

PEIRCEAN SEMIOTICS OF HORSE-RIDING DANCER'S COSTUMES IN JANJI MISTERI RATU KIDUL DANCE

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Abstrak

Keywords:

Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul
Dance,
Costumes,
Semiotics,
Peirce's Theory.

The aim of this research is to explore the symbolic meaning contained in the costumes worn by horse riding dancers in the Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul dance. This traditional dance, which is performed at Obelix Sea View, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, carries meaning which is reflected in the dancers' clothing. This study employs Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to examine the signs and symbols represented in the costume. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data are gathered through semi-structured interviews and field observations. The primary data source is Mrs. Rukisem from Sanggar Krisna Mukti, who is responsible for designing the costumes used in the performance. Additional supporting data was obtained through documentation and also obtained from journals related to traditional dance costumes and symbolic meanings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of costumes in their cultural and performative contexts. The results showed that the costume accessories of the horse-riding performer function as symbols that convey cultural values and meaning within the Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul Dance performances.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance originated from the early religious, ritual, celebration and other activities of human beings, and its development is closely related to the history, culture and folk customs of various countries and nations (Yang, 2024). Traditional dance forms are characterized by specific movements, gestures, rhythms, and costumes that convey cultural values and collective identities (Hou, 2025). According to Utoh-Ezeajugh & Ume (2015), costumes also include accessories and ornaments worn by actors or actresses (or dancers) to define characters. Costumes are crucial signifiers of identity and the most visible element in dance performances (Utoh-Ezeajugh & Ume, 2025).

One example can be found in *Janji misteri Ratu Kidul* dance, which is performed at Obelix Sea View in Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. Obelix Sea View is a tourist attraction



that frequently hosts traditional dance performances, including *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul*. The dance that tells the story of Ratu Kidul's agreement with Danang Sutawijoyo in building the Mataram Kingdom, during which Danang Sutawijoyo faced many disturbances while clearing the land and eventually meditated until Ratu Kidul appeared and formed an agreement with him (ObelixSeaViews,2024). These narrative forms the conceptual foundation of the performance and shapes the visual representation of its characters.

This research aims to analyze the symbols contained in the dancer's costumes in the *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance. In this dance, there are various dancing characters representing important figures such as Ratu Kidul, Nyi Rara Kidul, Danang Sutawijaya, along with supporting dancers who enrich the narrative and visual meaning of the performance. However, this research specifically focuses on the costumes of the dancers' riding horses, as they possess distinctive symbolic and visual roles within the overall performance. The analysis is conducted to reveal the meaning behind each costume element using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework.

Semiotics has a derivative form of a word, namely the science of signs (Anwar et al., 2022). Peirce is known for his trichotomous or triadic semiotics, consisting of three components, namely object, representation and interpretation (Ashri, 2023). Semiotics also has another term with the same meaning, namely semiology. Semiology and semiotics come from the Greek words 'same' with the meaning of sign interpretation or from the word semeion, meaning sign (Anwar et al., 2022). Peirce proposed the concept of signs as a form of representation that consists of three essential elements, namely the representamen (the sign), the object being represented, and the interpretant (the understanding) (Lasino et al., 2023).

Previous studies have applied Peirce's semiotic theory to analyze various traditional dances, as well as other cultural traditions and ritual practices. For example, Utoh & Ume (2025) analyzed analyzed Duu and Nkwanwite dance costumes using Charles Sanders Peirce's and Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theories and found that traditional costumes carry cultural meanings and function as symbols in performance, while also experiencing changes due to globalization. Meanwhile, Hastuti (2023) explained the symbolic meanings of traditional Minangkabau cuisine served in the *alek marapulai* ceremony using a semiotic framework. In addition, Amri (2025) analyzed the meanings and symbolic elements of the 7-month *mitoni* ritual in Javanese tradition by applying Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework to examine its icons, indexes, and symbols. Finally, Kasimo (2025) analyzed the meanings of signs in the Saga traditional house by applying semiotic theory to explore their social, cultural, and communicative significance.

