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Aims & Scope

International Journal of Asian Culture aims to promote in-depth research and discussions on various aspects of Asian culture. It seeks to explore the rich cultural traditions, social contexts, historical backgrounds, and contemporary changes within the Asian region. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the journal aims to broaden the scope of cultural studies related to Asia.

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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I write this forward for the inaugural issue of the International Journal of Asian Culture. This publication marks an exciting new chapter in our efforts to explore, document, and share the profound cultural diversity of Asia. Born from the thought-provoking discussions and groundbreaking research presented at the first international symposium of the Asian Academy of Culture, this journal aims to serve as a platform for the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and scholarly contributions from across the Asian continent.

At the symposium, we were honored to welcome esteemed scholars from Korea, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and beyond. Together, we delved into the complexities of Asian culture, highlighting not only its rich traditions but also the contemporary dynamics shaping the region today. The papers presented at this event serve as the foundation for the International Journal of Asian Culture, and we are proud to publish them here for the wider academic community.

The International Journal of Asian Culture aspires to be more than just a repository of research—it seeks to foster interdisciplinary conversations that bridge cultural studies with fields such as history, philosophy, sociology, economics, and the arts. Through this approach, we hope to create a forum where the cultural experiences and intellectual contributions of Asia can be appreciated, critically examined, and shared with the world.

In the pages that follow, you will find a diverse array of perspectives, methodologies, and insights, each reflecting the diverse cultural landscapes from which they originate. This journal aims to promote deeper understanding and meaningful dialogue about the unique cultural identities that make up this vast and dynamic region.

As we launch this journal, we invite scholars, researchers, and cultural practitioners from around the world to engage with us. We hope that the International Journal of Asian Culture will become a vital resource for advancing the study of Asian culture, celebrating its complexity, and promoting cross-cultural exchanges that enrich our shared global understanding.

We look forward to the ongoing contributions of our academic community, and to the continued exploration of Asia's cultural heritage and future. May this journal help illuminate new paths for scholarly inquiry and foster greater appreciation for the richness of Asian cultures.

(Chun, Hong Duck)

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Tumpeng: A Symbolic Representation of Divine-Human-Landscape Interactions in Indonesian Culture

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Abstract. Java is one of the big ethnic groups that inhabit the Indonesian Archipelago. The Javanese are the main ethnic group that inhabit this island. Java is a part of the Java Peninsula, which is surrounded by volcanic ash that is produced by several volcanoes along the central and southern regions of Java Island. The traditional dish tumpeng has become a national dish and symbol of Indonesian culture. It has been used as a symbol of the interconnection between humanity, nature, and spirituality. The purpose of this research is to convey the tumpeng as an expression of local wisdom that connects the Creator, Humanity, and Nature, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and landscape of Java. It is hoped that this research will help people understand how the interaction of Javanese society with the environment produces cultural products that hold significant value, especially from the perspective of landscape architecture.

1. Introduction

The Javanese are one of the big ethnic groups that inhabit the Indonesian Archipelago. Javanese culture has developed well in terms of architecture, language, customary systems, and also cuisine. The interaction between the Nusantara community and various beliefs and cultures that have entered has resulted in a rich cultural heritage. The landscape character of Java is a volcanic island with a dominance of mountains in the southern central part and vast, fertile lowlands in the northern part. The volcanic ash produced by several volcanoes on this island has a significant impact on enhancing the fertility of the land. Java Island has another name, jawadwipa, which means the island that is prosperous in rice. Until now, Java is still known as one of the main islands in Indonesia that produces rice for the national food supply. Approximately 60 percent of Indonesia's population lives in Java [1]. Java has experienced substantial population growth during the last four decades, resulting in increased human requirements. However, land resources to meet these demands are becoming increasingly scarce [2].

The people of Java have experienced an era of animism-dynamism, Hindu-Buddhism, Islam, and then the colonial period. Fortunately, many cultural heritages, both tangible and intangible, have remained preserved to this day. Javanese culture influences the motivational components of the Javanese community's behaviour. This is due to the values and beliefs of Javanese culture, which have been passed down through centuries among the Javanese people, influencing their behavior in numerous parts of life [3].

