

# The Meaning of Philosophy of *Sego Berkat*: an Anthropological Linguistics Study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32528/issn.v2i1.137>

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Published: Agustus, 2022



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**Abstract:** *Sego berkat* ‘rice of blessing’ is one of the most common types of delivery rice in Javanese society. *Sego berkat* can be used for various purposes, especially for salvation. This study aims to describe the philosophical meaning of *sego berkat* with an anthropological linguistic approach using a contextual design. *Sego berkat* is a symbol of asking for blessings to God. Data collection refers to the technique of note-taking, participatory observation, and interviews. The results of this study prove that *sego berkat* has a philosophical meaning that is in accordance with the values of local Javanese wisdom. *Sego berkat* contains a strong Javanese philosophy. In one *sego berkat* container consisting of rice, side dishes, vegetables, snacks, etc. contains a message to share sustenance. *Sego berkat* is a symbol of solidarity between citizens as a manifestation of the values of *hastha* behavior or the eight noble values held by the Javanese. These values include (1) *tepa selira* ‘tolerance’, (2) *welas asih* ‘love for others’, (3) *andhap asor* ‘humble, not arrogant’, (4) *grapyak semanak* ‘friendly and sociable’, (5) *gotong royong* ‘voluntarily cooperated’, (6) *guyub rukun* ‘harmonious and far from conflict’, (7) *ewuh pekewuh* ‘feeling shy’, and (8) *saling pangerten* ‘understanding each other’. *Sego berkat* to be able to break the deadlock of community communication that is separated by caste differences and social status gaps.

**Keywords:** *sego berkat*, philosophical meaning, anthropological linguistics, local wisdom, Javanese

## INTRODUCTION

Javanese are ethnic groups who like to hold thanksgiving or salvation. In the life cycle of the Javanese, starting from a baby still in the womb until someone dies, there is salvation. Salvation is a statement of request for something to God Almighty. Every salvation cannot be separated from the presence of all blessings. Javanese people often call it by saying,

According to Poerwadarminto [1] the word “berkat” means *sego salawuhane kang diwenehake marang wong-wong kang padha melu slametan*. If translated literally means rice including the side dish that is given to people who follow salvation. Bakker [2] stated that *berkat* is food taken home by the guests (of the *selametan*). Javanese - English Dictionary [3] explains that *berkat* is food, blessed by a religious official, take home from a ritual ceremony by the guests after they have eaten a portion of it.

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The online KBBI [4] gives the meaning of *berkat* with various meanings. The one related to the *sego berkat* or *nasi berkat* means food and so on that are brought home after the feast. *Sego berkat* is a delivery that is popular among the Javanese and is used in various Javanese rituals of life, from birth to death.

The Javanese in this study are those who live on the island of Java, who still preserve Javanese customs, use Javanese cultural heritage from their ancestors, and speak Javanese. Koentjaraningrat [5] mentions that the area of origin of the Javanese is the island of Java. The Javanese in this article are those who speak the Javanese language and live in Tulungagung, where the research was conducted.

*Selamatan* for the Javanese is a form of devotion and sincerity of worship to God. Some are manifested in the form of symbols of *selamatan* ‘salvation’ that have certain meanings. These symbols are expressions of appreciation and understanding of the “unreachable reality” in order to be “very close” to the life of the Javanese.

With these symbols of *selamatan*, Javanese assume that God is always present and “unified” in him in everyday life. Sumodiningrat and Wulandari [6] mention that this is in accordance with the *manunggaling kawula Gusti* ---in relation to God, the human spirit is always invited to do good by God.

Endraswara [7] states that the efforts of the Javanese to approach themselves through *selamatan* is a form of abstract cultural accumulation. This is a spiritual negotiation effort, so that supernatural things that are believed to be above humans do not have a negative influence.

One form of the symbol of *selamatan* is *sego berkat*. *Sego berkat* for some Javanese is often called *sego angsul-angsul*. The term *sego angsul-angsul* refers to the understanding of Poerwadarminta [8] which means *ulih, bali*. This is very appropriate because at the celebration, guests who came earlier brought rice etc. to be donated. Furthermore, the host is obliged to give *sego berkat* as a gift or return the donation to the giver so as not to “have debt”. The term *sego angsul-angsul* is becoming more popular than the term *angsul-angsul*.

Based on the introduction of the term *sego berkat*, it can be described its philosophical meaning. The description uses an anthropological linguistics approach Foley [9] namely by looking at linguistic facts in a wider social and cultural context. This study aims to reveal various aspects related to the Javanese perspective on all blessings.

