

# LESSON 2

Way of life and  
wet rice agriculture  
in the lowlands:  
The case of Java

<b>Subject</b>	History/Social Studies
<b>Topic</b>	Way of life and wet rice agriculture in the lowlands: The case of Java
<b>Level</b>	Lower secondary
<b>Key idea</b>	Across time, people respond to the varied natural environment of a region in multiple ways that shape their worldviews and ways of life.
<b>Key concepts</b>	Environment, highlands, lowlands, coastlands People, worldviews, way of life Response
<b>No. of periods/lessons</b>	1 period (1 period is approximately 50 minutes)
<b>Facilities needed</b>	A/V equipment and Internet access to play the video clips (or hard copy with similar content) Sources and handouts for distribution
<b>Prerequisite knowledge</b>	No prerequisite knowledge required. Understanding the attributes of lowlands (as explored in Lesson 1: Flood plains and river systems) is a plus.

### Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES
<p><b>1.</b> Identify the key features and significance of festivals, rituals and stories that are common in the region.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Link a community's way of life, its festivals, rituals and stories to the environment.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Examine videos and artefacts to draw out attributes and significance of festivals, rituals and stories.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Perform a role to recognize the feelings of people involved in stories.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Create stories or rituals which are similar to the ones that are experienced in many parts of a region.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Demonstrate awareness that environments shape our worldviews and ways of life.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Cooperate in groups to complete task assigned.</p>

Section	Lesson Development	Resources	Rationale
Introduction [5 minutes]	<p><b>1. Hook activity</b></p> <p>1.1 Show video or images of the rice harvest festival (Source 1 or Source 2). Ask the students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you see?</li> <li>• What do you think the festival is about?</li> <li>• Why do you think the festival is important to many communities in Southeast Asia?</li> </ul> <p>1.2 To highlight the idea of sharedness, point out that the rice festival is celebrated in many parts of Southeast Asia.</p> <p>1.3 Link responses to the fact that many of the communities in the lowlands are focused on agriculture. Festivals and rituals associated with this activity have shaped their way of life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source 1: Video of rice Jenang Festival in Java celebrating a traditional dish of porridge served with coconut and brown sugar. <a href="https://youtu.be/6hT-6t-Y30A">youtu.be/6hT-6t-Y30A</a> (58 s)</li> <li>• Source 2: Jenang Festival image</li> </ul>	A video is used as a hook to arouse students' interest in the lesson.
Development [40 minutes]	<p><b>2. Group work: Source/artefact analysis</b></p> <p>2.1 Once the festival has been identified by the class, provide each group with a picture of an artefact connected to the festival in Solo, Surakarta, Indonesia (Source 3).</p> <p>2.2 Ask students to bring artefacts connected with a rice festival within their own community (optional).</p> <p>2.3 Students work in groups to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw out the artefact</li> <li>• Name the artefact</li> <li>• Jot down what they observe about the artefact</li> <li>• Guess the significance of the artefact for the festival or ritual (what it is used for)</li> </ul> <p>2.4 The groups share with the rest of the class.</p> <p>2.5 Provide the actual name of the artefact and its significance if students are unsure or have guessed incorrectly.</p> <p>2.6 Point out to the class that there are many similarities in the artefacts and rituals carried out during harvest festivals across the region. Highlight that some rituals differ across the region with the influence of religion and other factors over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source 3: Cultural artefacts from the Jenang Festival (or artefacts from the local community)</li> </ul>	This activity allows students to work like archaeologists and to take notes on their findings.

Section	Lesson Development	Resources	Rationale
	<p><b>3. Role play</b></p> <p>3.1 Show the video about the rice goddess to generate student interest (Source 4).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> the full video lasts 25 minutes. A short extract may be selected to show during the class. Alternatively, students can be asked to watch the video prior to the class.</p> <p>3.2 Distribute copies of the story about the goddess of rice to each group (Source 5).</p> <p>3.3 Groups role play the whole story or parts of the story. Then, the students identify elements in the story that refer to an agrarian life.</p> <p>3.4 Point out that similar stories about rice are found beyond Java and in other countries in Southeast Asia, as many of the communities in lowlands depended on agriculture for their livelihood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Source 4: Video about the goddess of rice (25m 46s) <a href="https://youtu.be/CV4krSdeXOs">youtu.be/CV4krSdeXOs</a></li> <li>Source 5: Folktale about the goddess of rice</li> </ul>	The role play allows students to put themselves in the shoes – or place – of others to better understand their motivations and emotions.
Closure [5 minutes]	<p><b>4. Reflection</b></p> <p>4.1 Summarize the lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our way of life (festivals/rituals/stories) is shaped by the environment we live in.</li> <li>Lowlands in Southeast Asia focus on agriculture, which has shaped their way of life.</li> <li>Consequently, many festivals, rituals and stories are common in lowlands across Southeast Asia.</li> <li>At times, they differ due to the influences of religion and the time period.</li> </ul> <p><b>5. Suggested home extension activities</b></p> <p>As part of the reflection, ask students to do one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect stories related to agriculture (e.g. from their own community or country) and mark out the aspects related to agriculture.</li> <li>Create their own story related to agriculture</li> <li>Create an artefact to be used in the harvest festival and explain its significance.</li> <li>These pieces of work can be read or put up in class.</li> </ul>		Extension activities can be done as part of the reflection so students can demonstrate their understanding of the concept or generalization taught in the lesson.