Tumpeng is one of the tangible cultural heritage that exists to this day. As a traditional culinary dish, tumpeng holds significant social and cultural values as an expression of the Javanese community's gratitude to the Creator in various social activities. Tumpeng is a cultural heritage that still exists today. The elements and shapes present in the presentation of tumpeng actually symbolize aspects of Javanese culture that can be studied and developed, especially in relation to the characteristics of the Javanese landscape.

The purpose of this research is to convey the tumpeng as a symbol of local wisdom that connects the Creator, Humanity, and Nature. Studying the concept of tumpeng can help someone understand how the interaction of Javanese society with the environment produces cultural products that hold significant value, especially from the perspective of landscape architecture.

2. Result and Discussion

2.1. The Philosophy of Tumpeng and Its Complements

Before Islam arrived on Java, the tumpeng ritual was followed. The tumpeng tradition, which originated in Java and is seen as a communication from ancestors regarding requests to the Almighty, is strongly tied to Javanese philosophy. Tumpeng is provided prior to the celebration in the Javanese custom of *kenduri*. The shape and kind of tumpeng that the Javanese community often makes are determined by the requirements of the rituals that will be carried out.

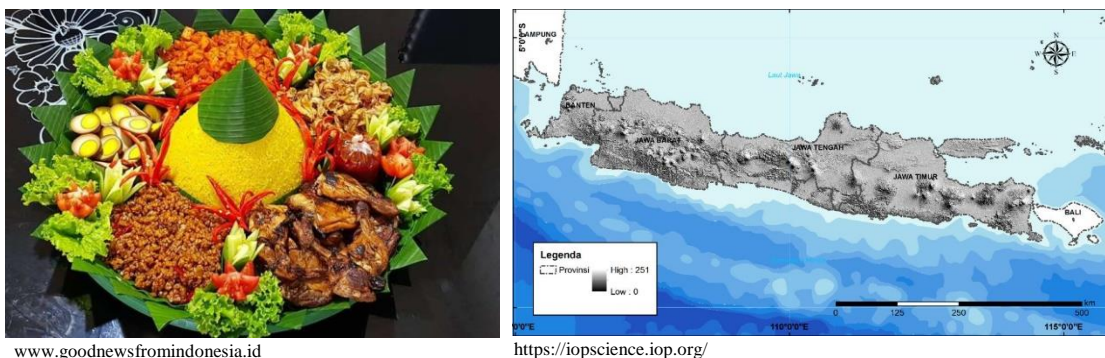


Figure 1. The shape of the tumpeng represents the volcanoes in Java.

Physically, tumpeng is closely related to Hinduism because of its mountain-like shape (Figure 1). In Hinduism, mountains are symbols of the universe. Therefore, for the Javanese Hindu community, mountains play a very important role. Mountains, symbols of the universe, would be barren without trees around them. Mountains and vegetation have a mutually dependent relationship. It seems to be a natural law: when there is a mountain, there will certainly be many kinds of trees growing around it [4]. The term *gunung* or mount itself in Javanese culture is a combination of two words: "*gu*" which means *Gusti* or God, and "*nunggal*" or "manunggal," which means to unite. It can be interpreted that a mountain is a landscape feature that is considered sacred in Javanese culture [5].

Java has many active volcanoes to this day, including Mount Semeru, Mount Bromo, Mount Merapi, and Mount Kelud. Mount Semeru, the highest volcano in Java, is a sacred mountain in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. Semeru also regarded as the center of the universe, both physically and metaphysically spiritually [6]. In addition to the Javanese ethnic group, the Balinese ethnic group on Bali Island also has a tumpeng culture that is quite similar to that of Java. Bali Island also has a mountain that is considered sacred, namely Mount Agung

conical shape of a mountain represents power or worship to God. This shape can also be interpreted as a symbol of human life and the surrounding nature. Life begins and ends under the power of the Creator. On certain types of tumpeng, red chili and shallots are placed at the tip of the tumpeng as a symbol of a request or prayer [5]. The use of red chili and shallots is becoming less common and has been replaced by cones made from banana leaves.

The mountain shape that resembles a triangle appears frequently in Javanese architecture (Figure 2). Some of them including the roof shape of joglo houses, the conical form of temples like in Prambanan Temple, *gunungan hasil bumi* (the big tumpeng made from harvested crops and traditional cakes) at *Sekaten* ceremony in Yogyakarta and Surakarta Palace, and even the traditional farmer's hat known as *caping*. The shape of the mountain is also adapted in the architectural concept of the Purna Bhakti Pertiwi Museum located in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, Jakarta.



