

Paes Ageng and Paseksen Luhur: Symbolic meanings of human life cycle markers

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Abstract

The Nusantara society tries to blend in and preserve the sustainable environment through symbols. One is contained in the bridal attire as part of the human life cycle marker. This article aims to reveal the drapery motifs form, function, and symbolic meaning in the Paes Ageng Yogyakarta and Paseksen Luhur Samin bridal attire. The analytical method uses structural analysis of forms, functions, symbols, and values in the human life cycle tradition. The symbols of *pinuwunan*, *pinuwunan*, *pratanda*, and *pranata* symbols are values in achieving safety and a reminder for the bride to preserve their environment.

Keywords: bridal attire; human life cycle; *Paes Ageng Yogyakarta*; *Paseksen Luhur Samin*

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1.0 Introduction

Javanese attire habits emphasize material aspects and moments as social markers. Crawford (2017) looks at Javanese civilization in the past as pioneers in attire, refinement, and royalty adopted even to the point of excess (Wijanarko, 2021). The attire procedure in *Mataraman* culture originated within the Surakarta Hadiningrat and Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat palaces. Nowadays, the public is allowed to imitate the king's regalia for attire at wedding rituals and ceremonies. This tradition is still being preserved, as the bride and groom are placed on the day of the wedding reception wearing their best attires (Raffles, 2019). His attire is known as *Paes Ageng's* bridal dress. *Paes Ageng* has complete components like royal attire, including wearing *kamph* drapery and complete and full shining make-up (Putri & Sampurno, 2022).

There are differences between agricultural communities in rural areas far from the centre of the kingdom. They create their own bridal attire culture, which originates from instincts that are influenced by surrounding conditions, such as in the Samin community in Dusun Jepang, Margomulyo, Bojonegoro, and Jawa Timur. Samin's teachings are identical to the philosophy of traditional Javanese society in their behaviour and thought concepts (Huda, 2019). *Paseksen* is included in the wedding ritual tradition. Before 2017, the traditional Samin wedding procession was still closed and not accessible to the public. There is a tradition that the bride and groom must be fellow Samin people. The bridal attire as a marker has not been specifically designed Until 2022, the Jarik *Paseksen* Luhur

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drapery, which has philosophical value, will begin to be used to strengthen ancestral teachings about simplicity (Sutrisno, 2024). This phenomenon shows that attire is not just a functional necessity but also a way to convey identity, lifestyle, and values (Qorib, Oktarina, & Ermelinda, 2023).

Attire, as a reflection of identity, status, hierarchy, and gender, has symbolic value and is an expression of a way of life, making it a social and cultural marker (Nordholt, Suffatni, & Aziz, 2005). Nowadays, fashion or attire style is something that is equated with clothing, even though in fact fashion is everything related to the procedure or style of clothing (Rohmah & Legowo, 2022). Fashion is a means of showing the wearer's self-expression, which is influenced by developments in fashion styles. Factors of cultural access, type of livelihood, and environmental conditions of users cause differences in bridal fashion styles. Based on this phenomenon, this paper aims to identify the meaning and symbolic value of the Paes Ageng bridal attire in Yogyakarta and Paseksen Luhur in the Samin community. The identification aims to determine the differences in form, function, meaning, and value contained in the two bridal attire.

2.0 Literature Review

Attire for Javanese people is traditionally synonymous with magical rituals and ethics. Nowadays, there have been changes in form or artistic adjustments to bridal attire. However, the essence of the symbolic meaning and values contained are still there. The Liang Gie (1976) stated that these values include sensory values, form, knowledge, and life. This value depicts that the bride and groom are expected to be able to show brilliance, admiration, wealth of knowledge, and become a successor in the future (Widayanti, 2011).

The habit of dressing neatly is common among the Javanese because dirty clothes are a disgrace (Raffles, 2019). According to Raffles in the History of Java, attire procedures in the 18th century were divided based on the wearer and their use, including daily attire, ceremonial attire, and war attire. Ceremonial attire was neat and luxurious; aristocrats wore cloth called *dodot* or *kampuh*, which was made of silk or cotton. At formal ceremonies or weddings, the arms, hands, and parts of the body up to the middle of the stomach are not covered. Women meet the king; their hair is decorated with flowers/jewels. Gold plates or *jamming* are worn on the forehead, and gold jewellery on the neck and arms is used during wedding ceremonies for men and women.

