

Reading the Spiritual Message Behind Javanese Traditional Wedding Procession

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ABSTRACT (Capital, Bold, 11pt)

With the development of technology and the influence of globalization, the younger generation in Java, Indonesia, tend to leave the traditional Javanese procession in their marriage. This threatens the sustainability and preservation of the cultural heritage. This research using qualitative research methods and a descriptive and semiotic approach aims to analyze the values and symbolism contained in Javanese traditional wedding processions. Data was collected through direct observation, interviews and literature study. The series of procedures for traditional Javanese wedding processions and the values contained in each procession are analyzed in depth. The results of the study show that each Javanese traditional wedding procession contains various symbols that reflect the social, religious and cultural values inherent in Javanese society. These symbols have a deep philosophical meaning and are a reflection of the relationship between the bride and groom, family and society. Although it is not an obligation, the use of Javanese traditional ritual processions in marriage for couples with Javanese ethnicity does not have a significant effect on the wedding ceremony or the days afterward, but some couples choose to do it as a form of respect for their ancestors and inherited values, and hope that life their marriage was filled with goodness and blessings passed down by the ancestors.

Keyword : Javanese traditional wedding procession, cultural values, symbolism, spiritual message.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a nation with thousands of tribes and languages certainly also has cultural diversity. One example of the many diverse cultures in Indonesia is the culture of the wedding procession. The island of Java, which consists of several provinces, also has unique wedding processions in each region. For example, the Betawi tribe in Jakarta is famous for its pencak silat procession and throwing pantuns at each other. Likewise with the Javanese and Sundanese who also have their own unique procedures. Java as a tribe, is famous for its noble Javanese philosophy. This noble and noble Javanese philosophy is generally firmly attached to each of its cultures. For example, the culture of dress, Java has a batik ornament design that has a certain noble meaning in each of its motifs. We know the craft culture in Jepara which is complicated, nremit and ngarawit as an indicator of progress and high expertise and skills of Jepara carving artists at that time. Meanwhile, in marriage, Java also has its own traditional procession. Wedding processions in Javanese customs in each region also have their own differences and uniqueness. Marriage as one of the important moments in human life, including in Javanese culture, Javanese traditional wedding processions are rich in symbols that have deep meaning. These symbols reflect values and traditions passed down from generation to generation.

Each procession at a traditional Javanese wedding contains various symbols that reflect the social, religious and cultural values inherent in Javanese society. For example, the procedure for the siraman ceremony, the procedure for meeting the bride and groom, and the procedure for giving offerings. Each symbol has a deep philosophical meaning and reflects the relationship between the bride and groom, family and society. The existence of symbolic meanings in Javanese traditional wedding processions is very important to strengthen cultural identity and maintain ancestral heritage. In the process of marriage, these symbols are not just a formal ritual, but also a form of expression of love, loyalty and respect between the bride and groom.

However, based on observations and interview made by the author, it is undeniable that in this modern era, more and more young people have lost their understanding of the symbolic meaning of the traditional Javanese wedding procession. Technological developments and globalization have influenced people's

perspectives and mindsets, including in matters of marriage. Based on observations made by the author and corroborated by Yunus Handoko (2023) in his interview, Many Javanese people, especially in the city of Malang, no longer use traditional Javanese processions and tend to adopt modern culture as their wedding procedures. There are many reasons for leaving the procession which is rich in messages of life, such as being impractical, not modern so that they do not understand the existence of a noble message behind the traditional Javanese procession. ~~As a result, the values and symbolic meanings of traditional Javanese wedding processions are starting to be neglected and threatened with extinction.~~ Thus, many losses will arise in the future from the abandonment of these ancestral teachings, such as, Javanese cultural identity fades and then disappears due to disruption by foreign cultures and modernity, lack of nationality and sense of belonging, dulling skills and knowledge of traditional culture to lose economic competitiveness. Therefore, there is a need for in-depth research to dig up information about what are the series of procedures in Javanese traditional wedding processions and what values are contained in each of these processions. This research has great hopes to be able to contribute to the Javanese people in understanding the existence of noble messages contained in Javanese traditional wedding processions. In addition, by understanding the existence of these noble messages, it is hoped that the Javanese traditional wedding procession will become the main consideration when the younger generation of Javanese people will carry out the wedding procession. A further impact is that this Javanese local culture remains sustainable into the future, and is able to become a source of reference for wedding industry players and cultural experts to create wedding concepts that are more culturally minded and maintain existing traditional values.

