

## **CANOLI: GUARDIAN OF SACRED BANQUET IN THE RITUAL ACTIVITIES OF KASEPUHAN CIPINANG, BANTEN, INDONESIA**

**Ria Andayani Somantri, Agus Heryana, Mikka Wildha Nurrochsyam,  
Ria Intani Tresnasih, and Ani Rostiyati**

*The National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia*

**Abstract.** The Canoli is a woman who possesses indigenous knowledge and is the guardian of the sacred banquet in agrarian Sundanese communities. This research uses a qualitative paradigm with ethnographic methods. The concept of Levi-Strauss' culinary triangle method is used to explain this. The results demonstrated that during the process of cooking rice, it is transformed from the raw state to the cooked state. This process is symbolic, representing the transformation from nature to culture. Based on the binary opposition between raw and cooked, the role of Canolis as guardians of sacred food can be explained. Canoli has legitimacy in the ritual of honouring Sang Hyang Sri. Her role gives her a high social status and respect. Canoli's role is to act as a ritual intermediary for the belief in Sang Hyang Sri. Ritual offerings to Sang Hyang Sri can maintain social balance, reinforce hierarchy, and strengthen community ties.

**Keywords:** Canoli, indigenous knowledge, ritual, rice, Sang Hyang Sri

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2025.4.03>

Received 15 April 2025, accepted 2 July 2025, printed and available online 10 December 2025

### **1. Introduction**

Food becomes essential in shaping human organisation and life when it takes shape in the implementation of ritual transformation (Van Daele 2018). The Sundanese people have indigenous knowledge so that rituals can be implemented safely, smoothly, and successfully. Indigenous knowledge that is interesting to study

is guarding the banquet so that the guests are satisfied, there are no obstacles. This requires the help of someone called Candoli or Canoli.

At a banquet, various types of food are served. Food is closely linked to culture. How food is processed, cooked, served, distributed, and consumed are examples of the cultural domain. Food in culture is related to beliefs, taboos, rules, and technology that grow and develop in a group of people, characterising a group and distinguishing it from other groups (Nurti 2017: 9).

Canoli is a woman who serves as the custodian of rice and other foods during rituals. She is responsible for storing, guarding, organising, and removing food from a storage place called the *goah* (Danadibrata 2006: 126, Rosidi 2000, Soeganda 1982: 164, Suganda 2013: 39). Canoli is also a woman with spiritual powers. She can represent and communicate with spirits or the supernatural, who she believes can fulfil the wishes of the event organisers (Anwar 2009: 431).

A Canoli must keep food so that it is always fresh and edible (not stale), *saeutik mahi, loba nyesa* (a little is enough, much is not left over), *payu idangan* (food is not wasted), and *loba nu nyecep dina parasman* (many people give money at buffets or receptions) to generate financial benefits (Anwar 2009: 431, Desiana and Ratmanto 2018: 13) ancestral spirit and Nyi Pohaci Sang Hyang Sri, she lead ritual in padaringan to beg the success of the wedding event. The definition of the success event in a traditional Sundanese wedding is when serving food in the marriage ceremony "saeutik mahi loba nyesa" (although small will be enough when a lot it will left).

The existence of Canoli is closely linked to rice cultivation in the animistic dynamic beliefs of the ancient Sundanese agrarian society (Rostiyati et al. 2024). One of these is to glorify the natural forces that provide fertility for crops and livestock, embodied by Nyi Pohaci Sang Hyang Sri, known as the goddess of rice and the goddess of fertility (Somantri and Trenasih 2006). At present, Canoli can be found in communities that still maintain the customs of the Sundanese ancestral heritage, especially among the indigenous peoples (Adimihardja 1992b: 4, Krisnawati et al. 2024: 3, Suganda 2013: 33). It is, therefore, interesting to study the practice of Canoli in the lives of indigenous people, who still practice it today.

According to oral stories, Nyi Pohaci's body caused the emergence of various crops, such as rice, *kawung* (oil palm), coconut, and tubers (Holil 2020: 1, Kalsum 2010: 88). The story of Nyi Pohaci Sang Hyang Sri in Sundanese society is an adaptation of Indian literature. In Indian mythology, goddess Sri is the wife of Lord Vishnu. In Indonesia, Sang Hyang Sri is known as the goddess of rice (Noorduyn and Teeuw 2009: 273). In the text Sri Ajnyana (Kropak 625) in stanzas 930–934 it says:

*... datang ka Sangkan Herang. Eta geusan Sanghiang Sri, ngawakan kapretiwian, buket dina kageresan, cicingan hamo surahan.*

[... arrived at Sangkan Herang. It is the abode of Sang Hyang Sri, incarnate on earth, trusted in matters of agriculture, steadfast, never angry].

The figure of Sang Hyang Sri is also recorded in Old Sundanese manuscripts written in the seventeenth century (pre-Islamic), namely *Sewaka Darma* (Kropak 408), *Kawih Paningkes* (Kropak 419), and *Sri Ajnyana* (Kropak 625). In the *Sewaka Darma* manuscript (Atja and Danasasmita 1981: 2-5), it is mentioned that above the *kahyangan* (the abode of the gods and goddesses) of the gods (Isora, Brahma, Mahadeva, Vishnu, Shiva), there is the *kahyangan* of Sari Dewata inhabited by Ni Dang Larang Nuwati, Wirumananggay, Pwah Langkawang Tidar, Pwah Sekar Dewata. On the upper level, there is the Bungawari Kahyangan. This is the residence of Pwah Sang Hyang Sri, Pwah Naga Nagini.

The peasant community's veneration and respect for Sang Hyang Sri is in keeping with her position at the highest point in the *kahyangan*. Not much information is available from pre-Islamic Sundanese manuscripts. However, in later manuscripts, the story of Sang Hyang Sri was developed as a *wawacan* (oral literature), namely *Wawacan Sulanjana*. This manuscript describes the origin of rice and other plants from the body of goddess Sri, who is called Nyi Pohaci in the text. According to the story, these plants, especially rice, were sent to Prabu Siliwangi in Pajajaran to be planted (Kalsum 2010: 88, Soeganda 1982: 171).

The role of Canoli or Candoli has not been widely studied. Several articles on indigenous villages do not discuss Canoli much. The discussion of Canoli tends to be news only, positioned as part of the structure of customary institutions that take care of rice supplies (Afif 2020: 47, Marwanti and Kusnadi 2013: 99, Sumartias et al. 2019: 10). Some contain writings on the definition, requirements, and duties of a Canoli in the community. Therefore, the Canoli is not exclusive to the indigenous peoples, but Sundanese society generally recognizes the Canoli profession. In general, research on Canoli typically tends to have a very dominant Islamic influence. There are several Islamic requirements, and prayers in Arabic are an absolute requirement. Salah, fasting, and the *Nurbuat* prayer (prayer for Allah's help and protection) are part of the ritual that prospective Canoli must perform (Anwar 2009: 432-433). This research is unique because it explicitly investigates the presence of Canoli in the lives of the indigenous people of Kasepuhan Cipinang.

