018). Success for the Javanese is measured by achieving a balance between material needs, spiritual fulfillment, and emotional desires. Nofrima et al. (2021) emphasize the significant influence of culture on society, noting that Javanese culture prioritizes balance and harmony, with all elements of life needing to be harmonious, side by side, to ensure compatibility. Their lives emphasize harmonization, encompassing relationships with the self, others, nature, and God (Maharsiwara, 2006). The interaction of Javanese pluralism with Islamic culture has thus enriched Javanese culture with profound meaning.

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The fusion of Islamic and Javanese cultures has resulted in a newly harmonized arrangement (Maharsiwara, 2006).

Javanese society is renowned for upholding noble values and preserving ancestral traditions, contributing to a culture steeped in history, practices, and art forms. Historically, the Majapahit empire championed religious tolerance, influencing syncretic forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity among the Javanese (Mutiarra et al., 2022). This historical aspect thus resulted in the richness of Javanese culture that lies in its deep-rooted symbolism and profound meanings, guiding social behavior and philosophy (Ratnawati et al., 2021; Tri Wibowo et al., 2023).

Symbolism plays a pivotal role in Javanese life, permeating cultural celebrations and daily actions. Every aspect, including traditional ceremonies, carries sublime symbolism and prayers embedded in cultural and religious concepts (Suwito et al., 2009). Javanese individuals are considered products of an extended civilization, engaging in interactions, communication, and movement using symbols imbued with meaning. This intricate web of symbols allows humans to perpetuate their actions and interactions. The meanings and symbols are interpreted through thought processes, shaping habitual patterns in everyday life. This holistic approach is particularly significant in understanding life's three most important phases: the procession of birth, marriage, and death (Suwito et al., 2009).

The *tedhak siten* ceremony, a crucial celebration for Javanese families, serves as an expression of gratitude and a symbol of prayer for the prosperous development of children's lives, envisioning children growing into successful figures with blessings from God and guidance from both parents and family. This ceremonial tradition involves processions with the active participation of children, parents, families, and the community. Each caravan carries its unique role and symbolism, making the ceremony vital in shaping and strengthening relationships within both the family and the community. Building upon these aspects, this article aims to provide a comprehensive and detailed exploration of the symbolic meanings embedded in the *tedhak siten* ceremonial procession, focusing on language signs and linguistic implications.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the static cultural paradigm, Geert Hofstede employs the onion metaphor to explain the enduring nature of cultural values (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). According to Hofstede, culture is like an onion with four layers: symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. The symbols represent the surface manifestations of culture, such as language, clothing, and art. These symbols, like the *tedhak siten* ceremony in Javanese culture, serve as visible expressions of deeper cultural meanings (Sumarno & Mumfangati, 2016).

Hofstede asserts that culture remains stable over time, unaffected by historical or political events (Hofstede, 2001). This static bipolar paradigm, emphasizing culture's situation-free, context-free, and time-free nature, reinforces the idea that culture rarely undergoes significant changes (Fang, 2012; Hofstede, 1991, 2001, 2007). Hofstede identifies four dimensions of cultural differences: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001, 2005). Each of these dimensions corresponds to one of the layers in the onion metaphor. For example, power distance might be reflected in the heroes of a culture, representing those individuals with significant influence. Culture, according to Hofstede, serves as a distinguishing factor between nations, representing a collective mental programming that sets one group apart from another (Hofstede, 1994). This perspective aligns with Kumbalonah's (2013) statement, asserting that culture reflects the communal experience of a group or society.

An integral aspect often overlooked in cultural analysis is language, which is intimately connected to culture. Culture, as a collective mental programming, shapes individuals' thinking through language (Pishghadam, 2020). Pishghadam (2013) introduces the concept of 'cultuling'—'culture in language'—which facilitates the analysis of linguistic components containing cultural information. Cultuling analysis (CLA) can unveil cultural roots, heighten public awareness of language and culture, and offer suggestions for change if needed (Pishghadam, 2020, 2022).

Additionally, Clifford Geertz's work unveils the significance of traditional ceremonies with symbols in integrating a community's ethos and outlook on life (Geertz, 1973, 1992). The key to understanding culture, according to Geertz, lies in the idea of meaning. Paradigms, viewed as sacred symbols, synthesize a nation's ethos, including its tone, characteristics, quality of life, morals, aesthetics, and mood, with a comprehensive worldview—a fundamental idea of order (Clifford, 1973, 1992).

