

Uncovering Sundanese Values by Analyzing Symbolic Meaning of Ménak Priangan Clothing (1800-1942)

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Abstract. This study investigates symbolic meanings found in the Sunda ethnic clothing, particularly the Menak Priangan clothing. This study aims to uncover and document those symbolic meanings found in the Menak Priangan clothing as an effort to develop Sunda cultural artefacts of West Java. This study on Menak Priangan clothing applies ethnography (visual) and aesthetic methods. The visual method is utilized in order to uncover local cultural (Sunda) values found in Menak Priangan clothing visualization, including: design, model, name, and representing colours, which then directed towards local Sundanese aesthetic concepts living within the Priangan community. Furthermore, aesthetic method is used to explore role of aesthetic values in empowering visual cultural values within certain community, particularly Sunda aesthetic values. The study results show that since the 19th century, Sunda ethnic clothing was limited to Priangan Sunda only, while traditional clothing wearing by Priangan people reflects their social strata, consisting of: a. Menak Gede (Menak pangluhurna: mayor), bearing raden title, b. Menak Leutik/Santana (mayor assistant), titles: asep, mas, agus, ujang, (Nyimas for woman), c. Somah/Cacah: ordinary people/lower class. Clothing is a cultural phenomenon within certain culture reflecting such society experiences. For Menak people, clothing and its accessories have important meanings. They wear such traditional clothing and accessories as a symbol of power they have within bureaucratic structure and as a symbol of social status they bear within traditional community structure.

1. Introduction

Menak Priangan Research on Ethnic Clothing Sunda has been pioneered by a team of writers, to initiate an independent investigation of the Sundanese cultural artifacts in 2006 with the title " Design Iket Sundanese in Bandung and Sumedang Period of 1968-2006 " and in 2007 with the title " Wedding Dress Design Shift Sunda Yang influenced Islamic element in Bandung the period of the 1980s till the 2000s ". Through this research finding that the author had the team takes a strategic effort to inventory and documentation of cultural artifacts such as the Sundanese ethnic clothing, especially clothing Menak Priangan, as a cultural heritage that should be preserved and maintained its existence. Research related to fashion Menak Sunda has been done by Ayu Septiani (2012) with the title " The Power Symbol Apparel As Menak Priangan In the 19th Century SD Early 20th Century ". The study revealed that the powers possessed by Menak is a pattern of, whereas the view that Menak identical to the king who became the guardian of God serve as a reference for the exercise of power (manifest power) . To mean that the Menak was in power , is used symbols in this case is the clothing and equipment of the marvelous greatness . From these results the authors take a common thread that there needs to be more



advanced research efforts can reveal the symbolic meanings contained in Clothing Menak Priangan through visualization analysis study fashion.

2. Research Method

In the discussion of fashion Menak Priangan used ethnographic methods (visual) and methods of aesthetic. Visual methods used to peel value kesundaan in various dimensions in marvelous fashion visualization Priangan: design, model, naming, and colors that can represent them, is then directed to the concept of aesthetic reflection on society kesundaan Priangan. Activities that first do is to find and collect a good source of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources in the form of archives relates to fashion Menak Priangan. Secondary sources used include books, scientific papers, articles in newspapers / magazines, and general reference. Secondary sources used were not all directly related to the themes discussed in this paper, but there were substantively examine the theme of clothing, and there are thematically not discuss clothes, but rather to discuss aspects of the lives of the Menak Priangan. After the data sources obtained by the interpretation of the facts is then performed (visually).

In the final stage is done through a method of aesthetic studies approach Semiotics, visual language (visualization) of an object can be observed as a system of signs. In a review of visual language, there are two important aspects of semiotics, the indices and signs (including symbols). The index is a sign that has an existential dependency relationship between the sign and the 'who indicated they were', or have a causal bond / relationship with what it represents. While the mark is a basic element in semiotics and communication, ie everything that implies, which has two categories, namely as a marker (basic form; icon, symbol) and a marker (meaning). (Sachari 2002 p.74).

3. Discussion

3.1. Priangan

According to Wahyu Wibisana (1986 : 17) in Suwardi Alamsyah P (2015 : p. 16) Priangan area covers Cianjur, Bandung, Tasikmalaya, and Sumedang districts. This area is centered in Bandung city, the capital of today's West Java province, functions as the governmental and cultural development center. History analysis of Priangan shows that its people have cultural orientation towards Pajajaran.