## Sources and handouts

### Glossary

Agriculture: The science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool and other products.

Festival: A day or period of celebration. It is often organized for religious reasons. More recently, it can refer also to a programme of cultural events or entertainment.

Folktale: A traditional story or legend that is passed down through generations to a group of people and forms part of this people's oral tradition.

Ritual: A religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to an established order.

## Source 1: The Jenang Festival in the news

### 🎥 The Jenang Festival in Surakarta, Solo, Indonesia

Video clip (0 m 58 s)

[youtu.be/6hT-6t-Y3OA](https://youtu.be/6hT-6t-Y3OA)

Source: © CV. Lantar Cipta Media

## Source 2: The Jenang Festival



Source:

JP/Ganug Nugroho Adi, [www.thejakartapost.com/life/2017/02/22/jenang-festival-preserves-traditional-food.html](http://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2017/02/22/jenang-festival-preserves-traditional-food.html)

## Source 3: Cultural artefacts from the Jenang Festival

### Coconut graters



Source:

Yahya Tedjo, [www.kompasiana.com/enclear/54f33ff3745513a32b6c6d3f/kampretjebul3-festival-jenang-solo-2015#](http://www.kompasiana.com/enclear/54f33ff3745513a32b6c6d3f/kampretjebul3-festival-jenang-solo-2015#)

### Jenang Festival serving pots



Source:

Reca Ence Abdurokhim, [www.kompasiana.com/enclear/54f33ff3745513a32b6c6d3f/kampretjebul3-festival-jenang-solo-2015#](http://www.kompasiana.com/enclear/54f33ff3745513a32b6c6d3f/kampretjebul3-festival-jenang-solo-2015#)

### Cooking pot



Source:

Coretan Hana, [www.ainahana.com/2016/02/serunya-festival-jenang-solo-2016.html](http://www.ainahana.com/2016/02/serunya-festival-jenang-solo-2016.html)

### Source 4: Theatre play: The departing of Goddess Sri



Gnayaw Puppets live at Sadranan Agung Sri Tandur Arts Festival Central Java, Indonesia, 2015

Video clip (25 m 46 s)

[youtu.be/CV4krSdeXOs](https://youtu.be/CV4krSdeXOs)

Source: © Gnayaw Wayang

## Source 5: Folktale

### The Goddess of Rice, a tale from Indonesia

A long, long time ago, on the island of Java there were no rice plants. The people of the earth had only grown cassava for their daily food. Rice was only permitted to be grown in heaven. At that time rice was the food of the gods.

At that time man was permitted to visit heaven by walking on the clouds. The gods and goddesses often came down to earth to chat with man.

One day a youth went to heaven. He happened to see the gods dining on food that he had not seen on earth. The youth did not know that the food he saw was rice.

The fragrant smell of the rice made the youth's mouth water. How he wished to taste the delicious rice!

He sought a way to get his wish. He went to see Dewi Sri, the Goddess of Rice. He found the courage to beg Dewi Sri to be permitted to stay in heaven and to learn to grow rice.

He said, 'Dewi Sri, Goddess of Rice. I beg to be permitted to stay for a while in heaven. Please allow me to help plant, harvest, and pound your rice. Even if I get only a handful of rice, I want to help. I want to taste this rice, even if only a little!'

Dewi Sri, who was wise and kind-hearted, agreed. 'Did you know that rice comes from this plant?' She showed him a rice plant. 'You may work here and learn to be a farmer and cultivate rice.'

How joyful was the youth to get permission to stay in heaven. Dewi Sri taught the youth how to plant rice. First she taught him how to plough the rice field with a kind of tool to turn over the soil. It was called a *waluku*.

Then she taught him how to soften the soil with a harrow called a *garu*.

After the soil was softened, the youth learned how to irrigate, raise seedlings, plant and harvest. When the rice plant ripened, the goddess showed him how to cut the stalk using a small palm-held reaping knife called an *ani-ani*.

Dewi Sri also taught the youth how to pound the rice in a rice mortar called a *lesung*. When all of this work was done, the youth was at last allowed to taste a small handful of the rice. It was delicious! Just as he had imagined it would be.

