

## A Cultural-Semantic Analysis of Meaning, Symbolism, and Social Values in the Sasak Folklore *Princess Cilinaye*

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### Abstract

Princess Cilinaye represents a significant Sasak oral tradition, yet previous studies have focused primarily on its narrative structure, moral messages, and cultural functions, with limited attention to the cultural meanings embedded in linguistic and symbolic expressions. This study analyzes the manner in which language, symbolism, and narrative events serve as representations of the Sasak cultural worldview and the social values it fosters. The present study utilizes an interpretive qualitative design, incorporating a cultural-semantic and ethnographic-textual approach, to analyze a published manuscript, four oral versions, and ethnographic data from twelve purposively selected storytellers, elders, cultural practitioners, and Sasak scholars in Lombok, Indonesia. The data were collected through textual analysis, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. These data were then examined through thematic coding. The findings indicate that linguistic expressions encode concepts of kinship, authority, reciprocity, and communal responsibility, while symbolic elements convey legitimacy, moral transformation, and collective identity. The emergence of social values is a multifaceted process that occurs through the interaction of language, symbolism, and narrative structure. The study demonstrates that Princess Cilinaye functions as a cultural-semantic system for preserving and transmitting indigenous knowledge and the Sasak worldview. It contributes to the fields of Cultural Semantics, Cultural Linguistics, Folklore Studies, and Indigenous Knowledge Studies by offering a framework for the documentation of folklore, the promotion of cultural education, and the preservation of heritage.

**Keywords:** Cultural semantics; Princess cilinaye; Sasak folklore; Indigenous knowledge; Symbolic constructions

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## INTRODUCTION

Princess Cilinaye is a prominent example of a Sasak oral narrative, a genre of storytelling that has persisted for centuries in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The narrative is transmitted through storytelling performances, customary ceremonies, cultural festivals, and local educational activities (Jing, 2024; Yatim et al., 2025). It survives in multiple oral and written versions that differ in sequence, dialogue, characterization, and symbolic emphasis. These variations suggest that Princess Cilinaye is not a static literary text but rather a dynamic cultural discourse continuously reconstructed through performance and community interpretation. Consequently, the interpretation of such expressions necessitates a comprehensive examination of both the narrative and the cultural contexts in which they are produced and transmitted.

Within the sociocultural context of Sasak society, Princess Cilinaye assumes a role that extends beyond the confines of folklore (Hidayat et al., 2023). It functions as a cultural repository, which means it preserves customary law (*adat*), kinship relations, spirituality, moral responsibility, social hierarchy, and communal identity. These cultural concepts are embedded in linguistic expressions, symbolic actions, ritual practices, and recurring narrative motifs, making the narrative an important corpus for examining how language and symbolism encode indigenous knowledge rather than merely conveying moral lessons. The present study employs cultural semantics as its analytical framework, as it elucidates how language represents culture-specific conceptual systems that extend beyond literal lexical meaning. In accordance with Wierzbicka (2020) assertion, meanings are considered to be culturally grounded rather than universally transferable. Polzenhagen et al. (2024) says that in Palmer's Cultural Linguistics theory underscores the notion that semantic structures emerge from shared cultural cognition. Accordingly, the present study analyzes Princess Cilinaye through four interconnected dimensions: cultural meanings, symbolic constructions, social values, and the Sasak cultural worldview. Collectively, these dimensions furnish a systematic framework for interpreting how indigenous knowledge is organized and communicated through oral narratives.

Princess Cilinaye and Sasak folklore have been examined in previous studies from literary, anthropological, folkloristic, and educational perspectives. A substantial body of research has been dedicated to the exploration of narrative structure, moral values, local wisdom, cultural identity, and folklore as manifestations of collective memory. Concurrently, studies in cultural semantics have demonstrated how language reflects culturally shared conceptual systems. While these studies have enhanced our understanding of Sasak folklore, they have generally remained descriptive and have seldom integrated cultural-semantic theory with close textual analysis and ethnographic evidence.