The inland areas identically far from the centre of the kingdom have their own identity. One of them is in the style of dress of the Samin people who live inland in the national forest area but do not cooperate or work under the company (Asrawijaya & Hudayana, 2021). The conservative community pattern also has an impact on traditional clothing. Until 2017, there was no special clothing for brides; after that, there were special clothing motifs to strengthen the identity of the community (Wardoyo & Wulandari, 2024). This fact is interesting, as there are quite a few significant cultural differences.

One of the differences that is visible in clothing is the aesthetic form of batik motifs as an explicit marker of the symbolic value of clothing. Stylization of natural forms in the real world into ornaments or decorations by simplifying objects (Yunianto, 2018). The stylization of bridal attire highlights the character of every living creature as a form of hope for the wearer. Previous researchers have widely discussed this. One of them is drapery motifs in Paes Ageng Janggan Menir's bridal attire, which use cinder, nick, or glamping motifs. The motif resembles the Chhabadi Bhat motif, which consists of eight lotus petals with various flowers, birds, and leaves curving around the center of the petals. The difference lies in the technique of making it, not weaving but using batik techniques (Setiadi, 2024). The Chhabadi Bhat motif is one of the traditional patola motifs used by brides at wedding ceremonies in India. These eight lotus petals are believed to be the favourite of the Anavil Brahmins and are the eight teachings of Buddhism (Mili, 2014).

3.0 Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative descriptive method because the object of the study is specific. The object of the study is the drapery motif in *Paes Ageng* and *Paseksen Luhur*, with data sources obtained from the Samin community and the Duchy of Pakualaman through direct observation. The research procedure begins with data collection, data processing, data analysis, and data presentation. The data collection stage is through field observations that involve direct roles between researchers and resource persons. Interviews with traditional leaders were conducted internally and in-depth. Literature search of previous research findings in 2024. The collection of data on motif forms, functions, and meanings was categorized based on the urgency of the data and processed into main data. The main data were analyzed into research findings and narrated into research discussions. The presentation of data in the form of pictures, tables, and diagrams presented to provide clear information. This research aims to identify the values contained in the bridal fashion *paes ageng Mataraman* culture in Yogyakarta and *paseksen luhur* in the Samin community as part of the human life cycle ceremony.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Paes Ageng Bridal Attire

Paes Ageng attire was created as the regalia of the Kraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat palace. Until the beginning of the 20th century, this attire was only intended for the royal court with regulations of Pranatan Dalem Bab Jenenge Panganggo Keprabon Ing Kraton Nagari Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat. Royal attire that brides can wear includes Paes Ageng, Paes Ageng Kanigaran, and Paes Ageng Janggan Menir. All three were permitted to be used by the royal family, especially the Sultan's sons and daughters (Widayanti, 2011). In the following period, after Indonesian independence, these clothes and make-up were allowed to be worn by the public as bridal attire.

The types of *Paes Ageng* attire are differentiated by their form and function. Firstly, *Paes Ageng* attire is used during the *panggih* ceremony, a significant event where the bride and groom meet after the marriage contract. In this attire, the bride and groom wear *kamphuh* without tops. Secondly, *Paes Ageng Kanigaran* attire is used during reception ceremonies, with the completeness of this clothing resembling *Paes Ageng* but with the addition of top clothing in the form of a *sikepan* for men and a *kebaya* for women. Thirdly, *Paes Ageng Jangan Menir* attire is worn by the bride during the *boyongan* ceremony, which involves taking the bride to the groom's residence. This clothing is similar to *Paes Ageng Kanigaran* attire but without the *kamphuh*.

The completeness of the *Paes Ageng* bridal attire shows the beauty and majesty of the bride. The groom's complete attire consists of a blue *kuluk*, *cinde slarak kendang* pants, *kamphuh* drapery with *semen* motif, *buntal*, *kamus*, *lontong cinde*, and *selop* with jewelry of *cundhuk mentul*, *kalung susun tanggalan*, *gelang kana*, *cincin*, *kelat bahu*, *sumping*, *slepe*, and *keris branggah*. For the bride it consists of complex makeup covering *penunggul*, *wanda luruh*, *pengapit*, *penitis*, *godheg*, *prada* and *ketep*, *kinjengan*, *cithak*, *jahitan mata*, *menjangan ranggah*, *sumping*. The bride's accessories include *gelung bokor*, *jarik cinde motif slarak kendang*, *kamphuh* drapery with *semen* motif, *udet cinde*, *buntal*, and *selop* with jewelry of *subang ronyok*, *centhung*, *cundhuk mentul*, *kalung susun tanggalan*, *gelang kana*, *cincin*, *kelat bahu*, and *slepe*. This can be observed in Figure 1.