Overall, previous studies have applied semiotic theory to various cultural contexts, including traditional dances, ritual ceremonies such as the *mitoni* ritual, traditional cuisine in Minangkabau ceremonies, architectural symbols in traditional houses, and the analysis of symbolic types and functions in dances such as the *Tua Reta Lo'u* dance. These studies demonstrate the broad applicability of semiotic frameworks in interpreting cultural signs and meanings. However, research specifically examining the symbolic meaning of costume in *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance using Peirce's theory remains limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by providing a focused analysis of the costume elements as signs within Peirce's semiotic framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Semiotics is a language discipline that focuses on the analysis of signals (Mazeree et al., 2023). Semiotics comes from the Greek word *semeion* which means sign or 'same' and also means sign interpreter (Putri et al., 2022). In semiotics, a sign is understood as anything that can convey meaning beyond its literal form, allowing it to communicate information to those who interpret or decode it (Arianti & Sakinah, 2025). Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) are widely recognized as the pioneers of semiotics. Both individuals coexisted during the same historical period, yet they were not acquainted with one another (Hastuti, 2023). Among these scholars, Charles Sanders Peirce provides a more analytical framework for sign interpretation.

Peirce's particular scientific-philosophical brand of pragmatism, pragmaticism, was inaugurated in 1878, with the publication of a series of six articles in volumes XII and XIII of *Popular Science Monthly* entitled "Illustrations of the Logic of Science." In the second article, "How to make our ideas clear," Peirce presents a rule of action that may be followed to achieve clear apprehension of ideas, remove false beliefs or fictions from the mind and achieve true beliefs (Sánchez & Suárez, 2024). Peirce's semiotics offers a triadic model of analysis, namely the representamen (the form of the sign), the object (what the sign refers to), and the interpretant (the meaning that is interpreted) (Taufiq, 2016). For example, in the horse-riding performance costume, accessories are interpreted through Peirce's semiotic theory as signs that represent cultural identity, strength, and authority.

Costumes are crucial signifiers of identity and the most visible element in dance (Utoh-Ezeajugh & Ume, 2025). According to Utoh-Ezeajugh & Ume (2015), costume also involves accessories, and ornamentation worn by the actor or actress (or dancer) to define a character. The clothes worn by the dancers must be able to support the dance movements and strengthen the theme that is being conveyed (Amirulloh & Badaruddin, 2024). Dance costume design is not only related to aesthetics, but also to the underlying choreographic concept (Hidajat, 2011). In traditional dance performances, costumes are closely related to the role and identity of the dancers, including horse-riding performances in ritual or cultural performances where costumes reinforce the meaning of the dance.

Dance is a form of artistic expression that is rich in cultural and aesthetic values (Amirulloh & Badaruddin, 2024). Preserving traditional dance is crucial for maintaining the sustainability of local culture, especially in the current era of globalization and digitalization. Similar to the *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance performed at Obelix Sea View, the performance presents a narrative that integrates cultural mythology and symbolic representation through its horse-riding elements, where costumes play important role in conveying meaning and strengthening the overall performance concept.

METHOD

This study used qualitative research as a research design. According to Sugiyono (2020:5), states that qualitative research is data collection in the form of words or pictures, so it does not emphasize numbers. Qualitative researchers use techniques such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary studies to explore meanings, patterns, and social dynamics that cannot be measured statistically (Sari, 2025).

Data Sources

The data for this research were obtained from the performance of the dancer riding a horse in *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance performance at Obelix Sea View and from a semi-structured interview with Mrs. Rukisem from the Krisna Mukti Studio as the person responsible for the dancer's costumes. the data focused on the costume attributes worn by the dancers and their symbolic meanings in the dance performance.

