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### Rituals and Social Relations in Java: A Case Study of Gossip and Conflict

This paper aims to shed light on the practice of *rewang* and gossiping, to explore several aspects of social relations among Javanese from the point of view of women. *Rewang* literally means “to help” or “helper” in Javanese, but it is also used in reference to helping prepare for rituals, mainly by cooking. *Rewang* is the women’s domain in the ritual, where female neighbors and relatives participate on the basis of reciprocity.

Former studies in Java tend to focus on all male rituals and thus mainly pay attention to men’s roles in rituals. However, as discussed in this study, *rewang* has a significant effect on social relations, especially among neighbors through the act of gossiping. “Women are more talkative than men” and “women are gossipers” are common sayings among both Javanese men and women. Although their locations and times differ, it seems that not only women but also men gossip among themselves. But men’s gossip is often referred to as *cerita biasa* (ordinary talk) not gossip. Women pass gossip that they hear to family members, but men keep gossip that they hear to themselves.

Javanese concepts such as *alus* (refined) and *kasar* (unrefined) significantly affect the behavior, and also affect the manner of conflict. Since it is important to be *alus*, Javanese avoid showing their feelings directly to others. In this paper, we will see a case of conflict between two women in the study site.

The feeling of *iri* (envy or jealousy) is related to this conflict case. Gossiping and actions based on *iri* feelings are aimed toward equalization of neighbors. Javanese ritual is also used to correct existing inequality, but the way differs greatly based on gender. The performance of the men at the ritual is to achieve equalization of status through performed politeness. On the other hand, women’s gossiping is done to diminish the good name of a neighbor in order to achieve equalization.