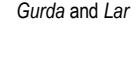


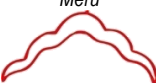
Fig. 1. (a) *Paes Ageng* attire worn by BPH Kusumo Kuntunugroho with Laily Annisa Kusumastuti; (b) *Paes Ageng Kanigaran* attire; (c) *Paes Ageng Jangan Menir* attire.

(Source: (a)(Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat, 2024); (b) (riaspengantinjogja.wordpress.com, n.d.); (c) (Pringgawidagda, 2007)

One of the distinguishing features of *Paes Ageng* bridal attire from other bridal attire is the use of *kamphuh*. *Kamphuh* is a batik-patterned drapery used as a body covering for brides, and it has a width of 2 meters and a length of 4 meters (Suharti, 2015). The batik motifs used as *kamphuh* are usually *semen* motifs. This motif has various types, but this article discussed the *semen* king motif. The variety of *semen* kidang motifs is complete compared to other *semen* motifs. This motif contains the hope that humans, as perfect creatures of God, must be clever and never give up on achieving perfection in life (*kasampurnaning dumadi*). Details of the shape and meaning of the motifs on the *kamphuh semen kidang* can be seen in Table 1. The *kamphuh semen kidang* motif is even more beautiful and majestic with the affixing of *prada*. *Prada* is a gold dye that is applied to intricate batik motifs. The gold color in intricate motifs gives a graceful and luxurious effect to the bride who wears it. This clearly shows the hierarchy or social status of the user.

Table 1. The shape of the motif from *kamphuh semen kidang*

Motif Design	Type	Meaning	Motif Design	Type	Meaning
	Main Motif	Living things in the world always bloom and grow. Humans who use it are expected to be able to use their minds to continue to develop their knowledge towards perfection.			
	Support Motif	Every human being is expected to protect each other in married life.			
	Support Motif	Symbolizes strength, might, and loyalty in life.		Support Motif	Science and knowledge as controllers of life from various passions.

Motif Design	Type	Meaning	Motif Design	Type	Meaning
Air Animals 	Support Motif	Humans live as people who always remember that God is the creator of everything.			nature.
Flame 	Support Motif	Symbolizes enthusiasm in achieving the expected goals.	Cecek 	Isen-isen	Symbolizes unity in achieving the main goal of achieving God's approval.
Meru 	Support Motif	Mountains are places with various resources that are beneficial to humans but can pose threats so that you remain alert.	Cecek Sawut 	Isen-isen	Human life is full of challenges and obstacles in order to achieve perfection in life.
Hayat tree 	Support Motif	A hayat tree as a shelter for various types of living creatures symbolizes the benefits of human life for			

(Source: Writer, 2024)

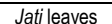
4.2 Paseksen Luhur Bridal Attire

The Samin people believe the wedding ritual tradition, Paseksen, is a sacred traditional procession. The processes carried out have structurally binding rules for social institutions, especially when selecting partners who must be members of the Samin community. Traditional wedding processions held before 2017 were still closed and could only be witnessed by the Samin community. Changes in tradition have occurred since 2018, with the freedom to choose a couple and the opening of the series of wedding processions to the public.

The Samin people have a simple lifestyle. An elder of the Samin community revealed that traditional attire refers to the ancestors, namely wearing black and simple clothes (Rumini, 2024). Attire was explicitly made for brides starting in 2022, namely jarik drapery with the Paseksen Luhur motif. The first use of this attire was by the bride and groom Suyanto and Widyawati (both of whom come from Dusun Jepang, Margomulyo, Bojonegoro). The subsequent use in 2023 will be the couple Riyan Agus Suwarso from Dusun Japan, Bojonegoro and Inggrit Citra Rahmadanti from Ngawi. This drapery was used in 2024 at the wedding between Aning Sungatmi from Dusun Japan, Bojonegoro and Aditya from Sidoarjo..

