The Symbolism of Ruwatan Offerings in the Indigenous Community of Kalitanjung Tambaknegara Banyumas

Gita Anggria Resticka – Erwita Nurdiyanto – Monika Herliana

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Abstract
Signs are linguistic in nature. Each sign is a combination of the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the formal form of the sign; in language, it is a unit of sound, while the signified is its meaning, i.e., what is signified by the signifier. The tradition of sedekah bumi (earth offering) is one of the practices that the indigenous Kejawen Tambaknegara community still maintains. In this tradition, various offerings serve as symbols of a series of rituals. This study examines the meanings of verbal (words, phrases, clauses, discourse) and nonverbal expressions in offerings that convey the local wisdom of the indigenous Kejawen Tambaknegara Banyumas community. Through semiotics, the cultural meanings of various offerings can be identified. This identification is essential because semiotics is a science that studies the processes of signification and communication, using signs as a means of interpretation. After all, signs have meanings based on conventions. In this case, assigning meaning involves identifying the conventions that give signs their meaning or significance. The purpose of this study is to identify symbols, emblems, and signs in ritual objects in the traditions of the Kejawen Kalitanjung Tambaknegara Banyumas indigenous community. This semiotic approach examines various symbols and signs associated with offerings in the life-cycle traditions of the Kalitanjung indigenous community. For example, during the sedekah bumi tradition, various offerings serve as clues to the cultural meanings of the symbols, signs, or emblems. The data collection technique involved direct participant observation by the researcher, who listened, asked questions, recorded, and noted all data related to the categories and expressions of language and culture in the offerings of the Tambaknegera Banyumas earth-offering tradition. Another method involved conducting in-depth interviews with selected informants knowledgeable about the cultural significance of the offerings.
Key words: symbolism, offerings, ruwatan, indigenous community, ethnolinguistics

1. Introduction

The Ruwatan tradition plays a vital role in the lives of the Kejawen community in Kalitanjung, Tambaknegara, Banyumas. It is not merely a ritual but also holds symbolic meaning, embodies local beliefs, and conveys teachings passed down by ancestors. The purpose of performing ruwatan is to purify oneself of misfortune, to serve as a symbol of gratitude, and to be a prayer for safety. Additionally, it serves to preserve harmony with the spiritual realm, uphold social values and community bonds, and serve as a legacy of spiritual knowledge and life philosophy. Ruwatan functions not only as a ritual to ward off misfortune but also as a medium for conveying cosmological values and social ethics from generation to generation. The tradition of the Ruwatan Sedekah Bumi in Kalitanjung Tambaknegara demonstrates how the Javanese maintain a harmonious relationship with nature and the spiritual realm. Through offerings, prayers, and the wayang kulit (shadow puppet) procession, the Ruwatan serves as a means of communication between humans and their ancestors, guardian spirits, and the Creator, ensuring continued protection as a symbol of gratitude and a prayer for safety, the Ruwatan Sedekah Bumi ceremony expresses gratitude for the harvest by praying together for a peaceful life, a steady flow of

sustenance, and harmonious relationships among the community. This tradition indirectly strengthens social bonds, fosters a sense of community, and reinforces the cultural identity of the Kalitanjung Tambaknegara community, which holds its customs and traditions in high regard (Resticka, Nurdiyanto, Junawaroh, Yanti, et al., 2024). In practice, the offerings in the ruwatan ritual contain symbols and meanings that represent humanity's relationship with nature, ancestors, and forces beyond human comprehension. However, over time, the younger generation has lost touch with these symbolic meanings, leading to a potential dilution of the ritual's significance, which is ultimately viewed as merely a ceremonial tradition. The people of Kalitanjung Tambakengara play a strategic role as preservers, guardians, and inheritors of Javanese traditions (Resticka, Nurdiyanto, Junawaroh, Oktaviana, et al., 2024). This indigenous community also plays a role in preserving traditional ceremonies. For generations, they have held the ruwatan sedekah bumi ritual during the month of Sura. The residents of Kalitanjung still preserve folk tales, incantations, songs, and ritual symbols passed down through the caretakers, traditional elders, and ruwatan puppeteers. This ritual serves not only as a spiritual practice but also as a space for the reproduction of cultural values and community identity.