Since the 19th century, Sunda ethnic clothing is limited to Sunda Priangan only, in which traditional clothing wearing by Priangan people reflects their social strata, consisting of:

- Menak Gede (Menak pangluhurna: mayor), bearing raden title.
- Menak Leutik/Santana (mayor assistant), titles: asep, mas, agus, ujang, (Nyimas for woman).
- Somah/Cacah: ordinary people/lower class.

Besides these social strata, there are 2 other categories of Menak :

- Menak lama, those who have cognation with mayors of old dynasty (mayors of districts from post-traditional kingdom era).
- Menak baru, those who does not have cognation with the mayors from the old dynasty, but becomes a Menak due to his today's positional.

3.2. Menak Priangan Clothing

Papaes is the way of wearing clothes which closely related to daily manner. The way of Sundanese wearing their clothes involves their traditional clothes and its accessories as well.

The nobleman dressing manner reflects his social status at the top of social structure. Basically, the Menak dressing manner during the 19th century up to 1942 had been applied by different generations, but then the colonial government issued special regulations concerning this issue, especially for government officers.

This study is focused on the Menak Gede social status related to their dressing characteristics, including:

Table 1. Dressing characteristics

<i>Man</i>		<i>Lady Dress</i>
Formal wear of a mayor wife usually follows his husband dress		
<i>Head</i>	Head cover consists of an iket (a Sunda headband), made of black batik Sawunggaling/Soga Gunawijaya/Gambir Saketi	Hair is combed backward and then bun, supported with gold hairpin completed with accessories consists of diamonds or flowers
<i>Upper Body</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing white skirt with Chiang I collar, with no sleeves/with long sleeves • Wearing <i>bedahan (sikepan)</i> short cloak applying 9 shirt buttons. Golden floral pattern embroidery was applied along the edge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing kebaya made of black velvet applying golden embroidery on the edge. • The kebaya long ends at the hips • The kebaya's neck is cut around the neck/circled • Accessories consists of: long necklace with a pendant, a serial brooch (3 layers brooch), kerabu, ring, and bracelet
<i>Lower Body</i>	<p>Wearing white/ black pants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing white skirt with Chiang I collar, with no sleeves/with long sleeves <p>Belt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When wearing <i>Keris</i>, there are usually 2 or 3 belts wearing. The first layer is a rough belt (stagen), followed by special belt covered with silk materials, and the upper one is a belt called <i>kamus</i> or <i>epek</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Keris</i> is inserted on the second belt with the handle is positioned towards the left side and should be wore when meeting the Dutch colonial officer to show respect • Daily dress of the <i>Menak</i> consists of casual cloth with white or black color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing cloth sheet (sinjang kebat) made of batik applying similar pattern with the husband batik cloth (lereng parang/doctor/parang kusuma) • A stagen belt with 4-5 meter long and 10-15 cm width is applied on the waist • Footwear consists of velvet sandals applying golden embroidery and beads <p>Daily clothes consist of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Kebaya made of satin/paris (plain or with flower patterns) ◦ Sinjang sheet with lereng batik pattern ◦ Footwear is leather sandals

3.3. Menak Priangan Clothing Accessories

The Dutch colonial government did not only regulate dressing manner of its officers, but also accessories to be used along with such clothing, as outlined in Staatsblad of 1820 No 22. Dressing accessories including tumbak ngawen (spears covered with a piece of fabric), senjata ngawen (shoulder rifle), kandaga (a safety box for official clothing, etc), padaharan, lante (a small chair made of rattan), a horse, epok (a small box to serve betel leaf), pakecohan (spittoon), gapit (artificial hands clipped with small piece of bamboo), bumbung (valuable papers storage), semambu (special belt made of silk with ornaments), a sword, a shield, songsong (royal umbrella), tumbak agem (spears used by the officer himself), and tumbak panurung (spears used by the officer's guards) (Lubis, 1998, p. 187).

Number of accessories and guards allowed was based on the officer's rank within pangreh raja structure.