The *Paseksen Luhur* bridal attire consists of men's and women's clothing. Attire for men consists of *udheng obor sewu* headband, white shirt, and " jarik drapery with *Paseksen Luhur* motif. For the bride it consists of a *sri kuncoro* shawl, kebaya, and jarik drapery with *Paseksen Luhur* motif. The jarik drapery with *Paseksen Luhur* motif is rectangular in shape with a width of 110 cm and a length of 245 cm. The variety of motifs consists of the main motif (*cempaka mulya*), supporting motifs (*mimi lan mintuno* and *jati* leaves), and *isen-isen* (*cecek kepyur* and *cecek grompol telu*). This motif aligns with Samin's third noble statement, namely that all humans on earth are equal before God and are brothers (*oyo mbedo mbedakne sapodo padaning urip, kabeh iku sedulure dewe*). Details of the form and meaning of the motifs are in Table 2.

Table 2. The shape of the motif from *Paseksen Luhur*

Motif Design	Type	Meaning	Motif Design	Type	Meaning
Cempaka Mulya 	Main Motif	Determination to achieve the goal of married life, based on love, mutual respect and complementarity.			life.
Mimi lan Mintuno 	Support Motif	Describes animals that always pair together for life and death. Interpretation of the symbol of indivisible unity.	Cecek Kepyur 	Isen-isen	the value of responsibility for completing work as a mandate that is carried out.
Jati leaves 	Support Motif	the value of gratitude for the abundance of blessings from the earth's products which are useful for the continuation of	Cecek Grompol Telu 	Isen-isen	the value of simplicity, thoroughness, caution in carrying out work.

(Source: Writer, 2024)

There is meaning in every part of the *Paseksen Luhur* bridal attire. The groom's attire is *udheng obor sewu*, and *udheng* is a headband, understood as *mudheng*, which means understanding (Wardoyo, 2019). Its use on the head means this organ's glory, the brain's location, and the centre of consciousness and inner thought for humans as creatures created by God that differentiate them from other creatures. The bride's attire consists of a *sri kuncoro* shawl, hair neatly loose or simply tied, a black kebaya, and *jarik* drapery with *Paseksen Luhur* motif as a bottom. The simplicity of bridal attire in Samin traditions reflects the superficial character of the life of the Samin people. Samin women represent a local community because they choose to live with their community group in a close inland place in a powerful system.

There are rules for using the *jarik Paseksen Luhur*. For brides, it is generally the same: the number of *wiron* of seven folds, the style of tying at the stomach using a *stagen*, and the bottom border above the ankles. Difference in fold direction, if a man folds from left to right, the right front view is the *wiron* position. For the bride, the direction of the folds is from right to left, the left front view is the *wiron* position.

5.0 Discussion

The bridal attire of *Paes Ageng* and *Paseksen Luhur* has magical and ethical meanings. The meaning is material and spiritual, which can provide value for those who wear it and those who see it. This is still in line with the culture of dressing since ancient times. Even the style of dress has spread to various corners of the region, although it has different styles. An example is what happens in the Samin community with the *Paseksen Mulia* bridal attire.



Fig. 2. The bride and groom use *jarik Paseksen Luhur*
(Source: Writer, 2024)

The two bridal attires have *luhur* values that are specific to the bride. Transitions in each phase of human life sometimes place humans in a vulnerable, weak, or critical position. Marriage is a marker of changing phases of the human life cycle from adolescence to adulthood. This phase is a sacred moment that is expected only to be passed once in a lifetime. This moment's importance means that you must prepare thoughtfully and carefully to step on it to achieve safety (Suwito, Adrianto, Baroroh, & Nurwanti, 2009). An explanation of the symbolic values is presented in Figure 3.