This ruwatan tradition is inseparable from the values of community and mutual aid, as people work together to prepare the gunungan of agricultural produce, the tumpeng, and the offerings. Additionally, they work together to build the pavilion and the wayang stage, and even to prepare the food. The sense of community and the presence of the residents demonstrate that the ritual belongs to everyone. Through collective effort, oral traditions, and their customary ceremonies, they ensure that spiritual values, ritual symbols, and life philosophies remain alive and relevant today. In the Ruwatan, various offerings are arranged and interpreted symbolically based on local knowledge. The uniqueness of the forms, names, and meanings of these offerings is integral to the Kalitanjung community's cultural system. Their commitment to preserving traditions demonstrates that the people of Kalitanjung strongly uphold their cultural identity amidst modernization (Makrifah & Fateah, 2020). This is evident from the large number of children invited to participate in the procession to learn about spiritual values, local expressions, and traditional symbols.

In the Kalitanjung Tambaknegara indigenous community, offerings play a central role in every sacred ritual. Offerings are not merely a series of gifts, but cultural symbols rich in spiritual, social, and ecological significance. They serve as an expression of gratitude for the fertility of the land, the abundance of the harvest, and the blessings bestowed by God (Makrifah & Fateah, 2020). Offerings such as tumpeng, agricultural produce, potted flowers, and market snacks are neatly arranged as a form of prayer. The hope is that the earth will remain fertile, free from pests, and spared from disasters. Offerings, as a medium of spiritual communication, serve as a symbolic language for interacting with supernatural forces, paving the way for the ruwatan ritual to dispel bad fortune. Each element of the offering, such as *tumpeng, kembang, sirih, kemenyan*, and others, embodies local philosophies passed down through generations. The names, forms, and arrangements of offerings hold specific meanings that reflect the community's perspective on life, the balance of the cosmos, and its connection to supernatural forces. In Javanese philosophy, humans, nature, and God are interconnected within a circle of harmony. Offerings reflect an ecological consciousness: all that is taken from the earth must be returned through offerings as a form of respect ; ,(Kwaymullina, 2018). Through this ritual, the Kejawen community of Kalitanjung Tambaknegara is reminded to care for nature so that it remains sustainable for future generations. Thus, the offerings in the ruwatan sedekah bumi ceremony among the Kejawen community of Kalitanjung embody Javanese culture.

They are not merely objects of sacrifice but also contain a system of signs closely tied to language, cultural symbols, collective prayers, and the preservation of traditional values. Within them lie spiritual awareness, social ethics, and a philosophy of life that have kept this tradition alive and passed down to the present day. Based on the background above, the research questions can be formulated as follows: a) What are the forms and types of offerings in the ruwatan ceremony of the Kalitanjung Tambaknegara community? b) What are the symbolic meanings contained in these offerings?; c) What is the relationship between the symbols of the offerings and the local language in this tradition?

The objective of this study is to describe the forms, types, arrangements, and methods of presentation of ritual offerings, as well as their layout. Additionally, it aims to uncover the symbolic meanings behind each element of the offerings and to identify the ethnolinguistic aspects within the ritual practice of offering. This research is important for understanding variations in the forms and arrangements of offerings and for ensuring they are well documented as part of local cultural identity. By revealing these symbolic meanings, this study is expected to demonstrate the connections among rituals, spiritual beliefs, and the philosophy of life in the Kalitanjung Tambaknegara Banyumas community. Through this ethnolinguistic approach, it is hoped to demonstrate the role of language in transmitting cultural values and spiritual knowledge within the Kejawen community of Tambaknegara, Banyumas. This research is expected to provide academic benefits for ethnolinguistic studies, particularly in the areas of language, symbols, and local cultural meanings. In practice, this research is beneficial for preserving the culture and local values of Kalitanjung Tambaknegara, Banyumas.