Clothing accessories closely related to the Menak clothing are medals, which usually mounted on the clothes. Such honor medals were given as a reward for loyalty performed by related officer to the government. It also given to compensate treat the disappointment of the Menak suffering from government action. Such Medal of Honor, according to Bijblad no. 2500, consists of gold, silver, and bronze medals, which had to wear on the left chest using special tape. Moreover, according to the 1886 Statute no. 219, the Governor General must give a sign of loyalty and bravery medals to the regents who had shown loyalty for 30 years. When recipient officer die, his medals of honor do not need to be returned to the government, but should not be used by others as well. If the recipient of honors subjected to the death penalty or forced labor, medals should be returned to the government, while if the punishment in form of imprisonment, during prison service marks should not be used (Bijblad 4158). If a regent wearing this special medal walked past the guard of soldiers, he is entitled to respect arms of the keeper (Lopez, 1998, p 191).

3.4. Symbolic Meaning of Menak Priangan Clothing

The word "busana" is taken from the Sanskrit "bhusana". In the Java language it is known as "busono". This word refers to similar meaning in both languages, namely "jewelry". However, there was a shift in Indonesian language in which the word "busana" has been translated into "pakaian". Nonetheless, the notion of "busana" and "pakaian" are actually different, in which the word "busana" has connotation as "beautiful or nice clothes". In other words, "busana" refers to "eye catching and well suited clothes, and wore in accordance with event where it is used". This is consistent with the original meaning of the noun "busana" as "jewels", something beautiful, good, or contains artistic (aesthetic) values.

The word "busana" has several different meanings in English. Their usage depends on relevant context, such as fashion, costume, clothing, dress, and wear. The word fashion is more focused on trend, which is generally shown, certain trend during the specified time (in fashion), displayed mode (fashion show), fashion creator (fashion designer), mode book (fashion book), an image pattern of the clothes according to the latest fashion (fashion plate). Furthermore, the word costume usually associated with type of clothing, such as national dress (national costume), western clothing (west costume), Muslim clothing (Moslem costume). On the other hand, the word clothing can be interpreted as clothes, in which the term is associated with certain conditions, such as clothing for winter season (winter clothing), clothing for spring season (spring clothing). (Arifah 2003, p. 1).

Menak Priangan clothing is a manifestation of Sundanese cultural artifacts language, which full of symbolic meaning associated with the role, position and responsibilities that must be bear by a Menak. From semiotics point of view, visual language (visualization) of an object can be observed as a system of signs. From visual language perspective, there are two important aspects of semiotics exist, that are indexes and signs (including symbols). Index is a sign that has an existential dependency relationship between the sign and 'object it is signed for', or have a causal relationship with what it represents. On the other hand, mark is a basic element in semiotics and communication, i.e. everything that implies meaning, consisting of two categories, namely as a marker (basic form; icon, symbol) and as a sign (meaning). (Sachari 2002 p.74).

From visual language semiotics standpoint, anything worn by a Menak Priangan, from clothing, clothing accessories, and badge of honor as well, represent symbols of greatness/power he own, as a form of nonverbal communication of a ruler/king to his people. Menak is identical to the king who represents the God, serving as a reference in running the power (power manifestation).

From visual language semiotics perspective, analysis on symbolic meaning found within Menak Priangan clothing can be described as follows:

Table 2. symbolic meaning

<i>Indexes</i>		<i>Signs, Symbols</i>
Head	Head cover consists of an iket (a Sunda headband) or bendo, made of black batik Sawunggaling/ Soga Gunawijaya/ Gambir Saketi	Headband in the form of bendo containing a highly symbolic meaning related to the Sundanese world view, headband in form of iket/bendo related to the concept of "masagi" (4 corners), a traditional teaching tells that if someone wants to be successful he must do masagi/ngajurus/learning. So, as a king/ <i>Menak</i> , one has to master extensive knowledge (masagi), because as noble person/king with power to rule, he has to master the certain knowledge enabling him to shape himself into a leader who can protect his own people
	Clothes, consists of bedahan made of black velvet	Black color implies (silow lamun teu kabuka) that a leader (<i>Menak</i>) should be the one that hideung/mature/authoritative. Meaning that becoming a leader one has to master wide range of knowledge and insight or masagi. 2. Golden ornaments symbolizes the greatness and glory of a <i>Menak</i> /king. 3. Badges of honor symbolizes loyalty, greatness and courage, as well as a distinguishing mark of social status between a <i>Menak</i> and people in the lower social strata.
	Lower clothes consists of Dodot Santana made of batik with lereng pattern (parang rusak barong, parang kusuma, kawung besar)	Dodot Santana with lereng/slopes pattern symbolizes that a <i>Menak</i> /king is on the highest strata within his society, since lowly <i>Menak</i> should not wear batik with this pattern