Schilderman (2007) further considers ritual studies as multifaceted, encompassing discussions on daily societal encounters as well as complex issues. Rituals, expressed through liturgy as a public manifestation of shared beliefs, play a crucial role in shaping social order. Meanwhile, according to other experts, rituals play a vital role in establishing order through objectified symbols. The symbol, in this context, not only conveys behaviors and emotions but also influences the personal disposition of the community. Dhavamony (1995) categorizes rituals into four types: (1) magical acts involving the use of materials believed to possess mystical powers; (2) religious acts, such as cults of ancestors, operating similarly to magical acts by invoking mystical powers; (3) constitutive rituals expressing or modifying social relations with a focus on mystical senses; and (4) facilitative rituals aiming to enhance the material well-being of a group by increasing productivity, strength, or providing purification and protection. This categorization provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse roles that rituals play within a community.

In this context, *tedhak siten* emerges as a meaningful cultural practice deeply rooted in Javanese history and culture (Sumarno & Mumfangati, 2016). This ceremony, recorded in ancient manuscripts like *Serat Tatacara*, written in 1893 and published in 1911, provides insights into Javanese customs at the end of the 19th century, especially in Surakarta, as documented by Padmasusastra (1911). Various studies have explored the *tedhak siten* ceremony from different perspectives. In education, Yahya (2020) focused on *tedhak siten* as a teaching material for BIPA; Nuryadi et al. (2022), and Wiryanto et al. (2022) delved into its applications in mathematics; and Putri (2021) examines *tedhak siten* in the perspective of Islamic education. Within the cultural domain, Nuryah (2016), Devi (2019), and Hafidzi (2020) studied *tedhak siten* as an acculturation of Javanese and Islamic civilization, its preservation, and the value of optimism in the tradition, respectively. Musdalifah and Yunanto (2021) explored the concept of self-efficacy in *tedhak siten* from a psychological perspective. Djaya (2020) applied phenomenologist Alfred Schutz's approach to examining *tedhak siten*, and Enderwati et al. (2022) delved into its symbolic meanings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Setting

The study's informants were individuals actively involved in *tedhak siten* ceremonies and elders possessing in-depth knowledge of the ritual. Primary informants included nine individuals, comprising six couples (parents of infants) and three baby shamans responsible for guiding the *tedhak siten* procession. The parents' ages ranged from 30 to 45 years, while the baby shamans were between 50 and 65 years old. The baby shamans consisted of two females and one male. In terms of education, four parents held high school degrees, two had bachelor's degrees, and the baby shamans had completed junior high school and high school. All informants were identified as Muslims. In addition to the primary informants, families of the infants' parents who participated in the ceremony were also consulted. These families had previous experience conducting *tedhak siten* ceremonies for their own children.

Regarding the setting, the study was conducted within the cultural context of Javanese communities, specifically focusing on the *tedhak siten* ceremony—a significant cultural event among the Javanese people. The research took place in urban and rural areas where the *tedhak siten* ceremony is commonly practiced.

3.2. Instrument

Prior to conducting observations and semi-structured interviews, a comprehensive literature review was undertaken, sourcing information from various outlets. This review involved exploring ancient manuscripts, dictionaries, and research findings, as well as video documentation and discussions pertaining to the *tedhak siten* tradition. The insights garnered from this literature review served as a foundational framework and guide for the subsequent semi-structured interviews.

The primary questions posed during the semi-structured interviews were meticulously developed based on the data obtained from the literature review. The key inquiries included:

- (a) What is the significance of the *tedhak siten* ceremony?
- (b) Why is the *tedhak siten* ceremony performed?
- (c) How crucial is the *tedhak siten* ceremony to you and your family?
- (d) When is the timing of the *tedhak siten* ceremony?
- (e) What tools and supplies are essential for the *tedhak siten* ceremony, and what do they symbolize?
- (f) What are the processions involved in the *tedhak siten* ceremony?
- (g) What is the sequence of processions in the *tedhak siten* ceremony?
- (h) What are the meanings associated with each procession?

These questions were further refined in the field based on the responses provided by the informants, with additional queries emerging organically during the course of the interviews.

Observations were conducted through direct participation in three instances of the actual *tedhak siten* ceremony, avoiding any reconstructions. The chosen approach ensured that the data collected reflected the genuine practices of the cultural owners. During the observation sessions, our role was limited to passive engagement—strictly observing, documenting, and refraining from intervention in the proceedings. Questions and answers were confined to pre- and post-ceremony discussions, preserving the authenticity of the cultural event.

3.3. Procedure

During the observation sessions, we meticulously documented and recorded crucial aspects related to the *tedhak siten* tradition. This included visual records and notes on various elements of the ceremony, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices. Simultaneously, interviews were conducted with key participants in the tradition, including elders, parents of the child, and extended family members. These interviews aimed to extract insights into the significance and prayers associated with each ceremony procession. Notes were taken, and interviews were recorded, ensuring minimal disruption to the informant's activities during both the preparation and post-*tedhak siten* ceremony.

Interviews were conducted systematically, with a list of predefined questions presented one by one to the informants. The questions evolved organically based on the responses received, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of the *tedhak siten* tradition. The focus was on maintaining a non-intrusive approach, respecting the cultural context, and ensuring a smooth flow of discussion.