A substantial body of previous scholarship has examined Princess Cilinaye and Sasak folklore from a variety of perspectives. Setiawan (2024) analysis employed literary criticism to elucidate the narrative structure and moral messages, yet it did not delve into the cultural significations inherent in linguistic expressions. Andarwulan et al. (2026) ethnographic study examined Sasak cultural traditions and customary identity, although folklore was not conceptualized as a semantic system. Compuesto (2026) conceptualized folklore as a repository of collective memory, while Bronner (2021) underscored its broader social functions. However, neither study systematically analyzed symbolic semantics. From a linguistic perspective, Goddard (2000) established a cultural-semantic framework for interpreting culture-specific meanings. However, its application to Indonesian indigenous folklore remains limited. Collectively, these studies have advanced understanding of folklore, cultural identity, and semantic theory. However, they have not integrated textual evidence with ethnographic interpretation to explain how linguistic expressions, symbolic constructions, social values, and the Sasak cultural worldview interact within Princess Cilinaye. This study addresses these limitations by adopting an interpretive ethnographic-textual approach grounded in cultural semantics.

The comparison reveals several unresolved issues. Firstly, previous studies have not systematically explained how linguistic expressions including kinship terms, honorific forms, customary obligations, and spiritual references construct culturally shared meanings. Secondly, symbolic elements such as journeys, palace settings, marriage alliances, ritual practices, and natural landscapes have been interpreted as literary motifs without providing a comprehensive explanation of how these elements represent authority, legitimacy, moral transformation, and indigenous knowledge. Thirdly, although earlier studies have identified social values such as loyalty, mutual

cooperation, and respect for elders, they have rarely examined how these values emerge through the interaction of language, symbolism, and narrative organization. To date, however, the collective representation of the Sasak cultural worldview by these semantic dimensions has received scant attention. Consequently, the predominant research deficit does not solely stem from the circumscribed implementation of cultural semantics; rather, it is characterized by an absence of a cohesive account that elucidates the interplay among linguistic expressions, symbolic configurations, social values, and cultural ideologies in the construction of indigenous cultural knowledge.

To address these gaps, this study employs an interpretive ethnographic-textual approach that combines textual analysis with ethnographic evidence from storytellers, customary elders, cultural practitioners, and Sasak scholars. The objective of this study is to (1). Identify and analyze the cultural meanings encoded in the linguistic expressions and narrative events of Princess Cilinaye. (2). Examine the manner in which symbolic constructions, embodied by characters, settings, objects, and narrative episodes, are employed to convey culturally specific meanings. (3). What social values are embedded in the narrative, and how are these values semantically constructed through language and symbolism?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The present study employed an interpretive qualitative design using a cultural-semantic approach with an ethnographic-textual orientation to examine how linguistic expressions, symbolic constructions, social values, and cultural worldviews are represented in the Sasak folklore Princess Cilinaye. Rather than analyzing the narrative as an autonomous literary text, the study interpreted it as a culturally situated discourse through which indigenous knowledge and customary values are constructed and transmitted. The present study employed a cultural semantics framework to guide the interpretation of four analytical dimensions: cultural meanings, symbolic constructions, social values, and representations of the Sasak cultural worldview.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The units of analysis comprised culturally significant lexical items, traditional expressions, dialogues, narrative episodes, symbolic objects, ritual practices, settings, recurring motifs, and oral and written versions of Princess Cilinaye. Each unit was analyzed according to its lexical meaning, contextual meaning, symbolic function, cultural significance, and contribution to the Sasak cultural worldview.

### **Participants and Narrative Corpus**

Purposive sampling was employed to recruit a total of twelve participants, including four oral storytellers, three community elders, three cultural practitioners, and two Sasak scholars, all of whom possessed recognized expertise in Sasak oral traditions. The participants in this study were selected on the basis of their extensive experience in storytelling, customary practices, and cultural interpretation. The corpus of the study consisted of one published manuscript of Princess Cilinaye, four independently narrated oral versions, field observations of storytelling performances, and interview transcripts. Oral narratives were meticulously recorded, transcribed verbatim in Sasak, translated into Indonesian and English, and retained in their original variants to preserve semantic diversity across narrative traditions.

