

ISMIL abstract

Collecting honey with love songs:

A sociolinguistic analysis of the Petalangan honey-collecting ritual, *menumbai*.

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In this paper, I analyze a honey-collecting ritual called *menumbai* as practiced among the Petalangan Malay speakers of Riau in Indonesia. The Petalangan are one of the indigenous ethnic groups of Riau, who live in the forested Kampar hinterlands on the eastern part of Sumatra. Petalangans have practiced the *menumbai* ritual, when they harvest honey from bee-hived trees. *Menumbai* literally means “enchanting bees with songs,” and Petalangans believe that the ritual engenders magic that protects honey-collectors from being stung by the bees. Given that the *menumbai* songs are mostly love songs, I will analyze (1) what kinds of conventional linguistic devices and rhetoric are employed to express love in the *menumbai* ritual songs, and (2) how this expressive genre is related to the actual working process of collecting honey. By addressing these two research questions, I will demonstrate the contextual meanings and multiple functions of the *menumbai* ritual performance. The ritual that I analyze in this paper was documented in *Desa Dundangan*, a Petalangan village in March 1999, while I was conducting my ethnographic and linguistic field research among the Petalangan people for fourteen months between 1998 and 2000.