This research explores how the structure of thought operates within the tradition of worshiping Sang Hyang Sri, the goddess of prosperity and fertility, through Canoli as the guardian of the sacred banquet. First, to explore how the symbolic meaning of the Canoli as guardian of the sacred banquet. Second, the social meaning of Canoli as the guardian of the sacred banquet is discussed. Third, what is the religious meaning of Canoli as the guardian of the sacred banquet.

## 2. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative paradigm. The subject is Canoli, a responsible woman who organises banquets and ritual activities in Kasepuhan Cipinang, a traditional village in Lebak Regency, Banten Province, Indonesia (see Figures 1).

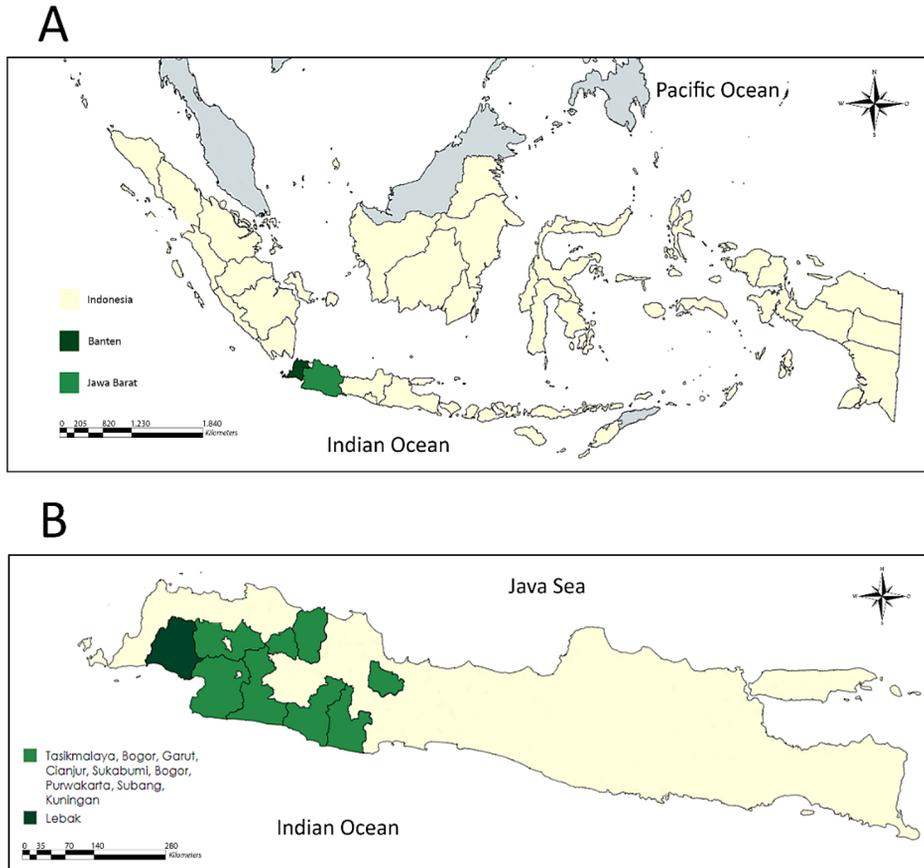


Figure 1. The map illustrates the distribution of the Canoli tradition in West Java and Banten Provinces: A. A map of the Indonesia archipelago with the dark green indicating the area of Banten Province and the light green colour indicating the area of West Java Province: B. A map of the distribution of the Canoli tradition in two districts: West Java Province (Regency of Tasikmalaya, Bogor, Garut, Cianjur, Sukabumi, Purwakarta, Subang, Kuningan) and Banten Province (Lebak Regency).

The data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and literature studies. Seven informants, who possess extensive knowledge of Canoli, were interviewed. The following four criteria guided the selection of informants: 1. Mastery of the customs of Kasepuhan Cipinang (one person as customary leader and one other customary elder). 2. Knowledge of Canoli (one person, a Canoli). 3. Owner of the kitchen in *imah gede* (house of the customary leader) (one person, the customary leader's wife). 4. Cook at the *imah gede* (3 person/cook vegetables and make cakes). Observations were also made regarding Canoli practices in implementing rituals in Kasepuhan Cipinang. This observation aimed to obtain data not revealed through interviews, to complement the data from the interviews. The observations included the equipment used by Canoli and the practices of Canoli in ritual activities. Literature studies were utilized to obtain secondary data related to Canoli.

The data were analysed using Levi-Strauss’s culinary triangle method to explain the cultural transformation carried out by humans through cooking (see Figure 2). Humans universally process their food of various types to have social and religious meaning, including symbolic meaning (Kartawinata 2024). Processing raw materials into cooked ones demonstrates how humans universally categorize their experiences (Levi-Strauss 1969). The culinary triangle, comprising three elements: raw, cooked, and rotten, represents the transition from nature to culture. The raw rice cooked into rice by Canoli in rituals in Kasepuhan Cipinang can be a communication system to convey cultural, religious, and social norms (Graf and Mescoli 2020). The role of Canoli in processing raw rice into cooked rice as part of a sacred ritual is associated with the myth of honouring Sang Hyang Sri. Levi-Strauss asserts that myths reflect the way people think. Myths reveal the fundamental structure of the human mind itself.

The research involved interviews with informants who volunteered information after explaining the study’s purpose. The researcher adhered to ethical considerations in accordance with the relevant code of ethics, namely the guidelines of the American Anthropological Association. Formal ethical approval was not sought as the study did not involve sensitive personal data or interventions that could pose a risk to the informants.

In accordance with the principles of research ethics, informed consent was obtained from the informants before participating in the interviews. Consequently, this research employs a structuralist approach to understanding the importance of food in sacred rituals while ensuring that the methodology adheres to academic ethical standards and respects the cultural norms of the Kasepuhan Cipinang indigenous people.

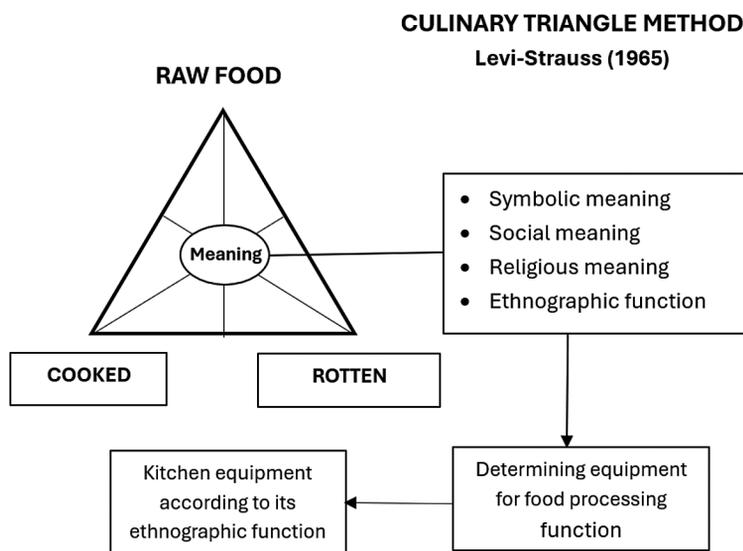


Figure 2. Culinary triangle method Levi-Strauss (adapted from Levi-Strauss 1966).

