

Religio-Linguistic Landscapes in Javanese Public Spaces

The Old Javanese phrase *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*—“Unity in Diversity”—encapsulates Indonesia’s ethos of pluralism, yet the extent to which this diversity is reflected in public spaces remains underexplored. This research project investigates the religio-linguistic landscapes in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta), focusing on the language used in signage outside of houses of worship, including, but not limited to mosques, churches, and temples. Java, home to rich religious diversity, serves as an ideal context for examining the intersection of language and religion in public spaces. The linguistic landscapes of these sites are inherently multilingual, featuring Indonesian, Javanese, Arabic, and English, with diverse scripts such as Latin, Arabic, and Javanese *Aksara*. Through photographic surveys and discourse analysis, the study examines how religious and cultural expressions are mediated through language and explores the role of religiolects—distinct linguistic forms shaped by religious identity—in shaping public signage.

Two comparable houses of worship might present themselves with drastically different signage. The mosque Kagungan Dalem Masjid Gedhe near the Royal Palace of Yogyakarta features a simple sign in Indonesian and Javanese *Aksara*, while Ganjuran Church in Bantul displays a multilingual mass schedule in Indonesian, Javanese, and English. Despite similar architectural styles, the church appears to cater itself multilingually while the mosque seems to focus on denoting the name and address of the location for visitors.

Providing a systematic examination of the signage outside religious sites can enable scholars and the public to engage with these textual witnesses. The findings offer a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between religion and language in Java’s diverse and dynamic society. Beyond the local context, this research holds broader implications for sociolinguistics, religious studies, and minority-majority relations, contributing new insights into the role of language in multilingual, religiously plural settings.

Keywords: linguistic landscapes, Java, religiolects, multilingualism, Indonesia

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