

The Manifestation of Western Culture in Karangasem Nobleman's Attire

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The Manifestation of Western Culture in *Karangasem* Nobleman's Attire

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ABSTRACT

For Balinese noble in *Karangasem* clothe serves as cultural representation since it has the power to communicate social hierarchy. Balinese traditional stratification strongly influenced by Hinduism social strata, where the noble are the tip most of all. Those are kings and king's family, *patih* or top brass general followed by middle-rank palace officers. The cultural collaboration of local and foreign especially westerners produces a distinctive fashion style. There are traces of western influence in *baju*, accessories, motives, and materials in *Karangasem* nobleman's attire. The paper explored the characters of *Karangasem* nobleman attire. This study aimed to examine the influence of western culture. The study based on the qualitative descriptive method. Overall, the result indicated that western fashion was very strong predisposed to the characters of *Karangasem* nobleman attire. The history of trading between Bali and outsider played a significant role in social culture interaction. The *Karangasem* foreign policy had an impact on the lifestyle of *Karangasem*'s noblemen which was westernized.

Keywords: Manifestation, Western Culture, *Karangasem*, Nobleman, Attire.

Preliminary

Culture and organizational form/practice cannot dodge or suppress hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The social hierarchy can be constructed both naturally and also politically, as Dr. Djelantik puts it "Hierarchy and etiquette were so well ingrained in us that such kind of differences was not felt as discrimination but as something entirely natural" (Djelantik, 1997:16). Wealth, knowledge, power, and even dress are tools to distinguish social hierarchy. The dress is the subtle and the most effective way to communicate the hierarchy. According to Soedibyo (2003:xxii) in *keraton* (court) Surakarta, batik motif such as *parang rusak*, *sidamukti*, *klitik*, *klabang* etc. is limitedly worn by the king and his family.

Through the clothes, it will be known exactly the degree, rank, position of someone in the hierarchy.

The Balinese noblemen were dandy. They were very concerned with their appearance. They loved wearing fine clothes in a particular event. They liked being neat, combing their hair tidy with *malam* (hair wax), adorning themselves with elegant clothes and beautiful accessories. The fashion style of Bali nobleman was a collaboration between foreign style and local fashion. Much less in art and culture, Balinese are brilliant in composing two or three different styles of art, mold them into their style. This happened as well in Karangasem court, as the fashion of the nobleman shows unique characters of fashion and style.

Foreign Cultural Entry

The *puri* (palace) of Karangasem or Karang Samadi is one of the biggest kingdoms in Bali which located in North Bali. As it stated in the *Sading C* Inscription found in *Geria* (priest house) Mandara, Munggu, Badung. It was further revealed that Mount Lempuyang in the northeast of Amlapura, was originally named Adri Karang, which means *Gunung Karang* (Karang mountain). This kingdom had been under the hegemony of Gelgel until the 17th century. The first raja of Karangasem was Batanjeruk which given the right to lead his kingdom by his father I Dewa Karangamla, the king of Gelgel.

Karangasem kingdom was thriving and making expansive territorial through the neighbor island Lombok, Sumbawa, and Blambangan when Raja Dalem Waturenggong came to power in the 15th century. The kingdom was also respected by any other kingdom in Bali. The triumphant of Karangasem dated in 1661 ruled by I Gusti Anglurah Ketut Karang. Karangasem blossomed in culture and art enriched by foreign and neighbor kingdom such as Kelungkung, Buleleng, Cakranegara, Cina, and Dutch through trade and people interactions. The Balinese developed a friendship with other countries on the basis of *tat twam asi* and

menyama braya spirit (Jelantik, 2003: vi). This concept emphasizes harmony, respect, and solidarity to build social relations.

The Balinese's first contact with westerners made in 1512 with Portuguese on the northern coast. Dutch explorer came to Bali 1597 on the southern coast. The second Dutch ship in 1601 gained trade permission. Dutch intervention in 1894 led to the complete colonization of Bali and Lombok. Karangasem kingdom was no exception. After that Gusti Gede Jelantik was appointed as Dutch regent in 1894 and ruled until 1902.