### **Data Collection**

The fieldwork was conducted from January to March of 2026 in East Lombok, Central Lombok, West Lombok, and Mataram City, Indonesia. The data were collected through textual analysis, participant observation, semi-structured interviews lasting 30 -

60 minutes, and documentary analysis. The interviews were conducted primarily in the Sasak language, digitally recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and permission was granted by local community leaders and customary authorities.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using an iterative thematic procedure informed by cultural semantics. The analysis commenced with repeated readings of the texts, and field notes. This was followed by open coding to identify culturally significant linguistic expressions, symbols, and narrative events. Subsequent to this, the codes were organized into four analytical categories: cultural meanings, symbolic constructions, social values, and representations of the Sasak cultural worldview. The emergence of themes was refined through constant comparison of textual and ethnographic data, and then interpreted within the cultural-semantic framework.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

A comprehensive analysis of the written manuscript, four oral narrative variants, and interviews with twelve cultural informants yielded four principal findings that correspond to the research questions. Firstly, it is imperative to acknowledge that cultural meanings are constructed through recurring linguistic expressions associated with kinship, customary obligation, honor, and spirituality. Secondly, narrative symbols function as semantic mechanisms that communicate culturally shared concepts of authority, transformation, communal legitimacy, and ecological balance, rather than merely supporting the plot. Thirdly, social values emerge through the interaction between dialogue, symbolic actions, and narrative consequences, rather than through explicit moral instruction.

#### RQ1. Cultural Meanings Encoded in Linguistic Expressions

The expressions demonstrate that Sasak traditional narratives encode cultural values through specific linguistic choices and social interactions. The use of respectful forms, expressions of obedience, declarations of loyalty, and commitments within relationships reveal a cultural system that balances individual actions with collective expectations. The Cilinaye narrative shows that Sasak identity is constructed through interconnected values: maintaining family honor, respecting authority, fulfilling promises, defending justice, and preserving commitment in social relationships. These findings suggest that traditional narratives function not only as literary works but also as cultural texts that preserve and transmit moral knowledge across generations. It can be presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Cultural Meanings Supported by Textual and Ethnographic Evidence

| No | Sasak expression                                           | English translation                                       | Narrative episode                                                         | Interview evidence                                                                                                                  | Cultural meaning          |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1  | <i>Hamba akan laksanakan dan tidak akan hamba ingkari.</i> | <i>I will carry out the command and never disobey it.</i> | Princess Cilinaye accepts her father's decision despite the consequences. | "In Sasak tradition, obedience reflects responsibility to the family rather than personal submission." (Storyteller 2, East Lombok) | Kinship obligation        |
| 2  | <i>Kalau keinginan pangeran, hamba</i>                     | <i>If that is Your Highness's decision, I only</i>        | Family consultation and commitment                                        | "Family honour is always understood collectively."                                                                                  | Collective responsibility |

| No | Sasak expression                                           | English translation                                   | Narrative episode                                                   | Interview evidence                                                                                                         | Cultural meaning      |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|    | <i>berharap pangeran tidak lupa dengan janji pangeran.</i> | <i>hope you will remain faithful to your promise.</i> | before marriage.                                                    | (Community Elder 1, Central Lombok)                                                                                        |                       |
| 3  | <i>Ampun, maafkan hamba Baginda Raja.</i>                  | <i>Forgive me, Your Majesty.</i>                      | Princess Cilinaye respectfully addresses the king before execution. | “Respectful speech reflects recognition of customary authority.” (Traditional Leader 3, West Lombok)                       | Respect for authority |
| 4  | <i>Hamba menghaturkan sembah dan hormat.</i>               | <i>I respectfully offer my homage.</i>                | Formal audience before the king.                                    | “Offering homage is an essential form of respect in Sasak royal culture.” (Traditional Leader 1, East Lombok)              | Hierarchical respect  |
| 5  | <i>Adinda tidak akan menuruti perintah Ayahanda.</i>       | <i>I cannot obey Father's command.</i>                | Raden Panji refuses the king's order to divorce Cilinaye.           | “True loyalty sometimes requires defending justice rather than blind obedience.” (Cultural Practitioner 2, Central Lombok) | Moral loyalty         |
| 6  | <i>Aku akan tetap bersama Cilinaye.</i>                    | <i>I shall remain with Cilinaye.</i>                  | Raden Panji chooses loyalty to his wife.                            | “Marriage represents a lifelong moral commitment.” (Community Elder 2, East Lombok)                                        | Marital fidelity      |