The ethnolinguistic approach is emphasized in this study because it can explore the deep connections among language, culture, and the symbolic meanings of the ruwatan earth-offering tradition. This approach allows for a description of how the Kejawen community of Kalitanjung views the cultural significance of each item and the processions involved in the earth offering tradition. Every linguistic element, such as *tumpeng, sirih, kembang*, and *kemenyan*, is used in the ruwatan process. Local knowledge regarding the function, arrangement, and meaning of the offerings is passed down orally through folk tales, songs, and chants during each stage of the ritual (Shulist, 2016). Language in the form of incantations and prayers serves as a spiritual bridge between humans and the spiritual realm (Bornman & Appelgryn, 1997). This is what distinguishes it from the practice of ruwatan *sedekah bumi* elsewhere. Furthermore, the language used in ruwatan rituals, such as the term "*ruwat*," can represent the beliefs, moral values, and cultural knowledge systems of Javanese society. Currently, research on ruwatan in Banyumas largely focuses on its ritual aspects and social functions. Meanwhile, studies examining the symbolism of offerings from an ethnolinguistic perspective, that is, the relationship between language, symbolic meaning, and cultural practices, are still rare, particularly among the Kalitanjung indigenous community. Through ethnolinguistic analysis, this study describes how words and expressions can construct the spiritual meaning, function, and philosophy of offerings in the ruwatan ritual. Furthermore, it explains how the symbols of these offerings are tied to cultural structures through language, rather than merely as physical objects. This ethnolinguistic approach also documents dialects, distinctive terms, and linguistic diversity, which are integral parts of local cultural identity. Ruwatan is a tradition resulting from the acculturation of Javanese and Islamic cultures, typically involving communal prayers, food offerings, symbolic rituals such as animal sacrifice, and traditional art performances (Elfira et al.,

2023),(Hu, 2023). In addition to being a spiritual ritual, ruwatan also strengthens social bonds and helps preserve the local culture, involving all segments of society. Therefore, research on the symbolism of ruwatan offerings in the Kalitanjung indigenous community is essential for uncovering the cultural meanings embedded in this system of signs. Using an ethnolinguistic approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between language, symbols, and cultural practices in Ruwatan, while also contributing to efforts to preserve the local wisdom of the Banyumas community.

Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an ethnolinguistic foundation (Barab et al., 2004), (Giolláin, 2024). The primary focus of this study is the form and structure of offerings in the Ruwatan Sedekah Bumi ritual, the symbolic meaning of each offering element, the expressions of terms, and the use of local language in ritual practices. This study not only describes the relationship between language and local culture but also how vocabulary, regional expressions, and mantras construct spiritual meaning. It examines how oral knowledge is passed down through stories, prayers, and linguistic symbols, and how language becomes a bridge between humans, nature, and the spiritual world. This study was conducted in Grumbul Kalitanjung Tambanegara Banyumas. This data source was chosen because the indigenous people of Kalitanjung still firmly uphold the traditions of ruwatan and sedekah bumi, which are part of their ancestral cultural heritage (Davis, 2016). Data collection was conducted through direct field observation, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation with the Kyai and Nyai Kasepuhan Kejawen Kalitanjung, traditional leaders, caretakers, practitioners of the ruwatan ritual, and local community members. The data sources for this study were linguistic units and utterances in the Ruwatan Sedekah Bumi procession in the Kejawen Kalitanjung community in Banyumas. Data analysis in this study involved identifying the vocabulary, traditional terms, local expressions, mantras, and songs used in ruwatan. In addition, it connects ritual language with the symbolic function of offerings and explains how language constructs spiritual meaning (Putra & Lutfi, 2023). Then, it interprets the socio-cultural context behind the terms used in the ruwatan process in the traditional community of Kalitanjung Tambanegara, Banyumas.

Theoretical Background

Culture as a knowledge system consists of concepts, perceptions, and beliefs that are held and inherited by members of society, which serve as patterns for behavior (*pattern for*) (Bilá & Ivanova, 2020). Research on the culture of the Tambaknegara indigenous community falls under ethnographic research. Ethnography is a type of cultural research that seeks to understand how people interact and cooperate through observable phenomena in everyday life (Dion, 1996), (Barab et al., 2004). Ethnography generally aims to describe a particular culture holistically, including both spiritual and material aspects. Ethnography views culture not merely as a product but as a process. Understanding culture means interpreting it. In this regard, all aspects of culture are open to semiotic interpretation (*semiotic decoding*) (Sorokina, 2012), (Jensen, 2015). Signs do not contain specific meanings or concepts, but provide clues that solely produce meaning through interpretation (Shulist, 2018). Signs become meaningful when their code is interpreted according to the conventions and cultural rules that a person adheres to, either consciously or unconsciously (Braithwaite, 2019). Thus, an interpreter is needed who can recognize it as a sign and connect it to several relevant aspects. All cultural meanings are created using symbols. A symbol is any object or event that points to something. Symbols would

have no meaning without myths, and myths would not exist or take shape without symbols (Hariyanto et al., 2024). Studying a society's system of symbols, such as language, rituals, clothing, and food, means trying to discover and understand the meanings and concepts of that society (Brac De La Perrière, 2017), (Bhutia, 2021), (Malik et al., 2023).