## 2. Symbolic meaning

Claude Lévi-Strauss states that food has symbolic meanings to convey meaning through symbols and metaphors (Murcott 2018). Lévi-Strauss introduced the culinary triangle concept, encompassing raw, cooked, and rotten. His model utilizes binary oppositions (such as raw/cooked and nature/culture) to explore how societies shape their worldview through food. (Robidoux and Stratas 2022). The model is utilised to analyse how diverse societies perceive and categorise food, thereby unveiling profound insights into their cultural and social structures (Graf and Mescoli 2020, Thircuir 2020). In the following discussion, the symbolic meanings of Canoli in ritual activities are examined to understand the thought structure of the supporting society. The binary opposition between raw and cooked rice in Sang Hyang Sri worship can be used to analyse the role of Canoli in ‘strengthening ritual activities’ and ‘protecting what is in the *goah* (the room where food is stored)’.

### 2.1. Strengthening ritual activities (negeran kaperluan)

The Kasepuhan Cipinang community has several significant ritual activities. Some of these activities are individual, and some are communal. Community members carry out personal activities in their residences, while communal activities are organised by the customary chief in his house, namely in *imah gede*. Each ritual activity culminated in a banquet, the scale of which was contingent on the activity’s nature.

Canoli is a mandatory component of all ritual activities organised by the traditional leader at *imah gede*. However, not every ritual activity in Kasepuhan Cipinang involves Canoli. Ritual activities that involve Canoli are generally attended by many people whose purpose is for the common interest of the Kasepuhan Cipinang community. If there is no Canoli present at these ritual activities, it is believed that bad things will happen, such as spoiled food and insufficient food. Therefore, the presence of Canoli is a symbol of *negeran kaperluan* or strengthening ritual activities.

The word ‘*negeran*’ denotes the process of fortifying the ritual activities organised by the customary chief. The strengthening is done so that the ritual activities are not disturbed by various supernatural forces, especially those related to banquets. These supernatural forces are not derived from the spirits of ancestors but instead emanated from supernatural beings. The supernatural forces can be intentionally sent to disrupt the smooth running of the activities. Supernatural beings disturbed by the activity may also do this. The disturbance can affect the people involved in the kitchen, the ingredients used to make the food and drink, the process of processing the food and beverages, including the finished food and drink. Canoli is there to repel or prevent supernatural forces that might disrupt the event.

In many cultures, women are often regarded as possessing supernatural powers during ritual activities. For instance, in the rituals of the Kangra Valley in Himachal Pradesh, northern India, women are frequently believed to be possessed by goddesses, endowing them with supernatural abilities. They carry out healing rituals and create supportive communities among women (Erndl 2007). In Gwadar, Balochistan,

women perform healing rituals incorporating supernatural beliefs such as jinn and magic. Frequently led by female healers, these rituals utilise chanting, trance, and herbal medicine to diagnose and treat illnesses (Sultana 2013).

Canoli possesses the power to prevent supernatural forces from two sources: first, from his ancestral lineage, and second, from the customary chief who grant it. It gives the Canoli authority, as evidenced by the transfer of incense and *panglay*, which have been subject to traditional head prayers. However, the power of Canoli diminishes during the menstrual cycle. Consequently, she will be replaced by her assistant in this situation.

## 2.2. Guarding what is in the Goah (netepkeun nu in goah)

*Netepkeun* means ‘guarding’, while *goah* is a relatively small room in the house used to store rice in Sundanese society. The architectural configuration of Sundanese house divides the house into three parts: the front for male members, the central for both genders, and the rear section for female members. The women’s section has a special room measuring about 2 x 2 meters called *goah*, a small room for storing rice. The *goah* is close to the kitchen and the women’s area. Therefore, men are strictly prohibited from entering the area, except for those who are there to take food.

A specific treatment is reserved for *goah* in everyday life, notably during ritual activities. If one is unaware that these rules must be obeyed and applied, it often leads to irrational phenomena. For example, there may be an abundant rice supply, but food shortages occur. This becomes a stain on the person performing the ritual. Therefore, it is necessary to present Canoli, who has exceptional skill in handling the *goah* and its contents under customary rules (Soeganda 1982: 164).

*Goah* gets special treatment because it is believed to be the residence of Sang Hyang Sri. Goddess Sri is the sacred spirit in the religious life of the Kasepuhan Cipinang community. Rice is stored in the *goah* and surrounded by offerings to Sang Hyang Sri. The offerings are made by women only (Muanas 1998: 48, Wessing 1978: 57). Various traditional utensils for cooking rice are also kept in the site. The Canoli guard the presence of Sang Hyang Sri during ritual activities according to custom. The Canoli must not leave the *goah*. If the Canoli is forced to leave the *goah* to pray or to go to the toilet, his assistant will take care of the *goah* for the time being.

The small room used for storing rice in ritual traditions is found in various cultures. In Toraja, the small rice store is called Alang, which is also used as a ceremonial site (Lullulangi and Sampebua 2017). This room is designed to protect the rice, an integral part of cultural and spiritual practices. This storage of rice is also linked to cultural and religious practices that believe in the importance of rice in social and spiritual life.

### 3. Social meaning

Claude Lévi-Strauss made a significant contribution to understanding the social function of food. The concept of the culinary triangle offers a framework for how rituals connect to social structures and myths (Levi-Strauss 1969). Cooking rice is not only a culinary activity but also reflects the thought structure of society. Canoli's role in cooking is a symbolic system. It reflects, shapes, and maintains social hierarchies within her community.

The ritual of rice cooking in Kasepuhan Cipinang shows a social structure, which is an organised pattern, that includes norms, social roles, and interaction systems. The customary chief and other traditional leaders live in Kasepuhan. They are all called the *banda kolot*. The *banda kolot* is responsible for maintaining Kasepuhan customs. The position is hereditary rather than elected and is determined by the Kasepuhan community (Marwanti and Kusnadi 2013: 98-99, Suganda 2013: 37-39).

The *banda kolot* comprises the following roles: *olot* (customary chief), *juru basa* (mediator between residents or guests and the customary chief), *amil* (has the expertise to lead prayers in the implementation of rituals), *paraji* (helps with pregnant women and babies), *bengkong* (helps with circumcision), *canoli* (helps with ritual meals), *pamoro* (helps provide animals for ritual purposes), construction worker, religious sections, and government sections. The customary chief, *olot*, is assisted by all the other members of the *banda kolot*. One such member is Canoli, as it is known in Kasepuhan Cipinang. The Canoli is always present and is responsible for the banquet and rituals performed by *imah gede* (the traditional leader's house).

The ritual demonstrates a social hierarchy within the realm of culinary practices. Social hierarchy in cooking rituals is deeply rooted in diverse cultural and social contexts. In some traditions, women occupy a position of superiority in cooking rituals. This phenomenon is not exclusive to any specific nation or ethnic group but is widespread across various cultural and social contexts. In Bali, for instance, the Dewa Yadnya<sup>1</sup> and Pitra Yadnya<sup>2</sup> rituals designate women to present the sacred offerings to the gods and ancestors. They cook food such as *tumpeng*<sup>3</sup>, *lawar*<sup>4</sup>, dan satay<sup>5</sup>. Symbolise the cultural significance of food in these traditions (Kartika 2021).