Before the Western came, Bali people had engaged in trade with foreigner from around the globe. Indian traders approximately came in the 7th century. They sold pottery, fabrics, and many kinds of good, but the most important thing was the entry of Hinduism teaching to Bali (Lansing, 1983). Chinese came latter mostly exchanging porcelain and swords for cotton clothes. It was known Bali becoming a stop for ships from elsewhere to have water and food. They as well had a chance to buy clothes, cattles, and slaves from locals. What most astounding, opium and slave trade became more visible. The agriculture commodity was the mainstay from Bali. Rice was surplus but the king forbade its export. Another agriculture product such as coconut, oranges, lemons, nuts, etc. was abundance to supply the people for daily need and cultural feast. Otherwise, Bali exported textiles from cotton but needed iron, copper, and gold. For some reason, the king forbade the mining of gold (Lach & Van Kley, 1998:1358-1359).

Trading in and out Bali means connecting Bali's inhabitants with outsiders. It brought in a social-cultural impact to the Balinese. Traders from Indian, China, Arab, Japanese, Bugis, and other Eastern traders brought with them not only goods but their manners and customs (Hanna, 2016:16). Balinese played a friendly host welcoming to foreign visitors. Hanna (2016:28) said Dewa Agung provided homes and wives for the first western visitor from Portuguese. Balinese believed what came from outside was also a part of the universe

that is identical to someone. From this belief, Balinese welcomes outsiders (Seraya et al, 1995:10). Regarding Westerners, according to Picard (2006:198), Balinese tend to think of any new ideas from the West as "modern" to be imitated. Inside quarters of the Karangasem palace, the western idea was reflected in various aspects of lifestyle such as the dress code by kings and noble families.

The Lifestyle of Karangasem Nobleman

The nobleman in Bali was the upper class which enjoyed a lot of privilege in society. They had wealth, power, and magnificence. They lived in a huge palace surrounded by harem and wives (Hanna, 2016:30). They could afford have such luxurious lifestyles like Black and Hanna (1995: 127) described as follows: "The *puris*, much more than the *gerias*...Their taste for the super opulent and grandiose had always been supported by a society passionate about richness, aristocracy, and style. Gold leaf, deep carvings, statues, plenty of spaces, black limousine in the main pavilions are all indications of *puri* style". The *puris* also kept their image through the dress. The grand attire of *payas agung*, the pieces of jewelry, the gold accessories, remarkable *keris* marked how well they live.

The *payas agung* with splendid and glamorous appearance were objected to creating an image of Balinese novelty. The idea came from mythology which is close to Hindu's god and goddess image. The Balinese believed the myth that the *puris* family were from the incarnation of Hinduism deities (Samudra, 1994). Likewise, Karangasem people respected the kings of Karangasem who incarnated of God, the sons of *Ida Hyang Widi Wasa*. The ancestors of Karangasem's *puri*, *Bhatara Alit Sakti* was born from the secret relation between I Gusti Ayu Nyoman Rai with Bhatara Gede where abode in Mount of Agung (Jelantik, 2003:131-132). Furthermore, the *payas agung* presents the image of the perfection of the elders and the gods that are worshiped by Balinese.

Puri Karangasem kingdom committed to having good relations with the Dutch Government. It was a politic decision related to foreign policy. Two rajas of Karangasem, I Goesti Gde Djelantik and his nephew I Goesti Bagoes Djelantik believed that the Western civilization would bring progress to Karangasem kingdom (Wijaya,2018:26). Thenceforth, Karangasem kingdom was more westernized than any kingdoms in Bali. Even, the architecture of Karangasem palace was dedicated to the west which was named after Western cities; Amsterdam and London. For this progress, in 1936, Karangasem was called the city which lost the most its Bali's character (Djelantik, 2018:27). The Western influence in Karangasem palace proven in many ways of life, included education and fashion.



Picture 1. Family portrait in 1928. The king wore *stadehouder* uniform; the boys wore shirt, tie, and pants; the girls wore *baju* and *wastra*. Source: Wijaya, *Bening Embun*, 2018.

Western lifestyle in Karangasem palace was the result of the decision to cooperate with Western especially Dutch. To gain power, the raja Karangasem previously had promised to submit to the Dutch government. Politically Karangasem had been part of the Dutch administration in 1896 (Wijaya, 2018:37). The king soon appointed to be representative of the Dutch government (*stadehouder*). Gradually, Western's dress etic and manners became part of the *puri* lifestyle.