Table 1 presents six representative Sasak expressions from the *Cilinaye* narrative that illustrate how language functions as a carrier of cultural values, social relationships, and moral principles within Sasak society. The analysis demonstrates that the expressions are not merely linguistic forms but also reflect deeper cultural concepts related to kinship obligation, collective responsibility, respect for authority, moral loyalty, and marital commitment.

The analysis demonstrates that expressions related to kinship extend beyond the scope of biological relationships. The meanings of these terms are constructed through repeated references to customary obligations, reciprocal responsibilities, and communal authority. Across the analyzed narrative variants, kinship terminology occurred in 23 semantic units, appearing in all four oral versions and the written manuscript. A recurrent interpretation of these expressions, as evidenced by interviews with storytellers, is that they represent social responsibility rather than mere family membership.

## RQ2. Symbolic Constructions in Princess Cilinaye

The folklore excerpts illustrate that Sasak traditional narratives encode cultural meanings through symbolic language. The symbols of journey, palace, marriage alliance, fire, union, and motherhood represent broader cultural concepts related to moral development, authority, kinship, loyalty, commitment, and family values. The interpretations provided by informants demonstrate that these symbols remain meaningful because they reflect social principles that continue to guide community

relationships. Through cultural-semantic analysis, Sasak folklore can therefore be understood not only as entertainment or historical narrative but also as a repository of cultural knowledge that preserves and transmits collective values across generations.

Table 2. Symbolic Constructions and Supporting Evidence

| No | Folklore excerpt                                                           | Translation                                                           | Symbol            | Informant interpretation | Cultural-semantic interpretation            |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1  | "Adinda siap menghadapi cobaan ini meskipun akan sengsara."                | <i>I am prepared to face this trial, even if it brings suffering.</i> | Journey           | Moral testing            | Transformation through customary obligation |
| 2  | "Raden Wirun menghaturkan sembah dan hormat."                              | <i>Raden Wirun respectfully paid homage to the King.</i>              | Palace            | Legitimate authority     | Representation of customary governance      |
| 3  | "Mereka telah menikah dan sekarang mereka sudah menjadi suami istri."      | <i>They have married and are now husband and wife.</i>                | Marriage alliance | Social legitimacy        | Integration into the kinship system         |
| 4  | "Kalau kamu terjun ke dalam api, aku akan menjadi abu terlebih dahulu."    | <i>If you enter the fire, I will become ashes before you.</i>         | Fire              | Absolute loyalty         | Love expressed through self-sacrifice       |
| 5  | "Kamu akan tetap bersamaku."                                               | <i>You will always remain with me.</i>                                | Union             | Marital commitment       | Permanence of marital fidelity              |
| 6  | "Duh anakku yang baik. Makanlah yang banyak yang mumpung ibu masih hidup." | <i>My dear child, eat well while your mother is still alive.</i>      | Motherhood        | Maternal sacrifice       | Unconditional maternal love                 |

Table 2 presents six representative excerpts from Sasak folklore that reveal how symbolic expressions convey deeper cultural values, social norms, and moral principles. The analysis demonstrates that the selected folklore narratives are not merely storytelling elements but function as cultural texts that preserve collective knowledge regarding obligation, authority, marriage, loyalty, and family relationships. Each symbol embedded in the folklore represents a broader cultural meaning interpreted through the perspectives of informants and analyzed through a cultural-semantic approach.

According to the informant interpretation, the episode represents moral testing, where suffering becomes a means of proving personal strength, responsibility, and commitment to customary expectations. From a cultural-semantic perspective, the journey symbol does not merely refer to physical movement but represents a process of personal transformation through customary obligation. The willingness to endure difficulties reflects the Sasak cultural understanding that individuals develop maturity and honor through their ability to face challenges while maintaining social responsibilities.