This research is a qualitative research with descriptive method and semiotic approach. Sugiyono (2005: 21) states that qualitative research is an analytical method based on post-positivism philosophy, used to examine the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument. The results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization. While descriptive is a method used to describe or analyze a research result but is not used to make broader conclusions According to Roland Barthes, semiotics is a science or method of analysis to study signs. Barthes distinguishes two meanings

(signification) of semiotics, namely denotation and connotation. Denotation is the descriptive and literal level or meaning agreed upon by all members of a culture, and connotation is the meaning produced by the relationship between the signifier and the culture broadly which includes beliefs, behavior, framework and ideology of a social formation. Semiology, in Barthes' terms, is basically studying how humanity uses things, to signify, in this case it cannot be mixed up by communicating (to communicate). Meaning means that the objects want to communicate, but also constitute a structured system of signs. (Sobur, 2009:15)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Javanese Traditional Wedding Procession

The Javanese traditional wedding procession is a ceremony full of tradition and deep meaning. Javanese traditional wedding is one of the moments that is highly respected and upheld in Javanese culture, because it does not only involve the bride and groom, but also involves family, relatives and the community. In this procession, each stage and symbol has strong values, and is believed to bring blessings and good luck to the couple concerned. From the engagement ceremony to the consent granted, every step in the traditional Javanese wedding procession provides an opportunity for all parties involved to unite traditions, honor ancestors, and strengthen bonds between families. In this sub-chapter, we will explore in depth how Javanese traditional wedding processions are carried out, the symbols used, and the meanings and philosophies contained therein. The following is a series of traditional Javanese wedding processions along with their explanations.

1. *Pasang Tarub* (Install tarub)

It was the first procession that was held out of all Javanese traditional wedding processions. Spatial planning, installation of tents, wedding stage, audio and lighting arrangements around the house where the wedding will take place are part of this procession.

Bratawijaya (2006) in Ambarwati et al (2018: 19) states that the word tarub in general society is often termed "*ditata ben ketok murub*" (arranged to look shining and luxurious) to show the public that a family is having a wedding intention. Meanwhile Setyaningsih (2015) in Ambarwati et al (2018: 19) states that tarub is a form of the teachings of Ki Ageng Tarub, one of the ancestors of the Kings of Mataram when he had a child's wedding intention. Tarub at that time was a tradition of woven coconut leaves to be used as a *payon* or roof as a shade which was installed in the yard of the house where the wedding ceremony took place.

2. *Pingitan* (Seclusion)

Hatmaja (2019: 4) in his research stated that seclusion is a pre-marital tradition that is usually carried out by the bride and groom before the wedding day. In practice, the bride and groom are prohibited from leaving the house or meeting her future husband until the consent granted. Because in the belief of the Javanese people, the bride and groom have "sweet blood", so they are vulnerable to invisible disturbances. In addition, it is believed that the period leading up to the wedding is a time of risk and full of distress, for this reason the bride and groom are not allowed to meet so that there is no danger or problem that could cancel the marriage of the two couples.

3. *Siraman* (splash)

Siraman is a bathing ritual that is part of a traditional Javanese wedding procession, where later the bride and groom will be showered with seven kinds of flower water by at least seven members of their family. This is a symbol of self-cleaning process, both physically and spiritually, before continuing with other more sacred rituals. The siraman ceremony is usually attended by respectable family members or 'pinisepuh', and is carried out at the bride's house. Before siraman, the bride wearing batik cloth will pay respects to her parents and family elders. The bride's father has the duty to end the siraman procession and take his daughter to the bridal chamber.

4. Midodaren

Judging from the language, this procession means turning the bride-to-be into an angelic figure. Midodaren night is also the last night of seclusion from the bride and groom. On this evening, he will be accompanied by his daughter's friends and family. She will be prepared both physically and mentally so that tomorrow she will look like an angel at her wedding. In addition, guests or relatives of the bride and groom who are present at the house also carry out "*tirakatan melek-melek*" rituals, starting with reading prayers so that smoothness and blessings are given to the wedding that will take place, then continued with hospitality, and filled with activities another to enliven the

midodaren night all night long.