Previous research has discussed more about *sego berkat* in general, not directly discussing the philosophical meaning of *sego berkat* in particular. Sutrisno [10] explained that the person who receives *sego berkat* must return it by giving a donation to the person who has a celebration. *Sego berkat* is the Javanese way of inviting others to come. Apart from coming to give prayers and blessings, they also donate -- partaking in the burden of the inviter’s expenses.

According to Sholikhin [11] it is called *sego berkat* because it comes from a *sego tumpeng* that has been cut and divided after being given a congratulatory prayer. It is hoped that the *sego tumpeng* for those who eat it will also receive blessings and protection from God. Another meaning of *sego berkat* is a symbol of asking for blessings and protection from God so that everyone who provides, makes, and enjoys *sego berkat* gets a gift from God.

The view of Gardjito et al. [12] explained that in the original tradition, the *tahlilan* people bring home *sego berkat* and souvenirs in the form of a *sarong* and tea pot. This *tahlilan* is usually assisted by students with a minimum number of 7 or 9 students.

Meanwhile, Rohman [13] explains that in the *slametan* there is a blessing and offerings or *uborampe* which are a medium of communication between humans and their Lord and as a symbol. With the

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slametan, harmonization, tolerance and the existence of a relationship between the nature of the microcosm and macrocosm occur.

Raibin [14] explained that in the feast, all the *sego berkat* or gifts given by the owner of the intention to the person who was invited to the celebration were called *berkat* or *berkatan*. After returning from the ritual of *selamatan* or celebration among the Javanese, guests will bring *sego berkat* or gifts called *berkat*. The term *berkat* basically comes from the word *baraka*, *yabruku*, *barkatan* which means to grow or increase or be happy. This term was chosen and popularized by the saints to replace the ritual offerings.

Existing studies have mostly discussed the *sego berkat* in general or as part of the completeness of the Javanese tradition. No one has discussed the *sego berkat* in particular, including its philosophical values. Based on this background, this research discusses at least four things, namely (1) the definition of *sego berkat* according to the Javanese, (2) the form and menu in the *sego berkat*, (3) the *selamatan* of the Javanese who use the *sego berkat*, and (4) the meaning the philosophy of *sego berkat*. These four things will become the red thread of research.

## METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative research design. Bogdan and Biklen [15] state that qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive research reports in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behaviors. Poedjosoedarmo [16] stated that this research is called contextual research because the *sego berkat* studied are highly dependent on the context of the blessings in Javanese culture.

The choice of research location in Tulungagung is because the Javanese here still hold a lot of *selamatan* and use all kinds of *sego berkat*. Selection of informants based on Bailay's criteria [17], among others, classified as normal among them, adults, male or female, healthy, have clear language habits. The informants in this study were *sesepuh* 'Javanese leader community' who understood and understood all about *sego berkat*, so they could describe them well.

This research data collection uses two ways, namely participation observation and interviews. Participation in observation is conducting observations that involve researchers in field observations and researchers act as observers or part of what they are researching. An interview is a meeting of two or more people to exchange information through question and answer so that they can know about all of *sego berkat*.

Poedjosoedarmo [18] said that the interview was a means of proving information from informants, so that reliable data was obtained. Next, the researcher will analyze the data following Ahearn [19]. "After linguistic anthropologists have all the data they need, interpretation becomes a process of looking for patterns to find answers to research questions that form the basis of research or to answer questions that arise during data analysis."

Data analysis through testing using questions in Javanese related to *sego berkat*. Furthermore, the researcher explains the data obtained according to the anthropological linguistic view. According to Duranti [20] this research is included in the study of ethno linguistics or anthropological linguistics because it departs from linguistic facts. According to Foley [21], anthropological linguistics is a study carried out by looking at linguistic facts in a wider social and cultural context.

According to Koentjaraningrat [22] in an anthropological perspective, language is part of culture. On the other hand, culture is generally inherited more thoroughly through language. So, language is the main vehicle for the inheritance and development of culture. This is in line with the opinion of Duranti [23] which

states that describing a culture is the same as describing a language. Based on the understanding of *sego berkat* by the Javanese, further explanation will be given regarding the definition, menu and presentation, *selamatan* that uses *sego berkat*, to the philosophical values that contain the values of Javanese local wisdom.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition of *Sego Berkat*

*Sego berkat* is a traditional Javanese food and is found in various *selamatan*. *Sego berkat* contains (1) *sego tumpeng*, (2) *lodo ayam* ‘chicken’, (3) fried eggs, (4) fried noodles, (5) *gudangan*, (6) *sayuran* ‘vegetables’ (7) *tahu* and *tempe*, (8) *serundeng*. etc. Each region in Java has different rules. Javanese in Tulungagung, generally the menu is as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 *Sego Berkat*

Source: Ari Wulandari

Figure 1 refers to an example of a *sego berkat* complete with side dishes. In Javanese thought, there are four definitions of *sego berkat*, as follows.