In addition to field data, a comprehensive collection of information was gathered from various written and video sources. These sources provided additional context and background to complement the field observations. Both field and literature data were meticulously categorized based on their respective domains.

The collected data, comprising both field and literature sources, underwent interpretation and analysis using ethnolinguistic studies. This analytical approach aimed to uncover patterns, meanings, and cultural nuances embedded in the *tedhak siten* tradition. The results of this analysis were then presented in a descriptive format, providing a nuanced understanding of the cultural practices surrounding the *tedhak siten* ceremony.

4. Results

4.1. *Tedhak Siten* and the Time of its Implementation

Javanese society boasts a rich tapestry of ceremonies that intricately weave into the fabric of the human life cycle, spanning from birth to death. Among these, *tedhak siten* stands out as a traditional ceremony marking the arrival of a child. Specifically performed when a child reaches seven *lapan* (7 x 35 days) old, this ceremony symbolizes a pivotal moment—the first occasion a child is deemed ready to step directly onto the earth.

In Javanese tradition, the period preceding seven *lapan* is characterized by the cautious avoidance of placing infants on the ground without protective bedding. Direct contact with the earth is reserved for this significant ceremony. The tradition encompasses various names within the Javanese community, such as *dun-dunan*, *pudunan*, *mudun lemah*, *mudun siti*, and *tedhak siti*. Despite the diverse nomenclature, the underlying concept remains consistent across these different designations. It's noteworthy that this ceremony extends beyond Javanese culture, finding resonance in the Sundanese community of West Java, where a similar tradition known as *turun taneuh* or 'down the ground' is observed. In West Sumatra, the Nagari Lansek Kadok community in the South Rao District, Pasaman Regency, follows the *botatah* tradition of descending children to the land. Even within the Chinese community in Toboali, South Bangka, the *tao sin* tradition celebrates a child's symbolic abdication at the age of one.

Typically conducted when a child reaches *pitung lapan* 'seven lapan' or 245 days old, the timing aligns with the Javanese calendar. This calendar incorporates two cycles—the saptawara cycle (Monday to Sunday) and the pancawara cycle (Legi, Pahing, Pon, Wage, and Kliwon). The combination of these cycles, known as the *lapan* system, spans a period of 35 days. Period *selapan* 'one lapan' means "a complete cycle in the system by which the days of the five-day week are combined with those of the seven-day week" (Horne, 1974). For example, a child born on Legi Sunday would undergo the *tedhak siten* ceremony on the 7th Legi Sunday or the 254th day after birth. However, adherence to the precise 245-day mark is not universal. Some may advance or postpone the ceremony based on Javanese beliefs about auspicious or inauspicious days. In certain cases, the ceremony may be conducted when a child reaches seven months in the Javanese calendar, aligning with the belief system rather than strict adherence to the 245-day timeline. For instance, a child born on Suro can undergo the *tedhak siten* ceremony on Rejeb, just like what Rubangi and Fibriani, one of the informants, did when conducting *tedhak siten* ceremony for their child.

Rooted in the historical context of Hindu Buddhism, the *tedhak siten* ceremony predates the influence of Islam. While not directly aligned with Islamic teachings, the saints did not explicitly prohibit this tradition. Instead, they skillfully integrated cultural processions with Islamic principles to foster a harmonious coexistence. Traditional ceremonies, including *tedhak siten*, are embraced as expressions of devotion to God, manifesting in distinct forms and procedures mirroring religious worship. The symbols embedded in these ceremonies convey deep appreciation and meaning (Sholikhin, 2010).

The timing of the *tedhak siten* ceremony exhibits variability within the community. Some opt for the morning, precisely after the Fajr prayer before the sun rises, while others prefer midday, as the sun begins to lean westward.

4.2. Uba Rampe (Equipment) for Tedhak Siten

- (1) *Tumpeng*
- (2) *Jenang merah putih* (red and white sweet rice porridge)
- (3) *Jajan pasar* (various traditional snacks)
- (4) Assorted tubers
- (5) *Jadah tujuh warna* (sticky rice cake with seven colors)
- (6) *Kembang setaman* (various flowers)
- (7) Water
- (8) *Bokor kencana* and dipper
- (9) Ladder made from sugar cane
- (10) *Kurungan ayam* (chicken cage)
- (11) Jewelry, money, and other symbolic items
- (12) Sand
- (13) *Udhik-udhik*

4.3. Tedhak Siten Procession

- (1) *Selamatan*

Selamatan stands as a cherished tradition among the Javanese people, symbolizing a sincere plea for divine blessings. This meaningful event takes the form of a festive feast or banquet, where guests are

often bestowed with blessed rice. It's noteworthy that the *tedhak siten* ceremony typically commences with the sacred ritual of *selamatan*.