Figure 2. Illustrations of architectural works and objects that take the concept of mountain shapes.

Tumpeng crafted from rice fashioned like a mountain, which has lengthly been taken into consideration to symbolize the connection among gods and those, and their interplay with the Javanese cultural landscape. In a religious context, tumpeng is regularly related to the idea of power and braveness to triumph over life's challenges, and the mountain-fashioned rice is taken into consideration an image of power and braveness. Furthermore, tumpeng is likewise an image of solidarity and concord in Javanese society, as it's far regularly served at conventional activities along with ritual ceremonies and weddings. From an anthropological perspective, tumpeng displays the harmonious interplay of humans with their environment, and ingredients along with rice and veggies are herbal merchandise that develop in nature.

The rice, which is frequently served in a cone form, represents the fertile ground and the plenty it offers. This artistic representation emphasizes the idea that nature provides an unending supply of food and sustenance. As side dishes, chicken is typically cooked with coconut milk and turmeric, eggs are boiled and served with their shells, milkfish and catfish are fried, and

anchovies are fried after being blended with rice flour. In the meantime, all of the vegetables are boiled and then combined with *urap*, or spiced and seasoned grated coconut[7].

Tumpeng is frequently offered at important occasions like as weddings and harvest festivals called as *gunungan hasil bumi*, which are inextricably linked to natural cycles. These rituals honor the harvest season and the fertility of the land, connecting the dish to the natural cycles that sustain life. The using of fresh herbs and flowers as garnish adds another depth of symbolism. These decorations not only add to the dish's aesthetic appeal, but also serve as reminders of nature's beauty and fragility. They represent the cyclical nature of life and the interdependence of all living things.

Tumpeng has now become a national dish and symbol of the Indonesian people. The presentation of tumpeng has developed alongside globalization and its huge developments. Some kinds of tumpeng are tumpeng megana, tumpeng kendhit, and tumpeng kapuranto (Figure 3). Tumpeng megana was created for a child's birth celebration. The rice used is also white rice, which represents purity. The green veggies surrounding the tumpeng also represent freshness, ensuring that the youngster remains fresh and robust in all conditions. This tumpeng stands out for its use of eggs and red chili peppers. White rice is used in tumpeng kendhit, while yellow rice is put in a circle in the center. The dynamics of human life are said to be represented by this tumpeng. All things, including happiness, misery, failure, and success, will undoubtedly be conquered one after the other. This tumpeng is an offering to God in appreciation for all that has happened.

The addition of blue rice makes tumpeng kapuranto incredibly special. Antioxidant-rich butterfly pea blooms are the source of the blue hue. In addition, blue is a symbol of sincerity, calm, tranquility, and commitment. The typical usage of this tumpeng is in apology. The sender of this tumpeng must already be aware of their objective, which is to beg for forgiveness for anything they did in the past.

The diversity of side dishes that accompany tumpeng, including vegetables, meats, and spices, symbolize diversity of natural resources. Each dish is carefully chosen to highlight different aspects of nature—vegetables represent the fruits of the land, meats represent the animals that live there, and spices reflect the great biodiversity of flora.



Figure 3. Tumpeng Megana, Tumpeng Kendhit, and Tumpeng Kapuranto

Tumpeng additionally has a strong connection to Javanese culture. This dish is regularly served at conventional occasions including ceremonies, weddings, and holidays. In those occasions, tumpeng is appeared as an image of togetherness and harmony. Additionally, tumpeng includes a deep non-secular meaning, in which the rice fashioned like a mountain is visible as an image

of energy and braveness in dealing with life's challenges. Thus, tumpeng isn't always simply meals, however additionally part of the wealthy and numerous cultural identification of Java.