5. *Wedak pupur*

This ritual has the goal of "*nggusah lelembut sing ngganggu ing panggon pawon* ", meaning that during cooking the necessities for the wedding ceremony are not disturbed by anything unwanted. Handoko (2023) adds, this ritual takes place when the bride and groom are carrying out the widodaren procession. The form of the ritual is that some relatives or family are involved in the consumption part. They will make up or smear their faces with charcoal and then dance to gamelan music. While dancing they will play or sound tools that will later be used for cooking, such as sotil, pot, pan and so on.

6. *Adol dawet*

After the series of midodareni events, the guardian or parents of the prospective bride then enter the *adol dawet* procession. In this procession, the parents of the bride and groom will organize a ceremony where they sell dawet as a dish to the guests who are present to witness the event. Invited guests who want to enjoy must make a transaction as a reciprocal of the dawet. However, payment for dawet buying and selling transactions does not use money but uses *kreweng* or tile shards made of clay. This is a symbol that all life originates from the earth. In this *adol dawet* procession, the mother acts as the seller, while the father will hold the umbrella to cover the mother who is selling, this

gives an example to their children (to-be) that cooperation is the key in building a family. Handoko (2023) adds that the *adol dawet* stage is a form of raising funds from the bride's parents to make the wedding event successful, where the *kreweng* that has been paid by invited guests will later be used as cash.

7. *Ijab / akad*

In a traditional Javanese wedding procession, *ijab kabul* is the main element that must exist. The reason is because the *ijab kabul* granted is a prerequisite for the legality of marriage, and for that, the head of the KUA must be present in the procession. Gozali (2002) in Hatmaja (2019: 2) states that basically, marriage or marriage is a bond or agreement between a man and a woman that formalizes sexual relations between them voluntarily. This agreement between the two parties creates happiness in a household life filled with love and peace (*sakinah*), carried out using methods blessed by Allah SWT.

8. *Panggih / temu manten*

This is the stage after the procession of the marriage contract or *ijab qabul* has been completed, where the prospective groom and bride have legally become husband and wife. *Panggih* is the stage where the bride and groom meet after about 40 days they do not meet because they are going through a seclusion procession. In this *panggih* procession, the parents of the bride and groom are not allowed to participate, only the escort and companions from both parties. Handoko (2023) added, to maintain his dignity and honor, the parents of the two bridal couples are not allowed to be involved in this procession first.

9. *Balang gantal*

Gantal is a betel leaf rolled up to three rolls, some fill the roll with yellow rice and coins. These pre-prepared hangings will then be brought by each bride and groom. When the time comes, when the *Pranotocoro* has given permission to throw *gantal* at each other, the bride and groom standing facing

each other will throw at least 2 times at each other. The first throw is towards the heart as a symbol that each of the hearts has been paired. The second throw from the bride to the groom's knee as a symbol of her future devotion to her husband.

Bratawidjaja (2000) in Purnawangsih et al (2020: 166) states that in ancient times, it was believed that in the past, Balangan Gantal Betel was able to make a person disguised as one of the brides look like their true form. Meanwhile, Handoko (2023) added in his interview, this gantal pot was inspired by the story of the descent of the prophet Adam and Siti Hawa to earth, but they are quite far apart. In his search, the prophets Adam and Siti Hawa, who were separated quite a distance, made the two of them throw objects around each other as a sign of their existence, so that later they would be known and met each other.

10. *Nglangkah garu luku*

After the wedding couples finished the ritual of throwing gantal at each other, the next time the groom was directed by *Pranotocoro* to step over the *garu* and *luku*. A *garu* is a tool tied to an ox or buffalo used by farmers to plow the fields, while a *luku* is a tool to attach the rake to an ox or buffalo. Because of their use for plowing fields, making harrows and harrows is a symbol of the ancestors in search of life. Stepping over *garu* and *luku* is a form of symbolizing responsibility between husband and wife.