<sup>1</sup> Dewa Yadnya is a ceremony addressed to the gods as a tribute and gratitude for the grace given to humans. One example of a Dewa Yadnya ceremony is *piodalan*, a temple anniversary ceremony.

<sup>2</sup> Pitra Yadnya is a ceremony addressed to ancestors as a tribute to the deceased's spirit. One well-known example of a Pitra Yadnya ceremony is *ngaben*, the ceremony of burning a corpse so that the spirit reaches the pure realm.

<sup>3</sup> *Tumpeng* is a traditional Indonesian dish popular in Java and Bali. The rice is shaped like a cone and is prepared using yellow or white rice. Various side dishes are arranged around the rice, including fried chicken, eggs, tempeh, *perkedel* (mashed potato fritters), sambal, and vegetables. *Tumpeng* is typically served at various traditional occasions, such as thanksgiving and celebrations.

<sup>4</sup> *Lawar* is a traditional Balinese dish made from vegetables, grated coconut, spices, and minced meat such as chicken, pork, or duck. It also uses fresh animal blood to give it a distinctive colour and flavour.

<sup>5</sup> Satay, a specialty of Indonesia, consists of thinly sliced meat threaded onto small sticks or bamboo skewers. This dish can include a variety of meats, such as chicken, goat, beef, rabbit, and buffalo, and is prepared by grilling over hot coals.

In the Sundanese cultural tradition, Canoli, the female guardian of food, has the highest power and legitimacy in honouring Sang Hyang Sri.

Being a Canoli is a duty from the ancestors that must be obeyed. Canoli must fulfil several customary requirements. Only women can become Canoli. She must have a Canoli lineage from her ancestors. If these rules are broken, it is believed that destructive events will happen to the woman, such as illness and other harmful events. All women descended from Canoli ancestors have the potential to become Canoli. They are adult women or already married. However, if her husband does not follow the customs of Kasepuhan Cipinang or follows another Kasepuhan, the opportunity to become a Canoli is lost. In addition, women who follow their husbands outside the Kasepuhan Cipinang area cannot become Canoli.

There is only one Canoli in Kasepuhan Cipinang. Then, which female descendant of Canoli will occupy the position? The most important person who will become a Canoli is a direct descendant. When a Canoli has one daughter, she will be the successor. The successor will go to her sister if the daughter is not old enough.

Another requirement is the ability to master *urasan luar* and *urasan jero*. *Urasan luar* refers to practices related to kitchen affairs. The most important aspect is the practice of cooking rice for ritual. *Urasan jero* is the mastery of prayers, mantras, and spiritual practices. Three social environments are used to hone the *urasan luar* and *urasan jero* skills: family environment, traditional gatherings, and ritual implementation.

The first environment is the family environment of the Canoli descendants. Prospective Canoli can learn from their mothers or sisters currently occupying the Canoli position. They all have the same opportunity to learn about *urasan luar* and *urasan jero*. The inheritance of knowledge becomes part of their daily lives. The Canoli will know the right candidate to replace her from this process.

The second environment is that of traditional gatherings. The customary chief and other elders are responsible for maintaining the continuity of customs. They must preserve and oversee the transmission of Cannoli knowledge to the next generation. The customary chief provides a special time to teach knowledge related to customs. Some of these are related to agriculture, hunting, and childbirth, and meetings were also held to discuss the inheritance of knowledge about Canoli. If the meeting is related to Canoli, those attending are people associated with Canoli issues, the Canoli themselves, Canoli candidates, customary chief, and another traditional leader. The meeting discusses *urasan luar* and *urasan jero*. The Canoli candidates are usually asked to practice their knowledge of both matters in front of the customary chief and other elders. If there are any shortcomings, they will be corrected by the Canoli, the customary chief, and other customary stakeholders.

The third environment is the ritual activities the customary chief in *imah gede* carries out. Many traditional rituals require a Canoli to carry out their duties. Rituals related to the circle of human life, such as birth, circumcision, marriage, pregnancy, agricultural activities, and religious ceremonies. The traditional leader performs all these rituals at *imah gede*. On this occasion, prospective Canoli can learn about their various activities. They also get involved and help the Canoli if needed. This experience is essential to broaden their knowledge as Canoli candidates.

Through these three processes, only one Canoli candidate is selected. The Canoli, the customary chief, and other customary stakeholders make the selection. This Canoli candidate is expected to be able to replace the Canoli who has stopped carrying out their duties. The customary chief will assign the new Canoli. Prospective Canoli will be called to the traditional leader's house to ask for their willingness to become Canoli. There is rarely a Canoli candidate who refuses the assignment. Meanwhile, other Canoli candidates who are not chosen will become Canoli assistants. The number of Canoli assistants is around 4–5 who usually help the Canoli when carrying out their duties.

#### 4. Religious meaning

Lévi-Strauss' culinary triangle can help explain how food in ritual can be a medium of spiritual communication between humans and the divine world. Food is seen as a medium for the divine presence in human nature (Negley 2014). For the indigenous people of Kasepuhan Cipinang, food offerings in ritual activities have religious significance. In some ritual practices, the food of different tribes and nations shows the same meaning. Religious meaning is also found in the culture of food offerings and ritual activities of the Chinese community. This ritual is a form of local wisdom in the religious system, and as a medium of communication with God and the ancestors (Kepirianto et al. 2021). Rice has also been honoured, and rituals associated with sowing rice seeds, harvesting, and cooking rice have been described in ancient Indian literature (Sheshadri 2015). This suggests a universal sense of food symbolism in ritual activities.

The religious meaning of Canoli in the ritual activities conducted by the customary chief is closely related to spiritual life. The glorification of Sang Hyang Sri can be observed at every stage of her activities, which always begins with a ceremony and the recitation of mantras (Adimihardja 1992a, Heryana 2012). They adhere to Islam but have a belief in supernatural entities, such as supernatural beings and supernatural forces. One of these sacred forces is the figure of Nyi Pohaci Sang Hyang Asri, the Goddess of Rice and the Goddess of Fertility. The existence of Canoli is closely related to the figure of Nyi Pohaci Sang Hyang Sri (Asri) or Goddess Sri or Nyi Dangdayang Tresnawati, the ruler of rice. This belief represents an agrarian Sundanese society that still firmly holds old customs related to farming procedures.

In many cultures, raw rice is often used in rituals to symbolize the blessings of nature. This is in line with Lévi-Strauss's culinary triangle, where 'raw' represents the unprocessed and pure state of food, which is often used in religious and cultural rituals to signify divine blessings and natural purity (Lynch 2007). In Japan, sushi<sup>6</sup> and sashimi<sup>7</sup> are not only part of the culinary scene but are also used in Shinto religious ceremonies to honour the gods of nature (Grapard 2021). In Korea, dishes such as *yukhoe* (raw beef) are served in Jesa ancestral rituals as a symbol of respect for family spirits (Lee et al. 2018). In the ritual activities of Kasepuhan Cipinang,

<sup>6</sup> A Japanese specialty consisting of rice combined with fish, seafood, eggs and vegetables.