MENAK PRIANGAN CLOTHING (BUPATI BANDUNG) TAHUN 1920-1942

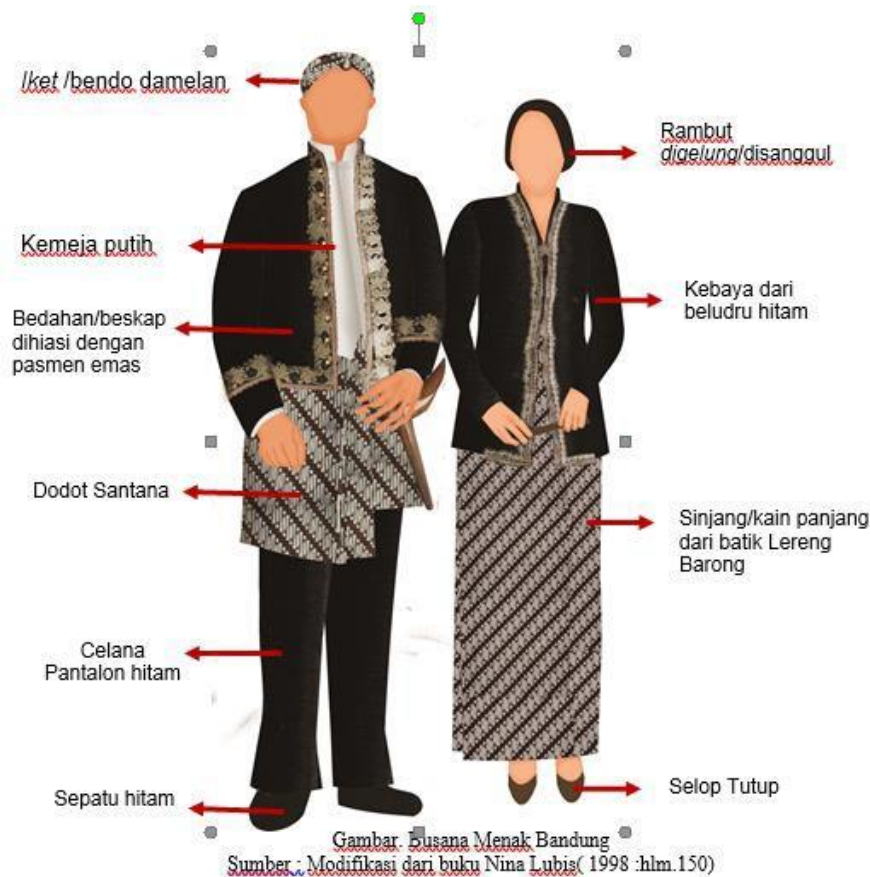


Figure 1. Busana Menaik Bandung.

4. Conclusion

Clothing is one of cultural artefacts that can communicate past events occurred in certain community to be read and studied in the future. For Menak, clothing and its accessories have a particular significance, since Menak clothing is a symbol of status in his traditional social structure, apart from being a symbol of power in the bureaucratic structure.

From clothes functions as a means of nonverbal communication point of view, the relationship between Menak as a native ruler with his people in the 19th century until the 20th can be understood as a close interdependence relationship between two different but inseparable elements. In the Javanese traditional concept, such relationship is called king- servant relationship. It indicates that the Menak life is strongly influenced by the Javanese traditions, rooted from Mataram kingdom controlled Priangan region in the past. Mataram culture influence may be seen in many aspects of Menak life, which is strongly oriented towards Javanese tradition up to two centuries after Mataram kingdom power ended. One of such tradition is symbols of power as shown in clothing and accessories used.

Menak clothing, accessories, and badges of honor represent symbols used to legitimize his power. Through dress worn a Menak/nobleman shows his authority/power to govern even to be served as just like a king.

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