11. *Wiji dadi*

The next stage of the panggih procession is *wiji dadi*, or some other people know him by the *ngidek endog*. It is the stage where the groom steps on the chicken eggs that have been prepared by the bride. After the egg is stepped on until it breaks, the bride will then wash it with clean water, as a form of respect for the wife towards her husband, followed by the parents and invited guests. Handoko (2023) in his interview stated that the *wiji dadi* or step on the egg

stage is a form of commitment from the bridal couple to inherit *wiji sejati* or superior offspring.

12. *Klowongan*

This is the stage where the guardian of the bride covers the shoulders of the bride and groom with red sindur cloth right after the *wiji dadi* procession is over. After both shoulders of the bride and groom are covered with sindur cloth, the father will stand in front of the front then herd and pull each end of the sindur cloth that covers the two brides, while the mother from behind participates in pushing the two pairs of brides while holding the sindur cloth, towards the *dampar kencono* or aisle.

The meaning of this procession is that a father shows the right path for the bride and groom so that both of them find happiness in marriage. While the mother is behind as an encouragement (*tut wuri handayani*), (Bratawidjaja, 2000 in Purnawangsih et al, 2020: 168). Whereas Handoko (2023) in an interview stated that this procession is a form that the father has made the two bride and groom children, later there will be no distinction between biological children and children of in-laws, so that later they will be *gulowentah* (guided like biological children). This was reinforced by the arrival of the bride and groom at the aisle, the father of the bride would then take the two bride and groom's laps before they finally sat down by themselves.

13. *Mbubak*

It is a special ritual for the guardian or hajat owner who marries his first woman, as a symbol of the completion of having a baby girl. In this stage, the bridal couple and their guardians will perform a few rituals on the stage directed by *Pranotocoro*. To suit the agenda of the event, gamelan players will play tembang pangkur as a complement. As is well known, the song macapat pangkur is a literary work created by Sunan Drajat which tells the story of an

old man whose body has begun to weaken (*mungkur*) and will spend his time getting closer to the Almighty.

Bratawidjaja (1988) in Nafifa (2015: 106) states that the *Bubak Kawah* (*mbubak*) ceremony is carried out when someone is married for the first time and their child is the eldest daughter or second daughter. In other words, if the first child is a boy, the bubak crater ceremony is not needed. However, if the daughter is number two and the eldest child is a boy, then the bubak crater ceremony is required.

14. *Kacar-kucur*

Handoko (2023) states that the *kacar-kucur* procession is a form of "*anak kudu donoweweh karo wong tuwo*" (the obligation of children to always give to their parents). Before being able to provide for his small family, the groom hands over his wealth to his parents, even though it will be from parents parents will return it back, so that the blessing on the fortune that is expected for this procession to go through.

Meanwhile, Bratawidjaja (2000) in Purnawangsih et al (2020: 168) states that this procession begins with the groom pouring rice and beans onto the bride's lap. This is a symbol that he will become a husband who is ready to be a husband who will provide a living from his hard work to his partner to be managed properly. Furthermore, Kucuran is wrapped tightly and given to the mother of the bride as proof of the groom's sincerity in the future to provide for his family well.

15. *Dhahar klimah*

Dhahar klimah or *kembul* is a procession of feeding each other with food and drinks that have been provided. This procession is a symbol of the results of the fortune that will be used together for the benefit of the family (Bratawidjaja, 2000 in Purnawangsih et al, 2020: 169). Handoko (2023) in an interview stated that dhahar klimah is compared because their hearts are united, interpreted by mutually feeding the groom and bride simultaneously. Because the truth is that in an arranged marriage one cannot clap one hand, but must always be together between the two partners.

16. *Sungkeman*

Sungkeman in a traditional Javanese wedding is a manifestation of loyalty and respect for the bride and groom to their parents. In this ritual, the bride and groom show humility by bowing down to their parents, asking for blessings and apologies for any mistakes and misunderstandings that may have occurred. They pray and ask for blessings to form a happy family. Generally, before the *sungkeman*, the two bridal couples will first change their clothes or change their costumes first. The bridal costume from the beginning of the *akad* procession to before the *sungkeman* is called *Busono Keprabon*, while when they are about to perform the *sungkeman* they will change to *Busono Kasatrian*. Then, the keris, which should be tucked into the groom's attire or costume, when performing the *sungkeman*, must be entrusted to the bride, as a form of respect for parents.