Figure 1
Selamatan Procession



Source: <https://kepuharjosid.slemankab.go.id/first/artikel/52>

(2) *Sungkem*

Sungkem involves bowing or kneeling down as a gesture of filial piety and deep respect for one's elders. Typically observed during the procession of *sungkeman*, the elderly person takes a seat while the younger individual kneels before them, expressing reverence through either kissing the elder's hand or embracing their knee. The elder, in turn, may hold the younger person's shoulders or gently rub their head, offering blessings and words of guidance. In the context of the *tedhak siten* ceremony, children, guided by their parents, engage in *sungkem* as they pay their respects to their grandparents.

Figure 2
Sungkem Procession



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Gja_Me0INU&ab_channel=NikitaWillyOfficial

(3) *Wijikan*

The *wijikan* procession involves the washing of the child's feet, a ritual performed by both parents. The essential equipment includes *bokor kencana*, trays, copper dippers, holy water, garden flowers, and small towels.

Figure 3*Wijikan Procession***(4) Tapak Jadah Pitu**

The ceremonial procession involves stepping on a platform adorned with seven distinct colors. *Jadah (uli)*, a mixture of sticky rice and grated coconut, undergoes a meticulous preparation process involving cooking and grinding until achieving a clay-like consistency. Subsequently, the mixture is arranged in a clay plate, segregating each color, each representing one of the seven colors: black, blue, green, red, pink, yellow, and white. Parents play a central role in guiding the child through this symbolic journey, starting from the black and culminating at the white *jadah*.

Figure 4*Tapak Jadah Pitu Procession***(5) Climbing the Stairs**

In this ritual, parents guide the child up a seven-step ladder. Upon reaching the summit, the child briefly sits before descending the ladder, covering seven steps on the way down. The ladder is constructed from sugar cane stalks.

Figure 5
Climbing the Stairs Procession



(6) *Ceker-Ceker*

During this phase, the child stands on sand placed within a container. As this marks the initial encounter between the skin and the sand's texture, children often playfully interact, exploring the sensation with their feet.

Figure 6
Ceker-ceker Procession



(7) *Entry Confinement*

In this segment, the child is either seated or lying down, enclosed within a rooster cage. The cage's diameter exceeds one meter, providing ample space for the child. Within the enclosure, various objects and toys are placed for the child to choose from, including children's toys, money, jewelry, rice, flowers, and other symbolic items. The confinement is opened once the child makes their selections.

Figure 7*Entry Confinement Procession***(8) Spreading *Udhik-Udhik***

Udhik-udhik, a mixture of rice and grated turmeric resulting in a yellowish hue is scattered and playfully contested by attending guests, especially children, during the *tedhak siten* ceremony.

Figure 8*Spreading Udhik-Udhik Procession*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phf7Zea22yQ&t=9209s&ab_channel=AH

(9) *Siraman*

Siraman involves bathing the child with holy water infused with *kembang setaman*, a blend of fragrant flowers such as jasmine, gambir jasmine, sedap malam, red rose, kenanga, kantil, and white rose. Beyond the *tedhak siten* tradition, Javanese culture incorporates *siraman* in various ceremonies, including weddings, *mitoni* (seven-month pregnancy celebration), and *ruwatan* (ritualistic purification).

Figure 9
Siraman Procession



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wsSy3AJqxw&t=551s&ab_channel=TRANSTVOfficial

(10) Wardrobe Change

Following the bathing ritual, parents proceed to change the child's attire.

4.4. Language Marks in *Tedhak Siten*

(1) *Tedhak Siten*

In Yogyakarta, Javanese stands as the predominant language, influencing not only the city but also the surrounding regions. It acts as a nexus for linguistic dissemination and innovation (Sobirin & Rahman, 2022). The term *tedhak siten* [təɖaʔ sitɔn] finds its linguistic origins in the rich tapestry of the Javanese lexicon. The phrase *tedhak siten* is a combination of two primary words. Firstly, *têdhak*, which lexically translates to 'down,' and secondly, *siti*, signifying 'land' or 'earth' (Poerwadarminta, 1939). This linguistic amalgamation is deeply rooted in the cultural and ceremonial practices of the Javanese people.

The comprehensive term *têdhak siti* is documented in *Bausastra Jawa*, describing the "slamêtan ing nalikane bocah cilik wiwit diudhunake ing lêmah" (selamatan ceremony when the child begins to set foot on the ground) (Poerwadarminta, 1939). Additionally, it appears in *the Giri Sonta Course for Javanese (Lexicon)*, denoting the "feast on the occasion of the baby's first contact with the ground" (Bakker, 1964). These linguistic nuances highlight the ceremonial significance attached to the phrase in Javanese culture.