<sup>7</sup> A Japanese dish of thinly sliced fresh fish or other seafood served without rice.

rice as a raw material is a symbol directly related to honouring Sang Hyang Sri as the goddess of prosperity and fertility.

Respect for Sang Hyang Sri can be seen in treating rice as a goddess of heaven. For example, the name of the granary (*lumbung*) is Pohaci Gedong Manik. In Sundanese, ‘*gedong*’ means a large, luxurious house, while ‘*manik*’ means diamond. So, Gedong Manik is a large, elegant house containing diamonds or valuables. When going to Gedong Manik, one must be respectful and polite. Hold your breath, put your right foot and hand first in every step, and be courteous when taking rice. Note that the designation ‘right’ in the Sundanese-Islamic belief system indicates goodness and blessing. Furthermore, taking the paddy should be considered *ngagugahkeun*, ‘waking up’. In contrast, pounding the paddy should be interpreted as *meuseulan*, a massage to the Goddess who has just woken up from sleep (6). When Dewi Sri rests and relaxes, the art of Tarawangsa or Jentreng is provided as ‘entertainment’ to Dewi Sri (Heryana 2012: 161, Sumartias et al. 2019: 12). Paddy that is pounded into rice is stored in the *goah*.

The rules the Canoli must implement during the ritual are described in the following explanation. One day before the event begins, specifically in the afternoon, a *papasrahan* procession, ‘the handing over of something’, is conducted from the customary chief to the Canoli. *Papasrahan* refers to the customary chief’s assignment to the Canoli to attend ritual activities. The symbol of this assignment is the handover of a set of equipment that will be used by the Canoli while carrying out their duties.

Canoli is requested to meet with the customary chief in the afternoon. The customary chief has prepared a set of equipment for Canoli, consisting of items for the betel chewing ceremony, such as betel leaves, lime, gambier, and tobacco. In addition, the chief has also prepared incense (*Styrax benzoin*) and *panglay* (*Zingiber cassumunar*). The customary chief has blessed all these items. The customary chief hands over the equipment and asks Canoli to accept the assignment. *Papasrahan* signifies that the customary chief entrusts an essential matter to ritual activities, specifically kitchen affairs or dining. After the ceremony, Canoli can immediately perform her duties at the *imah gede* the following day.

On the day of the ritual activity, Canoli was prepared early in the morning at his home. She must cleanse herself of all sorts of impurities. She must be in a state of purity, having performed wudu. Her leading clothing is wearing a *samping* (long cloth) for the lower part and a *karembong bodas* (shawl made of white cloth) on the upper part. *The karembong bodas* the Canoli wears is a sign that she is on duty. The supplies provided to Canoli by the customary chief were very important. Incense and *panglay* were placed at the end of the white shawl by tying them. Meanwhile, other supplies were kept neatly in a special container. After all preparations were complete, he immediately headed to the *imah gede*.

Upon arriving at the home of the customary chief, Canoli will receive offerings prepared by the chief’s wife. These offerings include *rurujakan* (sour salad, banana salad, and coconut salad), bitter coffee, and fruits. The offerings are placed on a tray. After receiving the tray of offerings, Canoli proceeds to the *goah*. The offerings

are a tribute to Sang Hyang Sri. Then, incense and *panglay* are removed from the karembong's end. She will perform the ritual of blowing the *panglay* and burning the incense. A portion of the *panglay* is chewed and then blown out. This is done to ward off various disturbances from supernatural forces. Meanwhile, a piece of incense is burned in a special place, allowing it to release smoke and the aroma of incense. This serves as an expression of a request for the kitchen affairs or dining arrangements to remain undisturbed in any form.

The next procession is *nganyaran sangu*, which means cooking rice for ritual activities. Canoli must first cook rice. Cooking rice must also be done traditionally using traditional equipment (see Figure 3). These pieces of equipment include *dulang*, *seeng*, *boboko*, *aseupan*, *hihid*, *cukil entik* and *hawu*. This was done concerning Sang Hyang Sri.

Several stages of preparing rice: First, take the rice from the container after the Fajr prayer. The rice used comes from paddy that has been pounded using a mortar. The rice must be taken using a tool made from coconut shells called *entik*. Those who take rice must be Canoli themselves. Second, the rice is placed in a basket of woven bamboo called *boboko*. Then, the rice is washed until it is clean in that basket. Third, the rice is cooked with water until it becomes half-cooked in a pot on *hawu* or traditional fire stove. Fourth, the half-cooked rice is placed into a conical woven bamboo container called *aseupan*. Next, the half-cooked rice is steamed until fully cooked in a *seeng* container. Fifth, the cooked rice is placed in a wooden basket called *dulang*. The rice is stirred using a flat piece of wood called *cukil* to cool it down. After that, the rice is stored in *boboko*.

Canoli must remain silent and not speak to anyone during the ceremony. However, she recited special prayers and mantras during the procession. After cooking the first rice, the Canoli's task is to sit in the *goah*. The Canoli assistant can do the subsequent rice-making. Meanwhile, Polmak was entrusted with preparing other dishes that accompanied the rice. She is responsible for processing native chicken, goldfish, goat meat, and other vegetables. As for making typical Kasepuhan Cipinang cakes, they were handed over to a woman called *para*.

Cooked food symbolises culture and civilisation, reflecting human intervention and the transformation of nature through cultural practices (Robidoux and Stratas 2022). The food cooked by Canoli, when associated with the culinary triangle, goes through a 'raw' process (raw rice and water as the essential ingredients), then is transformed into 'cooked' through the cooking process, which is a symbol of transformation from the profane to the sacred (Negley 2014). The cooking process is a cultural act that is a symbol that connects humans to a higher order. This spiritual connection is also reflected in the various rituals and cultural practices surrounding the preparation and consumption of food (Setiarto and Herlina 2024) which are closely related to religious practices. Among these, the kupatan tradition, a significant Muslim custom, symbolizes gratitude and is prominently observed during major Islamic celebrations, such as Eid Al-Fitr. Ketupat is a typical culinary heritage of this tradition. It is a rice-based dish wrapped in diamond-shaped of young coconut leaves (janur).