After the entire procession is carried out, the two bridal couples will then hold a reception, where they will welcome and interact with the invited guests who have attended. Meanwhile, at this reception, generally there will be entertainment such as gamelan music, religious lectures and hospitality.

Signifier and Signified

Semiotics, as the study of signs and symbols in the context of communication, provides a framework that enables us to understand how meaning is created and interpreted. The two fundamental elements in this theory are the signifier and the signified, both of which play an important role in the process of communication and creation of meaning. The signifier is the physical form of the sign, something we can see, hear, feel, or feel, while the signified is the concept or meaning represented by the signifier. By understanding the interaction between signifiers

and signifieds, we can explore how communication influences our perceptions and interpretations of the world around us.

The table below is each signifier in the whole series of Javanese traditional wedding processions that have been compiled by researchers along with their signified.

NO.	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
1.	Pasang tarub  Source: (detik.com)	A family is having a wedding.
2.	Pingitan  Source: (bridestory.com)	Prevent bad things from happening to the bride and groom.
3.	Siraman  Source: (bridestory.com)	The process of self-cleaning, both physically and spiritually.
4.	Midodaren  Source: (idntimes.com)	Prepare the bride and groom physically and mentally so that tomorrow she looks like an angel.

5.	<p>Wedak pupur</p>  <p>Source: (mediakita.co.id)</p>	Prevent bad things from happening to the dishes that will be served.
6.	<p>Adol dawet</p>  <p>Source: (hipwee.com)</p>	Fundraising for the smooth running of the wedding.
7.	<p>Ijab/akad</p>  <p>Source: (suaramuhammadiyah.id)</p>	Official agreements and bonds in establishing relationships between husband and wife.
8.	<p>Panggih / temu manten</p>  <p>Source: (bridestory.com)</p>	The meeting between the groom and the bride after seclusion.
9.	<p>Balang gantal</p>  <p>Source: (bridestory.com)</p>	Each heart of his heart has a pair.
10.	<p>Nglangkah garu luku</p>	The form of responsibility between husband and wife.

	 <p>Source: (radarjogja.jawapos.com)</p>	
11.	<p>Wiji dadi</p>  <p>Source: (bridestory.com)</p>	A form of commitment from the bride and groom to give birth to superior offspring.
12.	<p>Klowongan (nggendong)</p>  <p>Source: (bridestory.com)</p>	Both bride and groom have been made children by the father, there will be no distinction between biological children and children-in-law
13.	<p>Mbubak</p>  <p>Source: (hipwee.com)</p>	Complete form of a father momong (raising) daughter.
14.	<p>Kacar-kucur</p>	The form of hoping for the blessings of fortune that will be used to support his family.

	 Source: (bridestory.com)	
15.	 Source: (bridestory.com)	The form of togetherness between the two partners in the family.
16.	 Source: (bridestory.com)	Asking for blessings and apologies for any mistakes and misunderstandings that may have occurred.

Table 1 . Table of Signifier and Signified of Javanese Traditional Wedding Processions
Source: Author's documentation

From table 1 above, it can be formulated some noble values that can be the provision of 2 married couples to sail the household ark. These messages include; Physical and mental preparation, strengthening feelings as a couple and family, uniting hearts, roles and responsibilities of husband and wife, commitment to have superior offspring, equality of parents in the recognition of children, hope for blessings obtained, maintaining togetherness in the family, as well as prayers of blessings and apologies to hope for family blessings.

Interest in Javanese culture which is rich in noble and noble Javanese philosophical values makes the author raise this topic. By digging and understanding more deeply the noble values contained in each of these traditional Javanese wedding processions, the author hopes to provide new insights about Javanese culture and the noble values contained in it.

Using a traditional Javanese ritual procession is actually not an obligation to be carried out for couples who want to get married, especially those who are of Javanese ethnicity. Not using Javanese traditional processions at weddings will also not have a significant effect on the continuation of the event or the days after. However, when a couple who is getting married later wants to use a traditional Javanese wedding procession, they will at least be given the provision of the teachings of the ancestors which contain messages of life in sailing the household ship that they will go through later.

Practicing the teachings of the ancestral "*budi*" does not mean wishing or pleading with the ancestors but maintaining the good deeds that the ancestors have done and taught for generations. So, carrying it out is a hope and a prayer so that the charity will continue to flow for the ancestors.

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