Result and Discussion

The ruwatan tradition in the indigenous community of Kalitanjung Tambaknegara Banyumas is held in the month of Sura. It involves a wayang performance in the afternoon with themes related to the earth's produce. There is a unique requirement that the dalang who performs the story must have been a dalang ruwat ten times before. Ruwatan is part of a series of traditions of giving thanks to the earth, symbolizing gratitude for its produce. During this ruwatan event, various offerings are presented throughout the wayang performance. Each offering has a deep cultural meaning and serves as a means of prayer for the smooth running of the ruwatan activities. The participants of Ruwatan are the entire Kalitanjung indigenous community, which consists mainly of Kyais and Nyais who adhere to the Kejawen Islamic belief system.

a. Types of Offerings and Their Presentation

Various offerings are presented during the ruwatan process. The primary offering is the '*gunungan*', an arrangement of agricultural products shaped like a mountain. This gunungan symbolizes gratitude for the blessings of the earth's produce that are obtained to meet daily needs. The farm product '*padi*' symbolizes food abundance and prosperity. '*Sayur* and *buah' symbolize welfare and the fruits of farmers' labor. 'Ubi and kacang-kacangan*' symbolize natural wealth. Various traditional cakes such as *jenang, ketan,* and *wajik* symbolize gratitude. In Javanese cosmology, the gunungan in the ruwatan tradition is a ceremonial object that symbolizes the relationship among God, humans (the microcosm), and nature (the macrocosm). During the ruwatan procession, the gunungan, which has been prayed over, is paraded and becomes a point of competition among community members. The community considers *'ngalap berkah*' to mean seeking blessings through the fruits of the earth found in the gunungan.

A shadow puppet performance lies at the core of the ruwatan process. This puppet show is not only entertainment, but also a ritual to ward off evil spirits and express gratitude and prayers for safety. In addition, it is also used as a spiritual medium to strengthen the relationship between humans and nature (Kramasch, Claire, 2001). In a wayang kulit performance, the dalang serves as a spiritual mediator, not only telling stories about the theme of *'Dewi Sri*' but also reciting prayers and leading rituals. The dalang performs the ruwatan story, interspersed with mantras, prayers, and richly meaningful Javanese songs. Gamelan is also an essential part of the ruwatan ceremony. Gamelan music is not only an accompaniment to the performance but also considered to have a spiritual function: to open communication with the supernatural world and to enhance and strengthen the sacredness of the procession. According to myth, the sound of gamelan in the ruwatan procession is believed to summon ancestral spirits or spiritual powers. The Javanese gamelan instruments, consisting of *gongs, kempul, kenong, kethuk, bonang, saron, demung, slenthem,* and *kendang,* are also adjusted to the play and the ritual moment, namely ruwatan. According

to myth, each gamelan instrument has a supernatural guardian who protects it. Therefore, each gamelan instrument is given an offering that, according to myth, neutralizes the negative energy surrounding it. The gamelan used in the ruwatan in the traditional community of Kalitanjung Tambaknegara is usually cleansed physically and spiritually with offerings of *kembang setaman*, *kemenyan*, and *air bunga*. Then, flowers are added to avoid endangering the players or audience. The offerings are placed near the gong ageng, which is the center of the gamelan's power, and near the *kendang* or *bonang* to open spiritual "*access*." This is very reasonable because gamelan has cosmic elements, including earth elements in metals, air elements in sounds or tones, and spirit elements in sound vibrations. It can be said that the indigenous Kejawen Kalitanjung Tambaknegara community views the offerings at the ruwatan puppet show as an expression of gratitude and a blessing exchange, namely giving something to the supernatural realm in the hope that the performance will bring benefits and safety.

b. The Symbolism of Ruwatan Offerings in the Local Cultural Perspective

Language and culture are interrelated and can reveal underlying meanings. The use, misuse, or non-use of language, form, register, and style (Hu, 2023). The identification of offerings in the Kejawen Tambaknegara community aims to find the meaning of linguistic practices in cultural practices. In this case, the concept of meaning is fundamental to the study's focus. In this regard, meaning is a mental process and one of the main elements in the formation of language. Saussure (1988) states that a sign consists of a signifier (signifie), which is related to semantic meaning. Suppose the signifier (significant) is related to 'what signifies', which is sound. In that case, the signified (signifie) is related to 'what is signified', which is the meaning or concept possessed by the signifier. An example of a linguistic sign in Indonesian is 'gunungan', as shown in the following image : /g/,/u/,/n/,/u/,/n/,/g/,/a/,/n/