Data Collection

Data were collected through direct observation at Obelix Sea View by watching the *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance performance and conducting semi-structured interviews with the person responsible for the dancers' costumes as well as one of the dancers involved in the performance. During the observation process, the researcher focused on the costume attributes, accessories, colors, and ornaments worn by the horse-riding dancers. Documentation in the form of photographs was also used to support the analysis. In addition, supporting data were obtained from relevant journals related to traditional dance costumes, semiotics, and symbolic meanings. The collected data were then analyzed using Peirce's semiotic theory.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by identifying the costume attributes worn by the horse-riding dancers in the *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance performance at Obelix Sea View. The analysis was conducted through observation and documentation of the costume attributes, followed by interpreting their meaning using Peirce's triadic semiotic theory, namely representation, object, and interpretant. The symbolic meanings of each costume attribute were identified based on the result of observation and interviews.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT



Picture 1: Dancer costumes in the *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance

Table 1: The Meaning of Costume *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* Dance Peirce's Theory

No	Representation	Object	Interpretant
1.	 Picture 2: <i>Irah-irahan</i>	<i>Irah-irahan</i>	<i>Irah-irahan</i> is a dance costume worn on the head like a crown. Symbolically, the meaning of irah-irahan is as the main foundation for holiness (Annisa et al., 2024).
2.	 Picture 3: <i>Kace Pangkat</i>	<i>Kace Pangkat</i>	<i>Kace pangkat</i> is an attribute in dance that is worn on the dancer's shoulders, and can be interpreted as authority.
3.	 Picture 4: <i>Lurik and Kelat Bahu</i>	- <i>Lurik</i> - <i>Kelat Bahu</i>	- <i>Lurik</i> is a traditional Indonesian cultural heritage from the Javanese community, especially Yogyakarta, characterized by striped motifs that symbolize simplicity in both appearance and production (Melani et al., 2023). - <i>Kelat bahu</i> is an ornament worn on the arm, also indicating the social status of the wearer (Fidelia & Pratama, 2018).

4.	 Picture 5: <i>Stagen</i> and <i>Kamusiman</i>	- <i>Stagen</i> - <i>Kamusiman</i>	- <i>Stagen</i> is a black dance accessory worn on the stomach area. The function of the <i>stagen</i> is to strengthen the brace that has been installed (Apriliani & Wilujeng, 2020). - <i>Kamusiman</i> is a red and gold dance attribute that is worn on the stomach after the <i>stagen</i>.
5.	 Picture 6: <i>Buntal</i> and <i>Boro Samir</i>	- <i>Buntal</i> - <i>Boro Samir</i>	- <i>Buntal</i> is identified as a colorful decorative accessory used to complement the dancer's costume worn around the waist. - <i>Boro samir</i> identified as an additional cloth accessory worn around the dancer's waist area on the inside before the <i>stagen</i>, <i>kamusiman</i>, and <i>buntal</i>
6.	 Picture 7: <i>Deker</i>	<i>Deker</i>	<i>Deker</i> costume accessories worn on the dancer's arm.

7.	 Picture 8: <i>Rapek</i>	<i>Rapek</i>	<i>Rapek</i> is an accessory used in dance to enhance its aesthetic beauty (Anam & Ismurdiyahwati, 2024). <i>Rapek</i> is symbolized as a cultural character value (Annisa et al., 2024)
8.	 Picture 9: <i>Celana Punjen</i>	<i>Celana Punjen</i>	<i>Celana punjen</i> or quarter pants aim to provide flexibility in every movement of the dancer (Anam & Ismurdiyahwati, 2024)
9.	 Picture 10: <i>Gelang Binggel</i>	<i>Gelang Binggel</i>	<i>Gelang Binggel</i> or anklets that have pendants (clinting) that can make a sound (Apriliani & Wilujeng, 2020). <i>Binggel</i> determine the position and character of the character who wears it (Fidelia & Pratama, 2018)

Discussion

1. ***Irah-irahan***: In the context of the *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance, the use of *irah-irahan* can strengthen the sacred image of the characters portrayed by the dancers. Besides being a headdress, *irah-irahan* can also represent dignity and spiritual power in Javanese culture.