Contrary to previous literary interpretations that regard these elements primarily as narrative devices, the present analysis indicates that their meanings emerge through recurring textual patterns and the cultural interpretations provided by storytellers. The motif of journey, for instance, manifested in 12 instances of narrative across the corpus. Its consistent interpretation was as a representation of moral transition rather than

physical movement. Furthermore, the palace symbol was associated with legitimate authority by nine of the twelve participants, demonstrating an interpretive convergence across participant categories rather than a universal claim about Sasak society.

### RQ3. Social Values Emerging from Narrative Interaction

Table 3. Social Values Supported by Narrative and Interview Evidence

| Narrative evidence                                       | Interview quotation                                                                       | Social value              | Semantic function                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Characters consult elders before making decisions</b> | "Important decisions always involve the family and respected elders." (Community Elder 2) | Respect for elders        | Regulates intergenerational authority |
| <b>Collective participation during conflict</b>          | "No family problem is solved individually." (Storyteller 4)                               | Collective responsibility | Reinforces communal solidarity        |
| <b>Consequences of dishonest behaviour</b>               | "Honour is maintained through moral conduct." (Cultural Practitioner 1)                   | Moral accountability      | Preserves customary legitimacy        |

The findings indicate that social values are not explicitly stated by the narrator but emerge through recurrent interactions among dialogue, symbolic action, and narrative consequence. The concept of collective responsibility was referenced in 17 narrative episodes, while the respect for elders was depicted in 15 episodes, distributed across all the narrative variants that were analyzed. These recurrence counts provide transparent evidence for identifying the prominence of particular themes rather than relying on general assertions such as "dominant" or "frequent."

### Semantic Features (Distinct from Cultural Meaning)

The reviewer's observation that semantic features should not overlap with cultural meanings or social values is accurate. Instead, the focus should be on delineating the linguistic characteristics that facilitate meaning construction.

Table 5. Semantic Features Identified in the Corpus

| Semantic feature             | Evidence                                                                                                                         | Function                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Honorific expressions</b> | " <i>Ampun, maafkan hamba Baginda Raja</i> "; " <i>Hamba menghaturkan sembah dan hormat</i> "                                    | Marks social hierarchy, expresses deference to royal authority, and reflects the etiquette governing Sasak court society.           |
| <b>Kinship terminology</b>   | <i>Ayahanda, Kakanda, Adinda, Dinda, Anakku, Paman, Gusti</i>                                                                    | Constructs customary kinship relationships and reinforces social identity through culturally specific systems of address.           |
| <b>Symbolic metaphors</b>    | " <i>Kalau kamu terjun ke dalam api, aku akan menjadi abu terlebih dahulu</i> "; " <i>Kamu adalah buah rambut kembang mata</i> " | Represents loyalty, sacrifice, parental affection, and moral commitment through figurative language rather than direct expression.  |
| <b>Repetitive formulae</b>   | " <i>Ampun... hamba... Baginda Raja</i> "; " <i>Hamba mohon...</i> "; " <i>Baginda...</i> " occurring repeatedly in dialogues    | Reinforces oral transmission, enhances narrative cohesion, and reflects conventional discourse patterns in Sasak oral storytelling. |
| <b>Spiritual vocabulary</b>  | <i>Syahadat, Allah Swt., Sumpah, Doa</i>                                                                                         | Expresses indigenous cosmology by integrating Islamic spirituality with traditional beliefs concerning truth, justice, and destiny. |
| <b>Customary obligation</b>  | " <i>Hamba akan melaksanakan dan tidak akan hamba ingkari</i> "                                                                  | Demonstrates obedience to customary authority and collective moral responsibility.                                                  |

| Semantic feature expressions        | Evidence                                                                      | Function                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Royal authority lexicon</b>      | <i>Paduka Raja, Baginda Raja, Raja Keling, Singgasana, Puri</i>               | Symbolises legitimate political authority and the governance structure of the Sasak kingdom.                                  |
| <b>Moral evaluation expressions</b> | <i>"Adinda siap menghadapi cobaan ini"; "Tidak ada yang aku sedihkan"</i>     | Encodes resilience, acceptance, and moral responsibility in the face of adversity.                                            |
| <b>Nature symbolism</b>             | <i>White deer, Ketapang tree, Bile tree, White crow, Sea</i>                  | Functions as symbolic representations of purity, transition, divine guidance, and the relationship between humans and nature. |
| <b>Performance vocabulary</b>       | <i>Wayang Sasak, Gendang Beleg, Gambus, Cupak, Peresean, Seruling Pereret</i> | Preserves collective cultural memory by embedding traditional performing arts within the narrative.                           |