(signifiant)



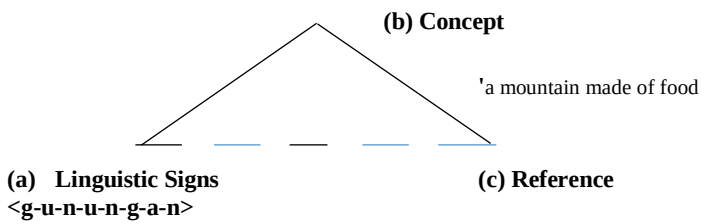
Outside Language: Reference

'mountain shapes made from food and produce during traditional ceremonies (signifier)

Based on the above data, these signs consist of two elements: the aspect of the sound image (a kind of visual representation) and the concept of its location. The implementation of the first marking system, according to Saussure, is that the signifier takes the form of a linguistic unit /g/,/u/,/n/,/u/,/n/,/g/,/a/,/n/ and signifier, which is the concept of the lexical word "gunungan," meaning a mountain made of food and agricultural products in traditional ceremonies (KBBI online). In reality, signifiers and signifieds form a linguistic sign, and this sign becomes a signifier for different signifieds and signs in the original language. The referent of the linguistic sign is something that exists outside of language. Furthermore, if the sign diagram above is interpreted in terms of the triangle of meaning proposed by Ogden and Richards (1923), it will appear as follows.

(b) Concept

'mountain shapes made from food and agricultural products in traditional ceremonies



The dotted line connecting the form with the referent in the triangle of meaning above implies that the relationship between form and meaning is indirect. In contrast, the relationships between concept and form and between concept and referent are direct, indicated by solid lines. Based on this, meaning is the understanding or concept possessed by a linguistic sign. The linguistic sign is identical to the word, so the meaning is the understanding or concept of the word "*gunungan*".

Symbols, from a Saussurean perspective, are a type of sign in which the relationship between the signifier and the signified appears arbitrary (Berger, 2010). From our perspective, symbols are things that have cultural significance and resonance. Symbols can influence and convey deep meaning (Eco, 2009). In semiology, denotative and connotative meanings are essential to ethnolinguistics. Denotative meaning is direct and can be described as a representation of a sign. Then, the connotative meaning of a sign can become a kind of myth or mythical clue (which emphasizes these meanings), so that, in many ways, connotative meaning becomes a highly influential manifestation of myth (Christomy, 2004). Then, from a mythological perspective, the signifier (a sign in the original language) is called a form, while the signified is a concept of the feeling process. Researchers can see the entire sign functioning as a signifier in the connotative or mythological system. To interpret a myth, one must identify its concept. The gunungan in the slametan sedekah bumi is made from agricultural products such as rice, eggplant, tomatoes, welok, chili,

mustard greens, bitter melon, oyong, and long beans. The gunungan is cone-shaped, the same shape as the tumpeng nasi served in traditional meals.

An example of the application of Lyons' theory is the communal presentation of food offerings during life-cycle ceremonies (such as the sedekah bumi ceremony) by the indigenous community of Kasepuhan Kalitanjung, Tambaknegara Village, Rawalo District, Banyumas Regency. This can be seen in the system of signs on rose petals in the offerings in the Ruwatan sedekah bumi tradition, as shown in the image below.