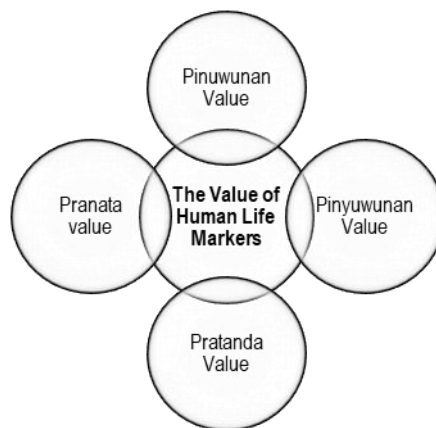


Fig. 3. The Value of Human Life Markers
(Source: Writer, 2024)

There are symbolic values in the *kampuh semen kidang* and the *jarik paseksen luhur* as part of bridal attire in Java. These values include *pinuwunan* (expressing gratitude), *pinyuwunan* (supplication), *pratanda* (marker), and *pranata* (preparing for the future) (Gamayanti, 2024). The explanation of these values is as follows,

5.1 *Pinuwunan* Value

Expressions of gratitude (*pinuwunan*) are poured out by the bride's family, especially the bride and groom's parents. Thanks to the parents' hard work in educating and providing for all their needs, the children they cared for arrived to start living independently. The provisions for the future life of the bride and groom are depicted in the various drapery motifs in batik.

5.2 *Pinyuwunan* Value

The supplication (*pinyuwunan*) is explicitly drawn from the variety of motifs. The golden and bright colors in *semen kidang* are an expression of hope for the brilliance of the future. Meanwhile, the dark-colored *jarik Paseksen Luhur* represents simplicity and inner calm. Both symbolize the hope for the bride and groom in the future of achieving brilliance in marriage, ease of sustenance, having intelligent and virtuous offspring, and being able to uphold the status of their extended family.

5.3 *Pratanda* Value

Markers (*pratanda*) based on attire designation. *Kampuh semen kidang* is a royal regalia that shows the specialness of a bride, like a king at the wedding. *Jarik Paseksen Luhur* has a philosophical value that strengthens ancestral teachings about simplicity and marks the Samin community's openness to responding to current developments, especially when choosing a life partner. Inwardly, this clothing marks a change in a human phase, from cheerful adolescence to responsible adulthood.

5.4 *Pranata* Value

Pranata, this bridal attire symbolises that future life is full of challenges and temptations. These temptations are wealth, women, position, and others. The hope is that by wearing these clothes, the bride and groom can act in a straight line according to norms. No matter how beautiful the attire is, if they cannot maintain the honour, they make the wearer despicable.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

Marriage, as part of the marker of the changing phase of the human life cycle, becomes a sacred event full of hope. Javanese bridal fashion is designed in such a way as to provide advice and a picture of the life that the couple will live in the next life. The bride, likened to the main character in the marriage life cycle ceremony, is depicted in the clothes she wears, which are full of symbolic meaning. One of the symbolic meanings and values is contained in the *kampuh semen kidang* cloth as part of the *paes ageng* bridal outfit and the *jarik paseksen luhur* which is part of the *paseksen luhur* bridal outfit of the *Samin* community.

The object of this study is limited to *kampuh semen kidang* fabric in *paes ageng* bridal wear and *jarik paseksen luhur* fabric in *paseksen luhur* bridal wear of the Samin community. This study has a limitation on strengthening the meaning and symbolic value of marriage as a marker of changing the phase of the human life cycle from adolescence to a sacred adult. The implementation of a sacred wedding ceremony is passed once in a lifetime.

Further studies are needed on the objects of batik fabrics or Indonesian wastra used in other traditional wedding outfits in various regions. The phenomenon of cultural shifts in the use of traditional clothing in the general public, some of which still maintain the rules of the *pakem* and some have undergone changes in the way of dressing. This is an opportunity for future studies, especially the study of symbolic meaning in the traditional wedding ceremony and its complement.

7.0 Paper Contribution to Related Study

This study contributes to discussing the meaning and symbolic value of marriage as a marker of changes in the sacred phase of the human life cycle, especially in the *paes ageng* bride and the *paseksen luhur* bride of the Samin community. Both have the same depth of sacred value of marriage as a marker of life cycle phase changes. The holy values are summarized in the expression of the value of *pinuwunan* (expression of gratitude), *pinyuwunan* (request), *pratanda* (sign), and *pranata* (preparing for the future). *Paes ageng* bridal attire has become the standard and reference dress in the traditional wedding tradition in Yogyakarta and Central Java. This study provides insight into the traditional wedding traditions of a pair of *paseksen luhur* brides of the Samin community in Bojonegoro, East Java. The display of simplicity in dressing using *jarik paseksen luhur* is able to represent the symbolic values of the life of the Samin people.

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