Tumpeng is used as a sacrifice to God in *Selamatan* custom. Offering a Tumpeng demonstrates one's understanding of his place in the universe and the fact that it is nothing in comparison to the unseen force that governs the earth, water, wind, and other elements of the environment. Offering a tribute is therefore crucial, according to Javanese beliefs, to preserving the bond between God and humanity. They believe that if God is happy with their offer, He would protect them. It is customary for attendees of the event to pray over the food before sharing it. At the traditional ritual, the community's leader will slice off the top of the Tumpeng and present it to the elderly as a token of appreciation and respect. This suggests that Javanese people have a great deal of regard for their parents and elders [7]. Furthermore, the system of creating tumpeng is regularly completed traditionally, in which the elements are cautiously decided on to make sure that this meal may be loved sparkling and delicious. Thus, tumpeng isn't always only a conventional dish, however additionally part of ongoing sustainability efforts.

2.2. Tumpeng as a Representation of the Landscape

From the discussion above, the presentation of tumpeng is essentially always accompanied by complementary ingredients, namely side dishes and vegetables. If a tumpeng stands alone as just rice without side dishes and vegetables, then it cannot be considered a complete tumpeng. If we draw a connection between this matter and the concept of landscape preservation, then the philosophy of tumpeng as a whole is similar to the necessity of preserving our natural landscapes. The presence of mountains in various cultures is regarded as something sacred, holy, and majestic. Mountains, as major landscape formations, cannot be separated from the existence of the surrounding landscape. The chain of active volcanoes along the central and southern regions of Java Island provides livelihood for humans and shapes the surrounding landscape. Side dishes and vegetables are associated to the area around a mountain as supporting elements of sustainability. Just like a tumpeng, a mountain that is not cared for in terms of the surrounding area's preservation will lose its meaning.

Humans have long interacted with the natural landscapes around them. Natural landscapes have a language that can be sensed and felt by humans. The language of the natural landscape is manifested in natural features such as the presence of the sun, clouds, wind, including the weather, trees, rivers, and even the sounds of birds [8]. Essentially, humans must maintain harmony with the landscape, both the tangible landscape and the intangible one.

The pressure on the sustainability of the landscape in Java is currently increasing. As the most densely populated island in the world, Java is experiencing very high levels of environmental degradation [9]. Not only from an environmental perspective, but the social and cultural aspects of this island are also very dynamic. The current era of globalization is also feared to rapidly erode the noble values of existing cultures. Land use planning policies in Java, especially those aimed at preserving rice paddies and farmland, are important to ensure the sustainability of agricultural practices since about 60 percent of Indonesian farmers live in Java [10]. Rice is the main staple food of the Javanese people and even nationally, so rice production policies play a crucial role in development [11].

From a broader perspective, preserving the landscape must continue in relation to the rampant destruction of natural landscapes. Strict regulations on zoning in development planning are

necessary to ensure the sustainability of natural areas needed to maintain the stability of the region's ecosystem. If an area has suffered damage to its ecosystem, the impacts can affect various aspects such as environmental, economic, social, and cultural aspects.

There are several ways that can be undertaken to preserve the sustainability of the landscapes of Java Island. First, to maintain the resiliency of Java Island in the face of food crop and horticulture challenges, several land conservation strategies can be implemented. Encouraging sustainable agriculture practices such as crop rotation, organic farming, and integrated pest management can help maintain soil fertility and reduce the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Second, promoting agroforestry systems, which integrate trees into agricultural landscapes, can enhance biodiversity, improve soil health, and provide additional income streams through forest products. Third, preserving the genetic diversity of local crops. Implementing integrated land use planning approaches can help balance agricultural activities with other land uses, such as conservation and urban development. Respecting nature is one way that people have a moral obligation to the environment. This obligation is placed on society as a whole as well as on individuals, particularly in societies that have passed down customs about their interaction with the natural world [12].

3. Conclusion

The Javanese culture, represented by the traditional dish tumpeng, serves as a philosophical symbol of the interconnectedness between humanity, nature, and spirituality, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and landscape of Java. The spirit of tumpeng, characterized by its complementary side dishes and vegetables, parallels the importance of preserving natural landscapes, particularly mountains, which are integral to their surrounding environments and cultural significance.

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**Tumpeng: A Symbolic Representation of
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We are pleased to acknowledge the receipt of your paper titled 'Tumpeng: A Symbolic Representation of DivineHuman-Landscape Interactions in Indonesian Culture' for the AAC Symposium. Your paper will be presented in an oral format. We expect your research to make a significant contribution to the symposium.

Sept. 27. 2024

Date



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