Delving into other dictionaries, the term *sitèn* is derived from the word *siti*, maintaining its association with 'land' or 'earth' (Gericke & Roorda, 1847). This linguistic continuity underscores the cultural depth embedded in the Javanese language. Morphologically, the phrase *tedhak siti* undergoes a transformation with the addition of the suffix *-an* (*tedhak siti* + *-an*), evolving into *tedhak siten*. The morphophonemic process (-i + an ~> ɔn) contributes to this evolution, resulting in the final linguistic form. This morphological shift also brings about a semantic transformation. The addition of the suffix *-an* changes the meaning from a simple 'down the ground' to a more profound 'ceremony of descending the ground' or 'the result of the process of descending the ground.' This semantic evolution encapsulates the cultural and ceremonial essence encapsulated in the term *tedhak siten*, highlighting its significance in the Javanese cultural landscape.

(2) *Pitu*

Symbolism involving the term *pitu* manifests twice in the *tedhak siten* ceremony—first, during the procession through seven colors, and second, in the ascent of seven steps on the stairs. The term *pitu* translates to 'seven' (Poerwadarminta, 1939). Within the context of the *tedhak siten* ceremony, these

seven symbols are interpreted as *pituduh* and *pitulungan*. The term *pituduh* [pitudoɦ] encompasses meanings such as (1) “kang dituduhake” (indicating or notifying), and (2) “pitutur” (advice) (Poerwadarminta, 1939). Alternative dictionaries offer definitions ranging from “(1) indicated; (2) instructions, advice; (3) occult whispers” (Nurlina et al., 2021).

Derived from the term *tulung* which means “tolong, menolong” (please, help), the word *pitulungan* takes the affix *pi-an*, transforming into “pertolongan” (help) (Nurlina, et al., 2021). Additionally, *pitulungan* appears in Javanese Bausastra (pitulun) (-an), signifying “srana kang dianggo nulung” (means used to help) (Poerwadarminta, 1939).

In essence, the symbolism of *pitu* conveys the parents’ aspiration for their children to consistently receive guidance and assistance from God. This divine guidance and support are envisioned to steer the child towards a virtuous and prosperous life, providing direction in decision-making and aid during life’s challenges.

(3) *Tebu* (sugar cane)

In Javanese and several other languages, there exists a linguistic phenomenon known as *kerata basa*. This form serves as an alternative method for explaining the meaning of a word by treating it as an acronym. The arrangement of acronyms is not always regular, lacking specific rules. Syllables or letters, whether from the front or back, can be tinkered with to fit the intended interpretation. This linguistic device often conveys messages, advice, jokes, or straightforward denotative meanings. For instance, the Javanese word *garwa*, meaning ‘husband/wife,’ is transformed into the *kerata basa* as *sigaraning nyawa*, conveying the concept of ‘soulmate.’ Similarly, *mati* (die) is transformed into *nikmate wis diganti* (the favor has changed); *gedang* (banana) becomes *digeget sakbubare madhang* (eaten after meals); and *guru* (teacher) stands for *digugu lan ditiru* (trusted and exemplified).

Another intriguing interpretation in Javanese involves the word *têbu* [təbu], interpreted as *anteb ing kalbu*, meaning ‘contained in the heart.’ In Kawi, *antěb*, derived from *mantěb*, means ‘solid, steadfast; heavy’ (Wojowasito, 1980). The term *kalbu*, borrowed from Arabic and integrated into Javanese, signifies ‘heart.’ Consequently, *anteb ing kalbu* is understood as a representation of strong determination and a steadfast heart. Additionally, sugarcane, being straight and unbranched, serves as a symbolic prayer for the child to tread the path of a straightforward and virtuous life.

Sugarcane, scientifically known as *Saccharum officinarum*, is a type of grass characterized by tall stems and segments. Its sweet juice is often converted into sugar. Sugarcane plays a significant role in the ceremonial procession involving the ascent of stairs. The ladder is constructed using *wulung* sugarcane (black) and the *arjuna* type, forming seven steps. Thus, the symbolism associated with sugarcane encapsulates the aspirations and prayers of parents, envisioning their children possessing a resolute determination and a steadfast heart, embodying noble qualities akin to the legendary puppet character Arjuna.

(4) *Andha* (stairs)

The term *andha* [əndə] in Javanese signifies “pring (kayu) loro digandhèng didokoki ambal dianggo piranti mêmènèk lan sak panunggalane” (bamboo [wood] arranged and patched as a climbing tool, and so on) (Poerwadarminta, 1939). Another interpretation among the Javanese associates *andha* with *aja ditunda-tunda* which translates to ‘don’t delay.’ This expression encapsulates the parental expectation for their children to promptly engage in or fulfill assigned responsibilities, emphasizing the importance of seizing offered opportunities without hesitation.