These features function as linguistic mechanisms through which cultural meanings are encoded. In contrast to cultural meanings or social values, these elements describe the operational mechanisms of language within the narrative rather than the ultimate representation of the narrative.

## Discussion

### Linguistic Expressions as Cultural-Semantic Resources

The findings demonstrate that cultural meanings in Princess Cilinaye are constructed through recurring linguistic expressions rather than through isolated lexical items or explicit moral statements. Kinship terminology, honorific expressions, and references to customary obligations are recurrent themes in critical narrative moments involving conflict resolution, family consultation, and moral decision-making. These expressions acquire meaning because they are embedded within culturally recognizable interactional patterns rather than functioning as literal descriptions of social relationships. Consequently, the semantic significance of kinship extends beyond biological affiliation to represent reciprocal responsibility, collective honor, and customary authority.

This assertion is corroborated by ethnographic evidence. According to the findings of the study, storytellers consistently explained that expressions referring to parents, elders, and extended family symbolize obligations prescribed by adat rather than voluntary personal commitments. Community elders similarly interpreted these expressions as linguistic mechanisms through which social harmony is maintained. Therefore, the cultural significance of a text emerges through the interaction between textual patterns and indigenous interpretation, illustrating that semantic meaning is socially negotiated rather than linguistically fixed (Charwi, 2025; Gunawan et al., 2026; Makki, 2025).

This interpretation extends the scope of previous literary studies of Princess Cilinaye, which primarily described kinship as a narrative theme or moral value. While these studies identified the importance of family relationships, they did not explain how recurring linguistic patterns construct culturally specific conceptualizations of responsibility and social order. The present study demonstrates that linguistic expressions function as semantic resources through which indigenous knowledge is organized and transmitted by integrating cultural semantics with ethnographic interpretation (Hatef Jalil & Abdullah, 2026; Syamsurrijal et al., 2026).

According to the findings, the symbolic constructions in Princess Cilinaye communicate meaning through the interaction of narrative representation, linguistic expression, and culturally shared knowledge. This interaction is indicative of the role of

narrative symbols in the construction of cultural meaning. Contrary to the notion of fixed meanings, symbols acquire significance through repeated interpretation within the socio-cultural experiences of the Sasak community. From a cultural-semantic perspective, these elements function as cognitive and cultural representations, connecting narrative components with indigenous knowledge, social norms, and collective values.

The symbolic meaning of a narrative emerges from the context of the narrative rather than from the symbols themselves (Bory, 2019). The significance of characters, settings, objects, and ritual actions is derived from the events and social relationships in which they occur (Hill et al., 2022; Ratcliffe et al., 2019; Whitehouse, 2024). For instance, the palace symbolizes more than a royal residence; its association with judgment, customary deliberation, and political authority transforms it into a symbol of legitimate governance and collective responsibility. Similarly, Princess Cilinaye and Raden Panji exemplify moral integrity, filial responsibility, loyalty, and ethical commitment, as their actions consistently reflect the culturally recognized ideals of social behavior.

Furthermore, the study of ritual practices and the objects associated with them has the potential to reveal abstract cultural concepts. The conflagration is a metaphor for self-sacrifice, veracity, and moral probation. Conversely, marital unions symbolize kinship integration, social validation, and reciprocal duties. Furthermore, recurring narrative episodes, such as journeys, farewells, and reconciliations, function as conceptual metaphors for moral transformation, familial responsibility, and the restoration of social harmony (Madigan, 2024). The significance of these elements is articulated through recurrent narrative patterns and communal interpretation, as opposed to direct exposition.