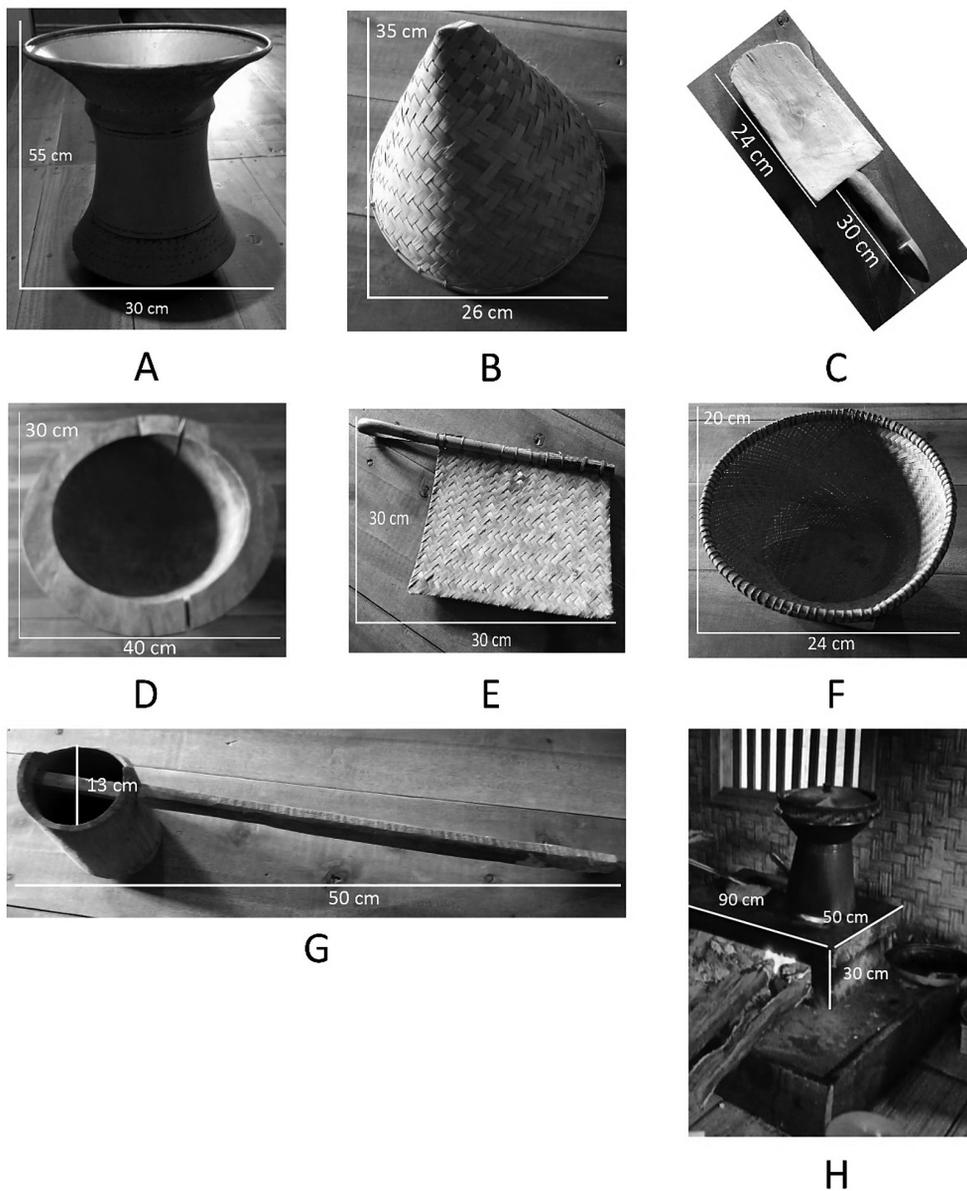


Figure 3. Some of the traditional equipment used by Canoli to cook sangu congcolt rice: A: Seeng, B: Aseupan, C: Cukil, D: Dulang, E: Hihid, F: Boboko, G: Entik, H: Hawu. Source: authors.

Various rituals and cultural practices in ritual activities in Kasepuhan Cipinang continue until the last day. The Canoli is assisted by *polmak* and *para* arrange food, which will be given to traditional leaders, *sabah* (parents or surrogate parents), *paraji*, *amil*, and government officials. The *sisihan* is filled with a rice basket, with rice accompaniment and cakes in the winnowing basket. One winnowing basket

*sisihan* is called *rampadan*, specifically handed over by Canoli to the customary chief. The *rampadan* was handed over by the Canoli as a symbol that the Canoli had finished carrying out his duties. Canoli will receive *parawanten* (a basket containing rice, coconut, kitchen spices, a bunch of golden bananas, cakes, and money) from the wife of the traditional leader.

Especially in one of the most prominent ritual activities in Kasepuhan Cipinang, namely the traditional ceremony of Seren Taun, Canoli will make *sangu congcot* or *sangu rasul* (cone-shaped rice). *Sangu congcot* will be served at the closing of the Seren Tahun's ritual (see Figure 4). Before cooking *sangu congcot*, Canoli must bathe, wash her hair using rice straw, and have wudu in a holy condition. While cooking *sangu congcot* rice, the Canoli must not eat or drink and must work in a closed area before the stove. *Sangu congcot* is made of white rice shaped like a cone, two boiled eggs, native chicken *bakakak* (a dish of chicken shaped like a person sitting cross-legged), and salt. The process lasts for approximately one to two hours. After the *sangu congcot* is finished, it is handed over to the customary chief.

The ritual activity of offering to Sang Hyang Sri ends with the hope of blessings and prosperity. The myth of Sang Hyang Sri is a manifestation of the universality of the structure of the human mind through binary oppositions that seek to create social harmony (Levi-Strauss 1969, Descola 2009) that for many it has come to embody one of the main characteristics of his way of thinking. It is also well known that Lévi-Strauss attributes to Rousseau the merit of having, in practice, founded the field of ethnology by inaugurating, in *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundation of Inequality*, a strand of thinking on the possible links between nature and culture (Lévi-Strauss 1978b: 35). The Kasepuhan Cipinang rituals can strengthen social bonds and foster a sense of community. Involving surrounding communities with diverse religious backgrounds and various community groups can encourage tolerance, solidarity, and social stability, which are crucial for maintaining social harmony. Offering rituals to Sang Hyang Sri can serve as a means of maintaining social balance, reinforcing hierarchy, and strengthening community bonds.

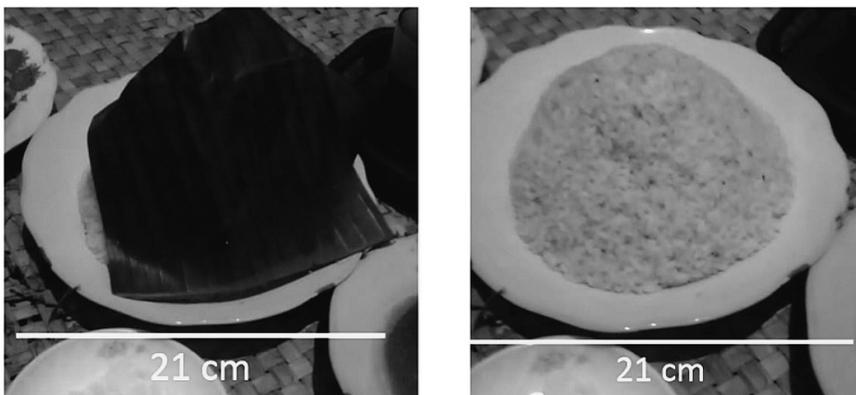


Figure 4. *Sangu congcot*, rice dish prepared by Canoli in traditional rituals in Kasepuhan Cipinang.