(5) *Tumpeng*

Tumpeng, a culinary delight shaped into a distinctive cone, holds a significant place in celebratory events. The term *tumpêng* [tumpəŋ] lexically translates to *sêga diwangun pasungan*, meaning ‘cone-shaped rice for *selamatan*’ (Poerwadarminta, 1939).

Originally rooted in Javanese Hindu culture, Tumpeng serves as a symbolic representation of Mount Mahameru, believed to be the abode of gods. With the influence of Islamic teachings, particularly the

concept of *manunggaling kawula Gusti* or ‘the union of the servant with his Lord,’ *tumpeng* took on new meaning. It is now seen as *yen metu kudu sing mepeng*—if you have left (from the previous religion), you must mean it (in the new religion), aligning with Islamic principles, notably reflected in the Qur’an surah Al-Isra’ verse 80 (Femina, 2017).

Javanese society demonstrates a harmonious blend of embracing a new religion while preserving existing traditions. This cultural acculturation fosters a peaceful transition, allowing the coexistence of old and new habits (Idham, 2021). Rather than abandoning longstanding practices, the Javanese people prefer integrating them into their evolving cultural tapestry.

The Javanese interpretation of *tumpeng* [tumpəŋ] extends beyond its culinary allure. It is seen as *tumindak sing lempeng*, encouraging individuals to ‘act uprightly’. Additionally, others view it as *tumapaking penguripan, tumindak lempeng tumuju Pangeran*, urging devotion to the belief that one must lead a righteous life towards the path of God (Ratnaeni, 2021).

In the context of the *tedhak siten* ceremony, *tumpeng* becomes a powerful symbol. It encapsulates parents’ aspirations for their children, signifying the hope that the child will consistently act and behave with integrity, walking upright in alignment with their nature as servants of God.

4.5. Symbolism in *Tedhak Siten*

(1) *Sungkeman*

In the Javanese Bausastra, *sungkêm* [suŋkəm] holds the lexical interpretation of “*sujud, tumungkul konjêm ing lêmah; bêkti bangêt*” (bowed, lowered his head towards the ground, very filial) (Poerwadarminta, 1939). *Sungkeman*, a sacred procession, demands solemnity and reverence. Originating from a blend of Javanese and Islamic culture, this tradition traces its roots back to the 1930s, initiated by Mangkunegara I, or Prince Samberjiwa, at the Surakarta Palace. Originally associated with Eid al-Fitr, *sungkeman* has evolved and found its place in various ceremonies, including weddings, proposals, *ruwatan*, *tedhak siten*, symbolizing a plea for blessings from elders (Ghofir & Jabbar, 2022).

Culturally, in the *tedhak siten* ceremony, *sungkeman* serves as a poignant expression of gratitude and filial piety from the child’s parents to the grandparents. Beyond the surface, it imparts valuable lessons to the child about respect, humility, courtesy, seeking guidance from elders, introspection, and eradicating selfishness. The hope is that through this procession, the child will cultivate humility and respect towards parents.

(2) *Wijikan*

The *wijikan* procession is also called *ranupada*. Linguistically, the word *wijikan* comes from the primary form of *wijik*, which gets the suffix *-an*. The word *wijik* means ‘to clean the hands or feet’ (Horne, 1974). The lexeme *ranupada* comes from the word *ranu*, which means *banyu*, ‘water’, and *pada*, which means *sikil*, ‘foot’. This procession symbolizes the parents’ prayers for the child’s purification before venturing into life.

(3) Stepping The *Jadah*

Jadah, or mashed sticky rice, adorned in seven colors, embodies the symbolic journey of life for children. Each color conveys a unique meaning: white for purity, yellow for strength, red for courage, green for fertility and success, blue for loyalty, purple for calmness, and black for intelligence. This procession signifies parents’ aspirations for the child’s life journey and the belief that they will overcome obstacles with divine assistance.

(4) Climbing The Stairs

The act of climbing stairs mirrors life’s trajectory. The child is encouraged to be chivalrous and tread a righteous path with determination, mirroring the hope that they will seize life’s opportunities with divine guidance.

(5) *Ceker-Ceker*

Ceker-ceker, playing with sand, symbolizes seeking sustenance blessings and fostering independence. It marks the child's first sanctioned contact with the ground.

(6) Entry Confinement and Selecting Items

Confinement in the *tedhak siten* ceremony symbolizes the encompassing world, manifested through a cage containing diverse objects: Qur'an, prayer beads, books, pens, gold, rice, flowers, and toys symbolizing various professions. During this ritual, the child actively selects items, revealing personal inclinations and potential future preferences.

Interpretations of confinement extend beyond physical boundaries, embodying limits and moral standards intrinsic to human existence. Although the child may express discomfort, this act symbolizes optimism rather than an escape from worldly constraints. It foreshadows the child's potential for a successful and purposeful life (Hafidzi, 2020).