Figure 1: Offering '*Tolak Bala*' at The Ruwatan Ceremony



Figure 2: Gamelan Offering at The Ruwatan Ceremony



Figure 3: Wayang and Kelir Offerings at The Ruwatan Ceremony

Rituals are a tangible form of sincere devotion to Allah SWT. However, these rituals are often represented through symbols that serve as manifestations or expressions of a deep understanding and appreciation of the unseen reality, making it feel very close. Rituals with offerings and symbols create a feeling that Allah is always present and united within oneself. These symbols can be interpreted as a manifestation of the idea that human existence is inseparable from God. The indigenous Kejawen Kalitanjung community in Banyumas applies this understanding by using various types of food in the slametan tradition as a symbolic means to appreciate their connection with Allah. There are various offerings to ward off misfortune, consisting of: (a) offerings to ward off misfortune in the form of *kembang telon*, incense burning, and rice with side dishes wrapped in banana leaves during the ruwatan sedekah bumi ceremony; (b) offerings for the gamelan in the ruwatan ceremony, consisting of agricultural products such as bananas, cassava, kembang telon, rice with side dishes, and bananas; and offerings for the gong in the wayang ruwatan ceremony, consisting of agricultural products such as coconuts, chili peppers, red onions, betel leaf water, kembang telon water, kolek, coffee, tea, ginger drink, boiled cassava, and rice with side dishes (c) offerings for the wayang ruwatan ceremony consisting of agricultural products such as rice and coconuts placed on top of the wayang screen, as well as offerings of long beans, chili peppers, red onions, garlic, and crackers arranged in an aesthetically pleasing manner as offerings for the dalang.

In various offerings presented in the ruwatan sedekah bumi ceremony, there is one offering that is always present, namely roses. Culturally, the people of Kalitanjung symbolize roses with the concept of mawerna-werna or variety. The cultural meaning of this symbol is the diversity of human desires. The roses used are whole red roses, with petals not separated, placed in a clear glass filled with water. Placing the roses in a glass filled with clear water symbolizes that human desires should not become excessive lust.

Furthermore, as Lyons' thinking holds, the relationship between signs and concepts is direct. This means that when the term rose flower is mentioned as an offering in the '*Nulak tradition*', the mind of someone who hears it automatically thinks of safety. The same applies to the relationship between concepts and significatium. Meanwhile, the relationship between signs and significatium is not direct. In this regard, all aspects of culture are open to semiotic interpretation

(semiotic decoding). Understanding culture means interpreting that culture (Becker, 2014).

c. The Cultural Significance of Ruwatan Offerings in the Kalitanjung Indigenous Community

Offerings are a form of respect for spirits, ancestors, and the universe. This shows that the Kalitajung Tambaknegara community believes in an unseen force that maintains the balance of life. In this case, offerings serve as a medium for communicating spiritual values (Sumarwati, 2022). In the tradition of ruwatan sedekah bumi in the Kalitanjung indigenous community, various kinds of offerings symbolize a request for a person or group to be freed from bad luck or misfortune. Ruwatan can be used as a form of cleansing or liberation, in which case offerings serve as a spiritual means to achieve it. The Kalitanjung community, which holds a ruwatan ceremony every year as part of the sedekah bumi tradition, expresses gratitude for the blessings they have received while praying for a smooth future. The various ritual offerings in Ruwatan demonstrate the preservation of the Banyumas community's traditional values and cultural heritage. Each ubarampe, or item, in the ruwatan serves to preserve the traditional values and cultural heritage of the Banyumas community. Each element in the offering, such as the tumpeng, flowers, incense, and *kembang telon*, has a philosophical meaning that teaches the local wisdom of the local community.

The indigenous people of Kalitanjung mainly adhere to Kejawen Islam. Kejawen Islam is a result of the syncretism of Islamic teachings with local Javanese culture. In Kalitanjung cultural practices, offerings are still used, but their intent and meaning are adjusted to avoid conflict with tawhid. This means that the primary purpose remains focused on Allah rather than on supernatural beings. The Kyai and Nyai explain that offerings are viewed as a cultural tradition that emphasizes spiritual and symbolic aspects. In addition, Kejawen Islam views offerings not as a means of worshiping supernatural beings, but as a spiritual symbol and a form of spiritual practice to maintain harmony between humans and the Almighty. The Kejawen Islam community of Kalitanjung maintains the principle of continuing to practice traditions and rituals. However, these offerings are expressions of gratitude, not worship. The tradition of offerings is part of the local wisdom passed down from generation to generation in the indigenous community of Kalitanjung. This reflects the Kejawen philosophy of life, which emphasizes deep spiritual knowledge and insight.