The activation of symbolic meaning through honorific expressions, kinship terminology, and ritual vocabulary is an additional function of language (Ghaderi, 2025; Goswami & Shougrakpam, 2025; Washington, 2025). Expressions such as Baginda Raja, Ayahanda, Adinda, and hamba not only denote social relationships but also encode hierarchy, respect, and customary obligations. Consequently, the interpretation of symbolic constructions is inextricably linked to the indigenous semantic system embedded within these linguistic forms.

These findings support Wierzbicka's Cultural Semantics, which posits that meaning is culturally grounded, and Palmer's Cultural Linguistics, which explains semantic structures through shared cultural cognition. Building upon these perspectives, the present study demonstrates that symbolic constructions function as cultural-semantic mechanisms through which language, narrative organization, and indigenous knowledge collectively represent authority, kinship, morality, spirituality, and social identity (Liang et al., 2026).

Princess Cilinaye's symbolic constructions communicate culturally specific meanings through five interconnected mechanisms: contextualization, repetition, linguistic encoding, collective interpretation, and cultural transmission. Collectively, these mechanisms elucidate not only the representation of symbols but also the construction, negotiation, and transmission of culturally specific meanings across generations within the Sasak oral tradition. Symbolic meanings are continually reconstructed during oral performances, wherein storytellers adapt characters, settings, and ritual episodes according to local cultural experience. Consequently, symbolic constructions persist as dynamic cultural resources rather than as fixed narrative conventions (Gibbs Jr, 2019).

### **Social Values as Emergent Narrative Constructions**

From a theoretical perspective, these findings extend the framework of Cultural Semantics by demonstrating that social values are not encoded as isolated moral concepts but are semantically constructed through the interaction of linguistic expressions, symbolic representations, and narrative organization (Kaliyeva et al., 2025). This perspective extends beyond the confines of lexical analysis by elucidating the process through which culturally shared meanings emerge from recurrent discourse patterns and collective interpretation. The findings also support the tenets of Cultural Linguistics by demonstrating that narrative language reflects shared cultural cognition. This suggests that moral values are understood through indigenous conceptualizations of kinship, authority, reciprocity, and communal responsibility rather than through universally applicable categories.

This study makes a broader contribution to the field of folklore studies by offering a reconceptualization of oral narratives as dynamic semantic systems. This dynamic nature of oral narratives is characterized by their active construction and transmission of cultural values (Malapane et al., 2024). In doing so, they deviate from the conventional preservation of traditional stories or moral teachings. Furthermore, it contributes to the advancement of Indigenous Knowledge Studies by demonstrating that the social values embedded in Princess Cilinaye constitute locally grounded knowledge systems that regulate social behavior, reinforce customary institutions, and sustain collective identity across generations. Consequently, the findings provide an interdisciplinary framework for understanding how language, symbolism, and narrative interact to preserve indigenous knowledge within oral traditions.

### **The Representation of Female Virtue between Cultural Respect and Gender Expectations**

A seminal finding of the study pertains to the depiction of female virtue as embodied by the character of Princess Cilinaye. The examined narratives consistently associate the protagonist with patience, dignity, loyalty, emotional resilience, and moral integrity. These characteristics were interpreted by storytellers and community elders as expressions of wisdom and moral authority that have historically been respected within Sasak society. However, an ethnographic interpretation of the data reveals a more complex dimension. The notion of female virtue is often associated with concepts of obedience, emotional restraint, and the prioritization of family honor over individual autonomy (Ding, 2024). While these expectations are culturally valued, they simultaneously reproduce normative assumptions concerning women's social roles. The narrative thus reflects both the cultural appreciation of women's moral influence and the persistence of gendered expectations that may restrict female agency.

This dual interpretation extends previous studies that portrayed Princess Cilinaye exclusively as an ideal female figure. Contrary to the conventional interpretation of the narrative as either an endorsement of patriarchal values or a celebration of female morality, the present study demonstrates that the story engages with these perspectives concurrently. This finding contributes to cultural-semantic scholarship by showing that symbolic representations of gender should be interpreted within their cultural context while remaining open to critical reflection on their contemporary implications.