The chosen items hold a profound significance, illustrating the child's potential interests and inclinations in the future. This act is intricately linked with parental prayers and blessings, emphasizing the spiritual and familial dimensions of the ceremony (Mursalim, 2019). As the child reaches the age of seven *lapan*, this ceremony unveils innate genetic instincts, providing parents with insights to guide and enhance the child's potential as they navigate the complexities of life (Probowardhani & Sri Arfiah, 2016).

(7) Spreading *Udhik-Udhik*

Rice in *udhik-udhik* symbolizes abundance and sufficiency, while coins represent prosperity and luck. This procession is a symbol of parents' hopes for their children to have a generous nature of helping others. Parents aspire for their children to be generous, sharing their fortune with those in need.

(8) *Siraman*

In this poignant ceremony, the child is bathed in water infused with assorted flowers, known as *kembang setaman*. This ritual holds profound significance for parents, elevating their self-efficacy and instilling confidence that their offspring will carry forth the family's esteemed legacy. This procession symbolizes more than physical cleanliness; it encapsulates parents' aspirations for their children's enduring well-being, a fragrant reputation, and a virtuous, prosperous life. Rooted in the Javanese saying "mikul duwur mendem jero", the ritual aims for children to take pride in upholding the family's esteemed name (Musdalifah & Yunanto, 2021).

(9) Wardrobe Change

After bathing, the child is put on new clothes. Symbolizing new beginnings, changing clothes signifies parents' hope for the child to lead a prosperous and joyous life.

(10) *Jenang Merah Putih* (Red and White Porridge)

In Javanese tradition, red *jenang* embodies courage, while white *jenang* signifies purity. The combination of red and white porridge encapsulates parents' aspirations for their children—a wish for them to embody courage and consistently tread the righteous path. Beyond this, the red and white porridge serves as a symbolic representation of new life. The red porridge within it represents eggs, while the white porridge symbolizes semen. Consequently, the joint presentation of red and white porridge becomes a powerful symbol of the union of these two vital elements, signifying the creation of new life in the world.

(11) *Jajan Pasar* (Various Traditional Snacks)

Jajan pasar, consisting of various traditional food and wet cakes, represents social interaction, signifying parents' hope for their children to navigate society with grace.

(12) Assorted Tubers

Tubers symbolize the aspiration for children to possess *andhap asor*, or “trêp ênggone ngajèni awake (ora gumêdhe)” (self-respect without arrogance)—being appropriate and humble in their conduct (Poerwadarminta, 1939).

Table 1
Symbolism in the Tedhak Siten Ceremony

No.	Symbol	Meaning
1.	<i>Tedhak siten</i>	The hope, acceptance, and introduction of the child in society and respect for the earth on which the child rests
2.	<i>Pitu</i>	Instructions and help
3.	Sugar cane	Strong determination and steady heart
4.	<i>Andha</i>	Don't delay
5.	<i>Tumpeng</i>	Act straightly
6.	<i>Sungkeman</i>	Humble and respectful to parents
7.	<i>Wijikan</i>	Purify the heart and self
8.	Stepping the <i>jadah</i>	Always heading to better
9.	White <i>jadah</i>	Chastity
10.	Yellow <i>jadah</i>	Inner and outer strength
11.	Red <i>jadah</i>	Courage
12.	Green <i>jadah</i>	Fertility, adequacy, and success
13.	Blue <i>jadah</i>	Loyalty
14.	Purple <i>jadah</i>	Peace, tranquility
15.	Black <i>jadah</i>	Intelligence
16.	Climbing stairs	Be chivalrous and walk straight
17.	<i>Ceker-ceker</i>	Looking for blessed sustenance
18.	Enter confinement and choose items	A world that has borders with everything in it
19.	<i>Udhik-udhik</i>	Generous and benefactors
20.	Rice	Abundance and sufficiency
21.	Coins	Prosperity and luck
22.	<i>Siraman</i>	Carries the fragrant name of the family and can live a clean and upright life
23.	Change clothes	A good life, prosperous, and can make his parents live happily
24.	Red and white <i>jenang</i>	The arrival of a new life
25.	Red <i>jenang</i>	Courage; egg cell
26.	White <i>jenang</i>	Chastity; semen
27.	<i>Jajan pasar</i> (various snacks)	Interaction of community life
28.	Assorted tubers	The nature of <i>andhap asor</i> (humble)

5. Discussion

Javanese culture has deep roots in Indonesian society, particularly because Java served as the center of the Majapahit kingdom and several Hindu kingdoms during the early stages of Indonesian civilization. The establishment of Java as the center of the Majapahit kingdom and several Hindu kingdoms made the Javanese known earlier than other tribes in Indonesia (Saddhono et al., 2016). Simultaneously, Javanese culture embodies a harmonious way of life, emphasizing a balance between seeking personal safety and supporting others. The transmission of Javanese cultural heritage from one generation to the next plays a crucial role in fostering a proper understanding within the community. Parents, in particular, play an essential role in passing down these cultural values to their children (Sari et al., 2018). Therefore, various cultural manifestations, ideas, values, customs, or behaviors in Javanese style, as well as artistic expressions in the form of works, are not contrasted with certain religious teachings because they are different (Rahayu et al., 2015).