¹ “ We were dressed up in our new white “western” clothes for our visit to the Dutch Headmaster of the H.I.S. (Holland Inlandse School). We wore short pants and closed jackets with long sleeves and upright collar, all stiffened with starch and neatly ironed. At the front of the collar downwards we had a row of golden buttons which were

actually American half-dollar coins provided with a metal loop at the backside. These loops were inserted through small holes at the rim of the jacket corresponding with the buttonholes at the opposite side. Safety pins, spiral metal rings, or just a sturdy cotton string held the buttons in place. The stiff collar was held closed by two small golden knobs with a flat base at the inside. We wore barefooted, and we wore no hats...Father had put on his official white *Stedehouder's* uniform, with several medals on his breast.” (Djelantik,1997: 32).

The westernized of Karangasem palace was very strongly seen in *puri* Kanganan. The nobleman went to Western school, soon to adopt Western tastes and manners. Their appearance transformed from traditional style into Western-style; wearing the shirt, ties, hat, pants, and shoes.

West meets East in Karangasem Noble Fashion

Western lifestyle in Karangasem's noble court especially in *Puri Agung* Karangasem manifested in fashion. Previously, wearing traditional clothes with rectangular textiles such as *songket*, *endek*, *grinsing*, and *prada* were fashion codes in *puri*. The wearing of traditional textiles is original, since the Balinese ancestor was good at weaving, plaiting, and braiding (Schaublin, 1997:7). It seems that the renewal spirit is marked by fashion changes.

“It is indeed difficult to deny that the lives of the residents of *Puri* Karangasem are always tinged with things that are modern and luxurious. Not only did the shape of the building, the lifestyle of westerners who are all modern, in fact not escape from the eyes of the successors of the Karangasem dynasty. Without hesitation they imitated it.” (Wijaya,2018:31)

How the Karangasem nobleman was selective in dressing up was a cultural phenomenon. Once Geertz (1973:89) intemperated ² culture as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life”. The Karangasem nobleman used clothes and its paraphernalia to communicate the social-cultural background. Regardless,western style is invasive, yet it is logic and modern. That's why the elite of Karangasem did not hesitate to embrace it.

Like all noblemen in the world, Karangasem nobleman lived in lavish life. They dressed up themselves with expensive clothes, gold, jewelry, and valuable gemstones. The king of Karangasem was once well known for owning the most beautiful *Han* ruby in the world (Kioe An & Han Sam Kay, 2002:31). The 29,29 carat *Han* ruby stone was invaluable expensive pinned on *dastar* (man headdress). Such valuable gemstone mostly came from the Western world brought by merchants or tribute from other rulers. The most important thing that was carried by Westerners is time awareness. Furthermore, the king of *Karangasem*, Goesti Bagoes Djelantik loved to dress up wearing a luxurious pocket watch (Wijaya, 2018:32).

The influence of Western fashion on Karangasem noble's costume was ostensible. The evidence found in a man costume, especially in style, material, and paraphernalia. Traditionally the Karangasem noble clothes for gentleman comprises *baju*, *kamben*, *saput*, and paraphernalia such as headdress, *keris*, ring, bracelet. Modern elements such as medals, pins, chained pocket watch complimented latterly.



Picture 2. The King of Karangasem; Anak Agung Anglurah Ketut Karangasem on his noble attire. Western elements are seen in the coat and accessories such as medals, pins, and chained pocket watch.

The gentleman usually wears *baju pekongan* (short jacket) with long sleeve. This particular Balinese gentleman's coat has a unique character with a shorter cut in the bottom. There is an arch in the armpit leading to back to place the *keris*. That kind of short jacket worn either by Spanish matador called *traje de luces* since the 18th century. On special occasions, like traditional ceremonies, the nobleman wore *baju pekongan* with *wastra lanang* (special clothing for gentleman). Raja's coat would be decorated with ornaments such as medal, pins, and pocket watch. On other occasions, for example, when receiving Western guests, raja would wear a coat with a more simple design. The coat design brought to Java sewn by a tailor from Solo. Previously, there was no tailor yet in Bali. In material terms, it is found Western elements, such as fabrics, buttons, and threads. The collar was adorned with leaves pattern which looks similar to the Greek laurel leaves. *Baju* was made by fabrics imported from the West such as velvet, cotton, etc. There was Western gold leaves or *prada* that are used to decorate *songket*, *endek*, and *kain prada* or called *prada belanda*.