- 1) *Sego berkat* is rice and side dishes that come from *sego tumpeng* which is divided and has been given a congratulatory prayer by *sesepuh* ‘leader of community’ in the feast. The rice and side dishes were brought home by the guests who came to the feast. Because of the blessing prayer, the rice is often called *sego berkat* or *berkatan*, which means rice containing a blessing prayer.
- 2) *Sego berkat* means rice and side dishes that have been prepared in a certain container (can be *beseke* ‘a container made of woven bamboo’, *takir* ‘a container made of banana leaves’, or a plastic basket. All the rice and side dishes are said to or given a prayer by the *sesepuh*. After that, people who come to the feast will eat together and go home with all the *sego berkat* that have been prepared.
- 3) *Sego berkat* means invitation rice given by the party inviter to another party. The party who receives the *sego berkat* must come to the invitee’s celebration or event and contribute. Donations given by the Java-

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nese in Tulungagung are in the form of basic commodities (*sembako*) or in the form of money according to the ability of the donor.

- 4) *Sego berkat* means *sego wangsulan* or *sego asul-asul*. This is complete rice with side dishes sent by the owner of the intention to all those who come and make donations. In addition to those who had come and participated in the feast, they received *sego berkat*, there were also follow-up *sego berkat* given to those who had donated or helped make the event run smoothly.

At least that is the definition of *sego berkat* in the minds of the Javanese in Tulungagung. They understand *sego berkat* in various ways according to their respective understandings.

### *Sego Berkat's Form and Menu*

The forms of *sego berkat* among the Javanese in Tulungagung are very diverse. Some are like Figure 1. Some of them use white rice in the form of *sego tumpeng*. Some of them are yellow rice or white rice, not made into a *tumpeng*, but round or according to the container. In principle form is not a problem for the Javanese in Tulungagung.

The most important thing that Javanese people pay attention to in making *sego berkat* is the menu. The menu in *sego berkat* consists of rice and side dishes. The mandatory menu in *sego berkat* are (1) *sego tumpeng*, (2) *lodo ayam* 'chicken', (3) fried eggs, (4) fried noodles, (5) *gudangan*, (6) *sayuran* 'vegetables' (7) *tahu* and *tempe*, (8) *serundeng*. etc.

*Sego berkat* means a request that all get blessings from God. *Berkat* comes from the Arabic word *barakatun* which means the plural form of *barakat* or goodness that continues to grow. Indirectly the existence of this *sego berkat* is a request to God so that blessings continue to increase and multiply.

### Javanese *Selamatan* Using *Sego Berkat*

There are many types of Javanese *selamatan*. Every session of life from the time humans are in the womb, birth, children, youth, adulthood, marriage, to death --- all of them have salvation. Every salvation there is an *uborampe*. *Sego berkat* is one of the important pillars in Javanese salvation. The following is a salvation that uses *sego berkat* as one of its *uborampe*.

#### 1) Relating to Babies

- a. *Ngupati* or *ngapati* (4 months pregnancy).
- b. *Nglimani* (5 months pregnancy).
- c. *Tingkeban* (7 months pregnancy).
- d. *Nyangani/Procotan* (9 months pregnancy, period before birth).
- e. *Puput puser* (safety cutting the navel).
- f. *Nanem puser* (congratulations on planting the placenta).
- g. *Brokohan* (baby birth safety).
- h. *Sepasaran* (congratulations on the fifth day of the baby's birth).
- i. *Puputan* (safety off the umbilical cord).
- j. *Selapanan* (safety for 35 days of baby's birth).
- k. *Tedhak siten* (safety for 7 months of baby's birth).
- l. *Setahunan* (safety for children aged 1 year).

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The Javanese hold a pre-natal celebration with positive expectations for the baby to be born. Likewise, when the baby is born to the age of one year.

## 2) Thanksgiving

Some Javanese are used to thanksgiving. When someone gets a gift or success, his family will hold a thanksgiving. They gather with family, relatives, neighbors, and friends to share happiness. This shows gratitude to God. Events at night or depending on the situation. The implementation is usually at the house of the event owner or in the mosque area ---according to individual habits.

The dish provided is generally *tumpeng* rice with side dishes. At events such as birthdays, sometimes bread and cakes are served. According to Koentjaraningrat [24] all dishes are “blessings” which are intended as the dead person and are given to those who are invited.