The various offerings used in ruwatan ceremonies in the Kalitanjung indigenous community have deep cultural symbolism. This cultural symbolism cannot be interpreted in isolation; it is also linked to the local community's mindset and worldview, which has been passed down from generation to generation. It is also linked to myths that serve as a binding force for identity and tradition. Myths strengthen an indigenous community's cultural identity by being passed down from generation to generation. In relation to the technical science of semiotics, Barthes notes that myths constitute the second order of meaning (second-order significations). Meanwhile, signs and signifiers are the first order (first-order significations). Signs in the linguistic system become signifiers for the mythical system, as illustrated in the identification of linguistic units used as offerings, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Labeling System

No.	Language	Myth
1.	Signifier /s/, /i/,/r/,/i/,/h/	Form /s/,/i/,/r/,/i/,/h/
2.	Signified Vines climbing on other trees	Concept Possess magical powers to ward off evil

In reality, signifiers and signifieds form a linguistic sign, and it is this sign that becomes a signifier for different signifieds and signs in the original language. From a mythological perspective, signifiers (which are signs in the original language) are called forms, while signifieds are concepts and signs produced by the process of feeling. One of the most common myths is the belief that spirits can disturb humans if they are not given offerings. People also believe that offerings can ward off calamities, i.e., prevent disasters. In this myth, offerings are considered to have mystical powers to ward off negative energy. This is similar to the ruwatan ceremony in the indigenous community of Kalitanjung Tambaknegara. One example is the use of betel leaf to communicate with the supernatural world. This myth states that ancestral spirits or supernatural beings can receive messages or intentions from humans through offerings containing '*sirih*'.

For the indigenous people of Kalitanjung Tambaknegara, the betel plant is not just a medicinal plant. However, '*sirih*' has great sacred value because it is used in various traditional rituals, offerings, and spiritual ceremonies. Betel is an essential element of local wisdom passed down from generation to generation. In addition, the betel plant has many traditional medicinal uses for treating wounds, digestive disorders, bad breath, coughs, and more. Because of its function, which is deeply integrated into traditional life, the Kalitanjung indigenous community is very protective of its preservation. Protecting the '*sirih*' also means protecting cultural identity. Given the current wave of globalization, preserving the betel plant is a form of resistance against the loss of cultural values. Traditional knowledge about the use of the '*sirih*' is passed down orally from ancestors. This traditional knowledge includes the best planting time, the correct harvesting method, which parts of the plant are used for medicinal purposes, and its use as an offering.

d. Ethnolinguistic Identification in the Terms and Narratives of the Ruwatan Ritual

The earth offering ritual in the Kalitanjung Tambaknegara indigenous community embodies local wisdom values throughout its processes. Language plays a vital role in identifying cultural meanings. Language is used to bring symbolic meanings to life. In this case, every element of the offerings used in the ruwatan *sedekah bumi* process has a symbolic meaning that is not only visible in its form but also explainable through language. Language explains the importance of the offerings. Language also gives spiritual identity to offerings through terms, narratives, and myths (Nkuna et al., 2025). In the offering process, language also appears in the form of mantras and prayers. Mantras are sacred sentences that are believed to have spiritual power. Mantras are recited by a ruwat dalang at the start and end of a wayang performance.

Usually, these mantras are recited slowly while accompanied by prayers. In addition, wayang ruwatan performances also tell stories about agriculture, featuring the goddess Dewi Sri.

This earth-purification ritual teaches us always to remember. In Javanese, this is called *eling, kelingan, ngelingi* (remember, remembering, and reminding). This earth purification ritual also symbolizes the removal of *suker* (dirt), pests, and disasters that can occur at any time. In addition, the purpose of this ruwatan is to *ngudar ruwet runtek* (release complexity and hardship) and *mberat sukerta* (get rid of bad luck). The traditional expressions and prayers in Banyumasan Javanese have become local wisdom we can all emulate. In addition, there is a local lexicon, such as *sengkala, ruwat*, and *berkah*, that reflects the spiritual values of the Kejawen Kalitanjung Tambanegara community. Each of these expressions reflects a deep belief about the relationship between humans and the supernatural and about how to maintain balance in life. The effort to cleanse oneself of negative energy to achieve physical and spiritual safety. Sengkala in the Kalitanjung tradition refers to bad luck, disaster, or misfortune believed to be attached to a person or situation. The local belief is that *sengkala* must be neutralized or broken so that it does not affect a person's life journey. Ruwat is a ritual of cleansing, freeing, purifying, and releasing oneself from bad luck, involving offerings, prayers, mantras, wayang kulit performances, and symbolic practices such as animal slaughter. The spiritual value of ruwatan is believed to be a way to break the bad energy that has been spiritually inherited, thereby cleansing a person or place. Then, the lexicon of blessings means having God's goodness or grace that brings salvation, sustenance, and happiness. In the Kejawen Kalitanjung belief system, blessings come not only from God but also from ancestors, nature, and guardian spirits. Spiritually, blessings are the ultimate goal of the entire ruwatan ritual, not merely to be free from misfortune but to live in harmony with nature, fellow human beings, and the creator.