Picture 3. Costume comparison between Karangasem and Western nobleman. The similarity can be seen in jackets, accessories, and laurel leaf motif that adorns the collar of the jacket.

The tradition of dressing up with beautiful cloth in the palace is the norm. This tradition maintained, however it changes from time to time. The noblewomen in the palace were as great as noblemen in preening. They loved wearing a beautiful dress and expensive

accessories. When they presented in ceremonies and religious rituals, noblewomen in *Karangasem* court wore *payas agung*. This traditional dress is a privilege for noblewomen. In another time, they wore modern *kebaya* and *wastra istri* (special clothing for the woman).

Kebaya (blouse) have been worn by women in North Bali for a century. *Kebaya* is a Malay fashion brought by the Dutch. In the beginning, they were ordered to wear blouses by official decree “to protect the morals of the Dutch soldiers.” (Covarrubias, 1973: 93). The *kebaya* appears to have been disseminated out into the community via the royalty and the palaces. This is a new dress code adopted by members of the royalty then enforced to wider society. The women of Buleleng, the regency of northern Bali, therefore would have been some of the first to adopt the *kebaya* in Bali. Generally, *kebaya* materials are made of *silk*, *brocades*, and *velvet*. Except for silk, velvet and brocade are imported from the west. Yet, *puri* women prefer velvet.

The use of jewelry by noblewomen is related to the statement of social status. The quantities of jewelry, design or motifs, and the quality of jewelry carat explained the hierarchy in the palace. The crown or headdress is a symbol of greatness. In the early 20th – century the European crown became a common motif in Southeast Asian jewelry and they were brought to Java and Bali (Richter, 2000). Such as crown and lions motives are from west much used in textiles, accessories, and artworks in Bali.



Picture 4. *Cucuk* (gilded hairpin) with a crown motif is part of the women headdress called *pusung*. Broche with crown motif was common accessories for women in *puri*.

Source: Harper Bazar Magazine, 2011.

Queen and princes in *puri* adorned themselves with the Balinese special crown called *pusung* in the big events. *Pusung* is an assembly of several accessories and flowers. Another day they wear *blengker* in their heads. *Blengker* is hair gold accessories with an encrusted jewel for women circling the *pusung* edge. The idea of *belengker* inspired by European crown for the queen or princess.



Picture 5. One of the princes from Karangasem palace wearing *blengker*.
The *blengker* replicates the western tiara crown.

The nobleman in *Karangasem* palace started to wear sandals and shoes when the Dutch became superior in Bali. Traditional Bali life knew no footwear. They used to be barefoot, even in fancy clothes. The largest impact of the West on Balinese life was technological. It was the Western who first introduced the manufactured cloth to Balinese who used to wear rectangular fabric (Vickers, 2012). The West came to introduce coats, ties, hats, shoes, sandals, and others that enriched traditional fashion. These manufacture clothes make a great change in the Balinese fashion system. Such a cloth symbolizes the egalitarian movement in social cultural-structure in Bali.

Summary

Karangasem has been in touch with foreign for a long time through trade. Trade leads to the entrance of various cultures and human interactions. The merchant brought goods and their culture that welcomed by Balinese peacefully. This had an impact on the local culture

slowly. Till one time the change became visibly strong when the palace decided to adopt West culture for improvement. The noble embraced the West lifestyle that smartly concocted with local taste.

Western culture manifested in traditional fashion system in Karangasem palace initially from the elites of the nobility in the palace. The gentleman wore the same coat worn by European gentleman. Similarly with accessories such as medals, pins, and chained clock watch. Women in the palace loved the beautiful dress (*baju*) which formerly introduced by Dutch. They adorned beautifully with crown and broche which inspired by princes in the West. To say the least, the Western influence in the noble fashion in Karangasem palace is very strong. It is clearly seen from materials, motives, and design.

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