Source: authors.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the above description, several ethnographic functions of Canoli in the ritual activities of the customary chief of the Kasepuhan Cipinang can be inferred. First, the cooking ritual performed by Canoli as the guardian of the sacred banquet shows that the thought structure of the supporting community operates in a binary opposition pattern of raw/cooked, nature/culture. Based on the binary opposition, raw and cooked give rise to the roles and duties of Canolis as guardians of sacred food. Second, the role of Canolis as guardians of the sacred banquet symbolises a particular social status. Canoli have power and legitimacy in the tradition of honouring Sang Hyang Sri. Canoli is included in the community's social structure, as well as the structure of the Kasepuhan customary institution. Canoli is an integral part of the *banda kolot*, a group of traditional stakeholders who are part of the structure of the Kasepuhan customary institution. Canoli occupies the status of a respected and important person in the social structure of the Kasepuhan Cipinang community. Third, Canoli is a mediator of rituals and beliefs. Every ritual activity carried out by the customary chief usually ends with a banquet. Of the many types of food served in the ritual, there is one food that has an essential meaning because it is related to the beliefs of the people of Kasepuhan Cipinang. The food is rice, a staple derived from rice from the rice plant (*Oryza sativa* or *Oryza glaberrima*). Rice is believed to symbolise Sang Hyang Sri, a holy spirit respected by the people of Kasepuhan Cipinang. Not just anyone is allowed to cook rice (especially cooking the first rice) because it is the same as respecting Sang Hyang Sri with all her procedures that can only be done by Canoli. Therefore, the ethnographic function of Canoli in ritual activities is to act as a ritual mediator for the belief in Sang Hyang Sri, which the people of Kasepuhan Cipinang believe. Ritual offerings to Sang Hyang Sri can maintain social balance, reinforce hierarchy, and strengthen the bonds of the Cipinang indigenous people and its surroundings.

**Availability of data and materials.** All data and materials in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Competing interests.** All authors declared that have no competing interests arising from this study.

## Acknowledgements

The authors thank the Cultural Heritage Research Group, Research Centre for Society and Culture, National Research and Innovation Agency, for providing material support and input to improve this article. We also thank the Chief of Kasepuhan Cipinang for giving us the opportunity to conduct interviews and observations.

## Addresses:

Ria Andayani Somantri

Research Centre for Society and Culture  
National Research and Innovation Agency  
12710, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: riaanday1@gmail.com

Agus Heryana

Research Centre for Manuscripts, Literature, and Oral Traditions  
National Research and Innovation Agency  
12710, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: aheryana41@gmail.com

Mikka Wildha Nurrochsyam (corresponding author)

Research Centre for Society and Culture  
National Research and Innovation Agency  
12710, Jakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: mikk001@brin.go.id

Ria Intani Tresnasih

Research Centre for Environmental Archaeology, Maritime Archaeology  
and Cultural Sustainability  
National Research and Innovation Agency  
12710, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: ria001@brin.go.id

Ani Rostiyati

Research Centre for Environmental Archaeology, Maritime Archaeology  
and Cultural Sustainability  
National Research and Innovation Agency  
Republic of Indonesia  
12710, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: anir001@bringo.id

## Reference

- Adimihardja, Kusnaka (1992) *Kasepuhan yang tumbuh di atas yang luruh*. [Kasepuhan that grows upon that which has fallen.] Bandung: Tarsito.
- Afif, Syarif (2020) “Kebudayaan Kampung Adat Banceuy Desa Sanca Kecamatan Ciater Kabupaten Subang”. [Culture of Banceuy traditional village, Sanca Village, Ciater District, Subang Regency.] *Al-Tsaqâfa: Jurnal Ilmiah Peradaban Islam* 17, 1, 43–57. Available online at <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/jat/article/view/9004>. Accessed on 23.09.2025.
- Somantri, Ria Andayani and Rini Intari Trenasih (2006) *Upacara tradisional di Kampung Urug*. [Traditional ceremony in Urug Village.] Bogor: Disbudpar Kabupaten Bogor.
- Anwar, Ety N. (2009) “Peran Candoli dalam perhelatan (suatu fenomena keyakinan orang Sunda)”. [The role of Candoli in the event (a phenomenon of Sundanese belief).] In *Diversity, Continuity, and Changes. Prosiding International Conference on Indonesian Studies*, 425–434. Available online at [https://icssis.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2729072009\\_39.pdf](https://icssis.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2729072009_39.pdf). Accessed on 23.09.2025.
- Atja and Saleh Danasasmita (1981) *Sanghyang Siksakanda ng Karesian*. [The Holy Siksakanda of Karesian.] Bandung: Proyek Pengembangan permuseuman Jawa Barat.
- Danadibrata, R. A. (2006) *Kamus Basa Sunda*. [Sundanese dictionary.] Bandung: Kiblat Buku Utama.
- Descola, Philippe (2009) “The two natures of Lévi-Strauss”. In B. Wiseman, ed. *The Cambridge companion to Lévi-Strauss*, 103–117. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846301.006>
- Desiana, Fauziah Ismi and Teguh Ratmanto (2018) “Komunikasi transendental Candoli dalam ritual adat Sunda (studi etnografi komunikasi pada komunikasi transendental Candoli dalam ritual adat Sunda di kota Bandung)”. [Transcendental communication of Candoli in Sundanese traditional rituals (ethnographic study of communication on transcendental communication of Candoli in Sundanese traditional rituals in Bandung City).] *Prosiding Hubungan Masyarakat* 4, 1, 12–17. Available online [https://www.academia.edu/65131707/Komunikasi\\_Transendental\\_Candoli\\_dalam\\_Ritual\\_Adat\\_Sunda](https://www.academia.edu/65131707/Komunikasi_Transendental_Candoli_dalam_Ritual_Adat_Sunda). Accessed on 23.09.2025.
- Erndl, Kathleen M. (2007) “The play of the mother: possession and power in Hindu women’s goddess rituals”. In T. Pintchman, ed. *Women’s lives, women’s rituals in the Hindu tradition*, 149–158. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195177060.003.0009>
- Graf, Karin and Elisa Mescoli (2020) “Special issue introduction: from nature to culture? Lévi-Strauss’ legacy and the study of contemporary foodways”. *Food, Culture and Society* 23, 4, 465–471. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2020.1773692>
- Grapard, Allan G. (2021) “Japanese food offerings”. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 48, 1, 165–185. <https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.48.1.2021.165-185>
- Heryana, Agus (2012) “Mitologi perempuan Sunda”. [Sundanese women’s mythology.] *Patanjala* 4, 2, 156–169.
- Holil, Munawar (2020) “Myths of Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Sri on Sundanese ethnic: efforts to reconstruct the values of environmental conservation”. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 469, 012054, 1–6. DOI: <https://doi.org/doi:10.1088/1755-1315/469/1/012054>
- Kalsum (2010) “Kearifan lokal dalam Wawacan Sulanjana: tradisi menghormati padi pada masyarakat Sunda di Jawa Barat, Indonesia”. [Local wisdom in Wawacan Sulanjana: tradition of respecting