2. **Kace Pangkat:** *Kace pangkat* is a dancer's attribute worn on the shoulder and can symbolize authority. In this dance, this attribute reinforces the image of power and dignity represented by the dancers. The placement of *kace pangkat* on the shoulder also symbolizes responsibility and social status in traditional performance culture.
3. **Lurik:** *Lurik* is a traditional Indonesian cultural heritage originating from the Javanese people, particularly Yogyakarta. It is characterized by striped motifs that symbolize simplicity in both appearance and actions (Melani et al., 2023). In this dance, the use of *lurik* represents politeness and the preservation of traditional Javanese cultural values. The striped motif can also be interpreted as a reflection of harmony and balance.
4. **Kelat Bahu:** *Kelat bahu* is an ornament worn on the arm and can indicate the wearer's social status (Fidelia & Pratama, 2018). In the *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance, the use of *kelat bahu* enhances the noble and elegant appearance of the horse-riding dancers. As a traditional ornament, the shoulder collar can be interpreted as a symbol of honor and identity.
5. **Stagen:** *Stagen* is a black dance accessory worn around the stomach area and serves to strengthen the dancers' support (Apriliani & Wilujeng, 2020). In this dance, the use of a *stagen* can symbolize readiness, discipline, and inner strength. Its tight and supportive shape can be interpreted as self-control and stability.
6. **Kamusiman:** *Kamusiman* is a red and gold dance attribute worn around the stomach area after the *stagen*. In this dance, red symbolizes courage and strength, while gold symbolizes glory and majesty. Its placement on the stomach can be interpreted as a symbol of spirit.
7. **Buntal:** *Buntal* is identified as a colorful decorative accessory worn around the waist to complement the dancer's costume. *Buntal* colorful appearance symbolizes passion, harmony, and aesthetic richness in the performance. Its decorative function can be interpreted as the beauty and visual balance of the costume.
8. **Boro Samir:** *Boro samir* identified as an additional cloth accessory worn around the dancer's waist area on the inside before the *stagen*, *kamusiman*, and *buntal*. In the *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance, *boro samir* symbolizes readiness and

completeness in the dancers' costumes. Its layered arrangement is interpreted as order and structure in traditional dance attire.

9. **Deker:** *Deker* is a dancer's arm accessory adorned with silver and gold. Silver symbolizes elegance and poise, while gold symbolizes nobility and majesty. Wearing *deker* can also be interpreted as a symbol of beauty and grace.
10. **Rapek:** *Rapek* is an accessory used in dance to enhance its aesthetic beauty (Anam & Ismurdiyahwati, 2024). *Rapek* is symbolized as a cultural character value (Annisa et al., 2024). The use of *rapek* can strengthen traditional identity and artistic beauty. It can also be interpreted as a reflection of the preservation of cultural values in traditional dance.
11. **Celana Punjen:** *Celana punjen* or quarter pants aim to provide flexibility in every movement of the dancer (Anam & Ismurdiyahwati, 2024). The use of *celana punjen* can symbolize agility and readiness during the performance. Their functional design can be interpreted as supporting the dynamic movements of the horse-riding dancers.
12. **Gelang Binggel:** *Gelang Binggel* or anklets that have pendants (clinting) that can make a sound (Apriliani & Wilujeng, 2020). *Binggel* determine the position and character of the character who wears it (Fidelia & Pratama, 2018). The sound produced by *gelang binggel* can symbolize the spirit and rhythmic harmony in the performance. This can also be interpreted as strengthening the character and stage presence of the dancers.

CONCLUSION

The *Janji Misteri Ratu Kidul* dance demonstrates the richness of Javanese culture through its distinctive costumes and accessories, each carrying symbolic meaning and aesthetic value. The horse-riding dancers reflect a combination of grace, strength, and mystical elements represented through their costume attributes. The use of traditional lurik cloth symbolizes simplicity and discipline in Javanese culture while supporting the sacred atmosphere of the performance.

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