Tradition, as a customary practice passed down through generations, carries elements of knowledge and learning. Its endurance is attributed to the inclusion of positive values relevant to societal needs. According to Javanese philosophy, individuals dedicate their entire physical and spiritual existence to achieving life goals (Pangesti, 2017). The expression of culture and values varies among individuals, with some maintaining traditional practices and noble values while others embrace modern lifestyles and globalization trends. Striking a harmonious balance between tradition and globalization is crucial for continued coexistence (Hariyanto et al., 2023).

Ceremonies and rituals in Javanese culture serve as conduits for instilling wisdom in community members. They aim to secure safety in various aspects of life (Bratawijaya, 2000). Observing the stages and cycles of life through these ceremonies reflects the meticulous attention Javanese people give to expressing gratitude for the blessings received. Through the rituals carried out, Javanese people are accustomed to using symbols from these various processions and obey the symptoms obtained through the learning process from the previous generation until then passed on to the next generation (Haryanto, 2013).

Symbolism is integral to Javanese people, so every culture and tradition symbolizes prayer, philosophy, values, and life guidelines. Symbolism is deeply integrated into Javanese culture, manifesting in traditional ceremonies, arts, language, and the philosophy of human life. This symbolism serves as a means of maintaining and passing on cultural values from generation to generation, also signifying respect for ancestors.

As noted by Hofstede (1991, 2001), culture is often perceived as stable and unchanging. This stability is reflected in traditional ceremonies like the *tedhak siten*, which, while not undergoing significant changes, may see developmental additions. For instance, the sungkeman procession was incorporated later to seek blessings from elders.

In the four dimensions of cultural differences (Hofstede, 2001, 2005), the *tedhak siten* ceremony can be seen as follows. First, on the dimension of power distance, the *tedhak siten* ceremony places the baby shaman as a person of higher rank than others. It is due to his position as the holder of control of traditional ceremonial processions. Baby shamans can order the baby's parents to do certain activities. At the rank below are the baby's parents, who perform traditional ceremonies together with the baby. They are perpetrators, but control is not entirely in their hands. Next are relatives, neighbors, and people at the *tedhak siten* ceremony. The hierarchy is only between them during the ceremony. After that, everyone returned to their respective social classes.

The second dimension in Hofstede's paradigm is individualism versus collectivism, which looks at how individuals are integrated into groups. The *tedhak siten* ceremony unites babies, parents, and the community in an event. Therefore, the dimension of collectivism is evident in this ceremony. Each individual is integrated into a community group with its role. They are combined into a robust and cohesive group. Individuals voluntarily attend this traditional ceremony as a form of solidarity. The third cultural dimension is masculinity versus femininity. Javanese society adheres to the patriarchal model. However, in the *tedhak siten* ceremony, the father and mother of the baby work together to guide their children to carry out each traditional ceremonial procession. Therefore, despite the overall patriarchal model, both genders play active roles in the ceremony. The fourth dimension is uncertainty avoidance. The procession at the traditional *tedhak siten* ceremony has been structured. In its implementation, it is accompanied by a baby shaman who will guide the procession. So, uncertainty in this ceremony can be avoided. The rules, laws, controls, and norms are evident in this ceremony. Similarly, the timing of implementation, counting of days, planning, and cultural values have clear rules and certainties.

The *tedhak siten* ceremony is a significant part of the Javanese society's life cycle, marking the birth and childhood phases. Each element, *uba rampe* (equipment) and procession in the *tedhak siten* ceremony, has meaning and symbolism. Values transmitted through these rituals embody the prudence of the Javanese community in navigating life. The ceremony illustrates the acceptance and introduction of a child to society, emphasizing respect for the earth on which the child stands. This traditional rite carries numerous prayers and hopes for the child's health, blessings, luck, and happiness in life.

The exploration of linguistic and symbolic meanings in traditional ceremonies can extend to other cultures and societies. Every community nurtures values reflected in its cultural practices, making traditional ceremonies valuable avenues for exploration. Research methods employed in this study can be adapted to investigate symbolic meanings in diverse cultural contexts. Future research could delve into the evolution of traditional ceremonies, especially considering the contemporary trend of commercializing these sacred rites. Striking a balance between economic development and cultural preservation is essential to ensure the continued cultural richness of these ceremonies. With a thoughtful approach, tourism can serve as a tool for cultural preservation and growth without compromising the intrinsic values of the community.

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