Other local expressions laden with symbolic language contain prayers, hopes, and moral messages. These expressions are usually uttered by traditional leaders, puppeteers, or village elders when opening rituals, reciting prayers, or giving advice to the community. The phrase "*sengkala kudu sirna, sukerta kudu mulya*" means that misfortune must disappear, and the heavy burdens of life must be lifted. This phrase is usually uttered in the puppeteer's ruwatan mantra, which affirms that the purpose of this ritual is to cleanse bad energy and elevate the quality of life. The phrase "*slamet rahayu*" means safety and prosperity. This phrase is uttered as a prayer so that the villagers and their crops will always be protected from danger, pests, and disasters. It is usually uttered in the opening or closing prayer of the ruwatan. Then, there is also an ancient mantra recited by the dalang or key holder, namely "*bumi dipa, bumi dipa, bumi mring sawiji*". The meaning of this phrase is to ask for the earth's blessing, for prosperity, and for the residents to live in harmony. The Kejawen Kalitanjung community firmly believes that the earth is not just the ground on which they stand, but a living being with a spirit and spiritual power. This request for the earth's blessing is expressed through the prayer "*nyuwun berkah bumi lan pangayoming Gusti*," which means asking for the earth's blessings and God's protection. This expression signifies the awareness that fertile land is a blessing that comes when humans are grateful and take care of it.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the ruwatan offerings in Kalitanjung Tambaknegara take various forms, including tumpeng, flower arrangements, betel leaves, holy water, incense, mounds of agricultural produce, and additional items such

as market snacks and other symbolic objects. Each element is arranged in a specific layout and accompanied by supporting offerings prepared by the local community. In the symbolism of these offerings, each form carries profound symbolic meaning; for instance, the mound of agricultural produce symbolizes gratitude, a plea for safety, and blessings of sustenance, particularly for the local community. This symbolic meaning reflects the relationship between humans, nature, ancestors, and the Creator. This ethnolinguistic research demonstrates that offerings are not merely understood as physical objects but are also brought to life through ritual language in local vocabulary, mantras, prayers, and traditional expressions that affirm ethical values, express gratitude, and invoke safety. In this context, the language and symbols of the ruwatan offering ritual form a unified spiritual meaning that constitutes the cultural identity of the Kalitanjung community. Language serves to bring symbolic meaning to life, preserve cultural values, symbolize collective identity, and act as a means of sacralization within ritual practices. Thus, language and cultural symbols are inseparable because they mutually reinforce one another in maintaining the belief system, preserving traditional identity, and sustaining local wisdom through the practice of the ruwatan earth offering ritual within the Kejawen community of Kalitanjung, Tambaknegara, Banyumas.

The implications of this research suggest that an ethnolinguistic study of the symbolism of offerings can contribute to efforts to document local wisdom, particularly regarding traditional ritual practices. This study also provides insight into the fact that rituals and cultural symbols are part of a community's knowledge system whose continuity must be preserved amidst modernization. These findings can also serve as material for strengthening local identity, a source of cultural learning, and further research examining the relationship between language, symbols, and cultural practices in traditional societies.

AI Tools Declaration

The author declares that artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used only as assistive tools during the preparation of this manuscript. Gemini was used to a limited extent to support initial idea exploration, outline development, and language editing. In addition, Scopus AI was used to identify and explore relevant scholarly literature. The use of these tools did not influence the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, or the study's conclusions. All intellectual content, arguments, and interpretations presented in this article are the sole responsibility of the author.

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Gita Anggria Resticka, S.S.,M.A
Faculty of Cultural Sciences Campus
General Soedirman University
Jalan Dr. Soeparno, North Purwokerto
Indonesia
gita.resticka@unsoed.ac.id
ORCID: 0000-0002-2226-2891

Erwita Nurdiyanto, S.S.,M.A
Faculty of Cultural Sciences Campus
General Soedirman University
Jalan Dr. Soeparno, North Purwokerto
Indonesia
erwita.nurdiyanto@unsoed.ac.id
ORCID: 0000-0002-8147-4931

Monika Herliana, B.Ed.,M.Li
Faculty of Cultural Sciences Campus
General Soedirman University
Jalan Dr. Soeparno, North Purwokerto
Indonesia
monika.herliana@unsoed.ac.id
ORCID: 0000-0002-7544-105X