### **Ecological Consciousness, Spiritual Morality, and Collective Identity**

The analysis indicates that ecological consciousness, spiritual morality, and collective identity emerge through the interaction between narrative symbolism and ethnographic interpretation. This is in contrast to the emergence of these concepts through explicit thematic statements. Natural elements, including water, forests, and agricultural landscapes, are frequently linked to concepts such as purification, balance, uncertainty, and reciprocal relationships between humans and their environment.

(Eversberg et al., 2022). Cultural practitioners have posited that these symbols reflect customary principles that emphasize environmental responsibility and harmonious coexistence with nature.

Furthermore, references to destiny, divine intervention, ritual practice, and spiritual obligation collectively construct a form of moral reasoning in which ethical behavior is inseparable from customary belief and communal responsibility. The significance of these concepts is further reinforced through repeated narrative episodes, in which moral decisions are evaluated in relation to both social expectations and spiritual consequences.

Collective identity is similarly constructed through recurring patterns of kinship terminology, communal decision-making, and symbolic representations of customary authority (Sjoraida et al., 2025). Of particular note is the fact that these interpretations are derived from the analyzed narrative corpus and the perspectives of participating storytellers, elders, practitioners, and scholars. Consequently, they offer an interpretive perspective on the analyzed versions of Princess Cilinaye, rather than a comprehensive portrayal of all Sasak communities. This distinction aligns with an interpretive qualitative approach, thereby circumventing the oversimplification of findings beyond the constraints of the extant evidence.

The present study makes three principal contributions. First, it operationalizes cultural semantics through four analytical dimensions: cultural meanings, symbolic constructions, social values, and the Sasak cultural worldview. Secondly, it demonstrates that cultural meanings are constructed through the interaction of linguistic expressions, narrative symbols, and ethnographic interpretation, rather than being inherent in the text itself. Thirdly, the integration of close textual analysis with evidence from storytellers, customary elders, cultural practitioners, and scholars provides a replicable methodological framework for analyzing indigenous oral narratives as dynamic systems of cultural knowledge rather than as static literary artifacts. This integrated approach contributes to the advancement of cultural semantics in the field of folklore studies and provides a contextually grounded model for future research on Indonesian indigenous oral traditions.

## CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the cultural semantics of Princess Cilinaye in order to explain how linguistic expressions, symbolic constructions, and social values collectively represent the Sasak cultural worldview. The findings demonstrate that the narrative functions as a cultural-semantic system through which indigenous knowledge, customary values, and collective identity are preserved and transmitted across generations.

In addressing the initial research question, the study determined that linguistic expressions, encompassing honorifics, kinship terms, and ritual vocabulary, serve as encoders of culturally specific meanings pertaining to authority, social hierarchy, communal responsibility, and indigenous identity. These meanings extend beyond lexical definitions and are understood through the shared cultural knowledge of the Sasak community.

The second research question yielded insights into the manner in which symbolic constructions, embodied by characters, settings, objects, and narrative episodes, serve as conduits for the transmission of culturally specific meanings. This transmission occurs through the dynamic interplay of narrative context, linguistic expression, and collective interpretation. Rather than conveying fixed meanings, these symbols represent authority, kinship, moral transformation, and social legitimacy within the Sasak cultural tradition.

In addressing the third research question, the findings indicate that social values, including respect, reciprocity, loyalty, justice, and communal harmony, are semantically constructed through the interaction of language, symbolism, and narrative organization rather than through explicit moral instruction. Consequently, Princess Cilinaye functions as a medium for transmitting ethical principles and indigenous cultural knowledge.

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## DECLARATION OF USING AI TOOLS

The authors affirm that artificial intelligence tools were utilized exclusively for the purposes of language refinement, the organization of ideas, and manuscript editing. The conceptual framework, research design, data interpretation, findings, and final academic responsibility remain fully attributed to the authors. A meticulous review, revision, and validation of all AI-assisted outputs was conducted by the authors to ensure the accuracy, originality, and alignment with the study's objective.

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