**Cutting rice using *ani-ani***



(continued ➔)

*Waluku*



The youth stayed on in heaven and learned rice farming well. He also enjoyed delicious rice many times.

But after several years of hard work as a farmer in heaven, the youth decided to go back home to earth. He longed for his family, relatives and neighbours.

'How happy they would be if the people on Java Island could enjoy this delicious rice,' he thought. 'By eating rice, the people could become as healthy and strong as the gods.'

The youth approached Dewi Sri and asked permission to go down to earth to visit his family and friends, whom he had not seen in such a long time. Dewi Sri agreed. But very early in the morning, without the gods' knowledge, the youth took several ripe rice stalks. He carried them with him to earth.

Arriving on earth, the youth planted the rice grains just the way he had learned in heaven. The rice grew rapidly. He worked hard and his plants developed well.

As soon as he had a harvest, he gave rice seeds to all of his neighbours and showed them how to plant and care for the rice.

Eventually all places on Java Island were covered with rice plants. When the rice was ripening for harvest, a golden yellow colour covered the entire land of Java Island.

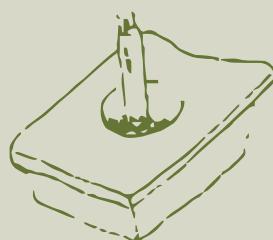
One day the gods came to visit earth. How startled they were to see golden rice plants stretching in all directions. They hurried back to heaven and reported to Dewi Sri. The gods were furious. Rice was permitted only in heaven.

Dewi Sri descended to earth. She knew this must be because of the youth who had helped grow rice in heaven. He must have stolen the rice seeds when he left heaven.

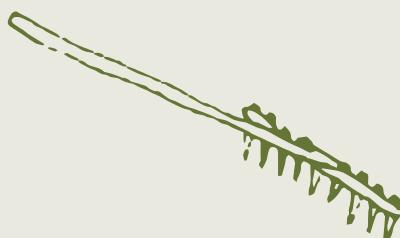
She soon met that youth.

At first Dewi Sri was angry, 'Young man, why did you betray my trust? You should not have stolen rice. This is the food of the gods.'

*Lesung*



*Garu*



(continued ☞)

'Forgive me, Dewi Sri,' said the youth. 'I did take rice seeds back from heaven without asking permission first. I did not do this for my own interest, Dewi Sri. I brought this rice back for the benefit of all the people on Java Island. These people had only cassavas to eat. I took pity on my fellow men and shared with them the rice seeds so that they also could taste delicious rice. I know I have angered you, Dewi Sri. I am willing to accept punishment for what I have done.'

Dewi Sri's anger subsided. The kind-hearted youth had intended to do something sincere and noble because he thought of other people.

'I forgive you,' replied Dewi Sri. 'But you should always ask permission first and not take things by stealing. As punishment for this, I will never allow another human to come to heaven, the place where the gods live.'

'However,' she continued, 'You will be allowed to cultivate this rice. But take notice that this rice plant is like my child. Take good care of it just as I have taught you.'

Dewi Sri gave clear instructions. 'Irrigate the rice field regularly. Weed the wild plants around the rice plants. Fertilize the soil. Harvest carefully with the *ani-ani* knife, so that you do not waste any grains or damage them. Let the birds also enjoy a bit of the delicious rice. Don't kill them, because the birds are the beloved animals of the gods. If you don't pay attention to my orders, I will send natural disasters to destroy your work! That was Dewi Sri's advice.'

Before Dewi Sri flew back to heaven, she spoke once more. 'In order to make the rice plants grow best, follow nature's rules. Plant the rice at the right time. I will give a sign from heaven by dropping jasmine flowers from my hair bun. These flowers will become the *waluku* stars (the constellation Orion). This is the sign that the season for planting has come.'

### Vocabulary

Cassava is a widely-cultivated tropical crop for its roots, which are a staple food for about 500 million people worldwide. Highly nutritious, the cassava root is used as a vegetable in dishes, grated to make cakes, or ground into tapioca flour. It is also called *singkong* (Indonesia), *ubi kayu* (Malaysia), *kamoteng kahoy* (Philippines), *man sampalang* (Thailand), and *củ sắn* or *khoai mì* (Viet Nam).

Dewi Sri is the goddess associated with rice, abundance and fertility among the Balinese, Javanese and Sundanese of Indonesia.

Orion is a formation of stars (or constellation) easily visible in the sky through the alignment of three bright stars making up Orion's belt. The name Orion is derived from a hunter in Greek mythology.

#### Source:

Telling Tales from Southeast Asia and Korea (Teachers' Guide) [asianfolktales.unescoapceiu.org/folktales/read/intonesia\\_2.htm](http://asianfolktales.unescoapceiu.org/folktales/read/intonesia_2.htm)