- rice in Sundanese society in West Java, Indonesia.] *Sosiohumanika* 3, 1, 73–94. Available online at [http://www.sosiohumanika-jpssk.com/sh\\_files/File/3.Kalsum.sosio.may.2010.pdf](http://www.sosiohumanika-jpssk.com/sh_files/File/3.Kalsum.sosio.may.2010.pdf). Available online at 23.09.2025.
- Kartika, Ni Gusti Ayu (2021) “Fungsi dan peranan perempuan Hindu dalam pelaksanaan yadnya di Bali”. [The function and role of Hindu women in carrying out *yadnya* in Bali.] *Pangkaja: Jurnal Agama Hindu* 24, 2, 194. Available online at <http://ojs.uhnsugriwa.ac.id/index.php/PJAH/article/view/2903>. Accessed on 05.10.2025.
- Kepirianto, Catur, Siti Mariam, and Vanessa Febe Purnomo (2021) “Food offering culture at Chinese rituals in Semarang Chinatown coastal community”. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 317, 01028. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202131701028>
- Krisnawati, Ekaning, Eva Tuckyta Sari Sujatna, Rosaria Mita Amalia, Ypsi Soeria Somantri, and Asno Pamungkas (2024) “The farming ritual and the rice metaphor: how people of Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi worship rice”. *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 11, 1, 2338329. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2338329>
- Lee, Chang Hwan, Yong Kim, Yong Suk Kim, and Young Yun (2018) “Ancestral ritual food of Korean *jongka*: Historical changes of the table setting”. *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 5, 2, 121–132. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jef.2018.06.001>
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1969) *The raw and the cooked*. Transl. by Doreen Weightman. (Introduction to a science of mythology, 1.) New York: Harper & Row. (French original, 1964.)
- Lullulangi, Maryam and Onesimus Sampebua (2017) “Tongkonan in Kalimbuang Bori and its built environment in the North Toraja regency of South Sulawesi, Indonesia”. *Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences* 12, Special Issue 9, 8673–8678. Available online at [https://eprints.unm.ac.id/16439/14/Artikel Jurnal Internasional Bereputasi - Tongkonan in Kalimbuang Bori and its Built....pdf](https://eprints.unm.ac.id/16439/14/Artikel%20Jurnal%20Internasional%20Bereputasi%20-%20Tongkonan%20in%20Kalimbuang%20Bori%20and%20its%20Built....pdf). Accessed on 23.09.2025.
- Lynch, Kathryn L. (2007) “From tavern to pie shop: the raw, the cooked, and the rotten in fragment 1 of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*”. *Exemplaria* 19, 1, 117–138. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1179/175330707X203264>
- Marwanti, Tri Mulyani and Nandang Kusrandi (2013) “Partisipasi Perempuan Dalam Upacara Adat ‘Seren Taun’ (Studi kasus pada masyarakat Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi Desa Sirna Resmi, Kecamatan Cisolok, Kabupaten Sukabumi Provinsi Jawa Barat)”. [Women’s participation in the ‘Seren Taun’ traditional ceremony (a case study in the Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi Community, Sirna Resmi Village, Cisolok District, Sukabumi Regency, West Java Province)] *PEKSOS: Jurnal Ilmiah Pekerjaan Sosial* 12, 2. Available online at <https://jurnal.poltekesos.ac.id/index.php/peksos/article/view/24>. Accessed on 23.09.2025.
- Muanas, Dadang (1998) *Arsitektur tradisional Daerah Jawa Barat*. [Traditional architecture of West Java.] R. Abu, ed. Bandung: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Jawa Barat.
- Murcott, Anne (2018) “Studying food choice in its social and cultural contexts: approaches from a social anthropological perspective”. In Anne Murcott, ed. *The Nation’s Diet: the social science of food choice*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Negley, Susan C. (2014) “The *coniunctio gastronomique*: reflections on the process of individuation in culinary terms”. *Psychological Perspectives* 57, 4, 384–402. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0332925.2014.962938>
- Noorduyn, J. and A. Teeuw (2009) *Tiga pesona Sunda kuno*. [Three charms of ancient Sunda.] Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya.

- Nurti, Yevita (2017) “Kajian makanan dalam perspektif antropologi”. [Food studies in anthropological perspective.] *Jurnal Antropologi: Isu-Isu Sosial Budaya* 19, 1, 1–10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25077/jantro.v19.n1.p1-10.2017>
- Robidoux, Michael A. and Alex Stratias (2022) “The Inuit’s offer to Canada’s Black Governor General: food, power, and the deconstruction of Lévi-Strauss’ ‘Culinary Triangle’”. *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 60, 21–39. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3138/ijcs.60.x.21>
- Rosidi, Ajip (2000) *Ensiklopedi Sunda*. [Sundanese encyclopedia.] Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya.
- Rostiyati, Ayi, Kholis Sofianto, Adeng, Heri Erwantoro, Rini Andayani, and Hilda Tismara (2024) “Interpreting Sundanese ritual practices at the *mikul lodong* ceremony in Cipatat, West Bandung, Indonesia”. *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, 1, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2334091>
- Setiarto, Raden Haryo Bimo and Vika Tresnadiana Herlina (2024) “Ketupat: a culinary heritage of Indonesia in *Eid Al-Fitr* tradition”. *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 11, 45. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-024-00259-x>
- Sheshadri, K. G. (2015) “Some rice cooking rituals as gleaned from ancient Indian literature and culture”. *Man in India* 95, 3, 547–551. Available online at [https://serialsjournals.com/abstract/58479\\_14.pdf](https://serialsjournals.com/abstract/58479_14.pdf). Accessed on 23.09.2025.
- Soeganda, R. Akip Prawira (1982) *Upacara adat di Pasundan*. [Traditional Ceremonies in Pasundan.] Bandung: Sumur Bandung.
- Suganda, Ki Ukis (2013) “Komunitas masyarakat adat Kasepuhan Ciptagelar”. [Kasepuhan Ciptagelar indigenous community.] In Emilianus Ola Kleden, Yuyun Indradi, and Liz Chidley, eds. *Hutan untuk masa depan: pengelolaan hutan adat di tengah arus perubahan dunia*. [Forests for the future: managing indigenous forests in a changing world.] Jakarta: Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara; Greenside Farmhouse, Hallbankgate, Cumbria: Down to Earth. Available online at <https://www.downtoearth-indonesia.org/sites/downtoearth-indonesia.org/files/R-Pertama.pdf>. Accessed on 23.09.2025. (English ed., 2009.)
- Sultana, Farhana (2013) “Ethnicity and healing rituals in Gwadar, Balochistan, Pakistan”. *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 4,2, 169–185. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2013.831020>
- Sumartias, Suwandi, Andi Alimuddin, Priyo Subekti, Iriana Bakti, Aat Ruchiat Nugraha, Susie Perbawasari, and Rosnandar Romli (2019) “Tarawangsa as a traditional communication media in the information dissemination based on local wisdom”. *ibrary Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, no. 3715. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/3715>. Accessed on 11.10.2025.
- Thircuir, Solenn (2020) “From culture to nature? The raw food diet and the ideal of natural eating”. *Food, Culture and Society* 23, 4, 506–522. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2020.1773672>
- Wessing, Robert (1978) *Cosmology and social behavior in a west Javanese settlement*. (Papers in International Studies Southeast Asia Series, 47.) Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Van Daele, Wim (2018) “Food as the Holographic Condensation of Life in Sri Lankan Rituals”. *Ethnos. Journal of Anthropology* 83, 4, 645–664. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2017.1314309>