## 3) Related to Marriage

Marriage for the Javanese is believed to be something sacred. In order to get safety in marriage, Javanese people perform various salvation during the wedding procession. All of these *selamatan*, one of which uses all the *sego berkat*. In a *sego berkat* marriage, it means prayer so that the wedding of the bride and groom goes smoothly and happily, lasts forever, has lots of sustenance, has good offspring, etc. kind. The stages of Javanese traditional marriage include:

- a. Marriage talks (family gatherings).
- b. Testimony (procurement of witnesses to marriages outside the family; close neighbors or close relatives).
- c. Establishment of a celebration committee (committee to support all wedding celebration events).
- d. In-law's celebration (core wedding session before the main event).
- e. The highlight of the event (starting from the marriage contract to the celebration).

## 4) Related to Death

Javanese carry out the salvation of death starting with the ritual of *geblag* ‘day of death’, *nelung dina* ‘three days’, *pitung dina* ‘seven days’ (ritual within 1-7 days of death), *matang puluh dina* (40 days ritual), *satus dina* (ritual 100 days of death), *setahun* or *pendhak siji* (1 year death ritual), *rong year* or *men-dhak loro* (2 years death ritual), *nyewu* (1000 day death ritual), and *haul* ‘death commemoration and send prayers every year’.

Death salvation is a form of praying for the spirits of those who have died to make it easier to face God. Each death rescue uses a different *uborampe*, but there are always all kinds of *sego berkat*.

### The Philosophical Meaning of *Sego Berkat*

Based on the definition, form, meaning, salvation of the Javanese who use all *sego berkat*, the philosophical meaning is reflected in it. Magnis-Suseno [25] on the Javanese worldview states that life and death, bad luck and disease are fates that cannot be resisted. Sapir and Whorf in Kramsch [26] state that language determines one's view of the world and the surrounding environment.

The character of the Javanese is the cause of his perspective on spiritual life as reflected in the lexicon and the form of traditional cuisine of *sego berkat*. Widayat [27] uses wayang characters to describe Javanese characters. The philosophical meaning of *sego berkat* is actually a reflection of the Javanese people's thoughts on their spiritual life. The philosophical meaning of *sego berkat* includes eight things, namely as follows.

1) *Tepo Seliro* 'Tolerance'

*Tepo seliro* means tolerance. One of the ancestral values held by the Javanese teaches that in life, we must respect diversity and differences, and be sensitive to the circumstances of others and the surrounding environment.

2) *Welas Asih* 'Love For Others'

*Welas asih* is a warm, understanding, self-help attitude when we face trials. *Welas asih* for ourselves will encourage us to do the same for others who are suffering.

3) *Andhap Asor* 'Humble, Not Arrogant'

*Andhap asor* means humble. This is a form of Javanese humility. No matter how good the condition, the Javanese say that you can't be arrogant, you can't be arbitrary.

4) *Grapyak Semanak* 'Friendly and Sociable'

The attitude of *grapyak semanak* is the attitude of someone who is easy to get along with and pleasant in association. This character usually likes to smile, be polite, respectful in conversation, likes to say hello, and often helps others selflessly.

5) *Gotong Royong* 'voluntarily cooperated'

*Gotong royong* is a well-known Javanese attitude. Since time immemorial, Javanese like to cooperate selflessly and voluntarily to create something good for the common good. For example, gotong royong to build an environmental security post.

6) *Guyub Rukun* 'Harmony and Far From Disputes'

*Guyub rukun* are two different terms. *Guyub* means togetherness or unity. Meanwhile, *rukun* means no fighting or avoiding each other's commotion. This attitude is maintained for the sake of peaceful living together.

7) *Ewuh Pekewuh* 'Feeling Shy'

The culture of *ewuh pakewuh* means trouble and unpleasant feelings. This means that people will easily help, but feel bad if they have to ask others for help. Therefore, the people around him must be able to read the situation when someone needs help.

8) *Saling Pangerten* 'Understanding Each Other'.

*Saling pangerten* attitude is an attitude of understanding something that is meant or is being felt by others, especially their difficulties. The existence of this understanding attitude will encourage the person concerned to empathize and help him or her resolve the problem.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research, *sego berkat* contains complete rice and side dishes. *Sego berkat* is a symbol of asking for protection to God. Javanese use all kinds of blessings in various rituals, starting from pregnancy, the birth of a baby, thanksgiving, marriage, and death. The value of Javanese local wisdom towards all blessings is a form of reflection and thought by Javanese who recognize the power of God. *Sego berkat* is a symbol of the good relationship between humans and God and humans with fellow humans. Human relationship with God is marked by prayer requests when they enjoy the *sego berkat*. The realization of good relationships with fellow humans is marked by eating together or *kenduri* and sharing *sego berkat*. *Sego berkat* to be able to break the deadlock of community communication that is separated by caste differences and social status gaps.

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