

Semiotics of Prohibited Ornaments (Awisan) in Tamanan Ward

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Abstract

Tamanan Ward is a relic building of the Majapahit kingdom era located in the Keraton Yogyakarta area. The existence of Tamanan Ward is supported by physical evidence, such as the sengkalan in the form of Bethara Gana or Ganesha found at the entrance of the ward and resembles Kori Agung. The Tamanan Ward building is historical evidence of cultural acculturation and depiction of royal heritage from time to time as shown by its ornaments. The ornaments in this building include: Praban motif ornaments and Putri Merong motif ornaments which are referred to as prohibited ornaments (awisan). The awisan ornament is a manifestation of the Sultan's power to organize and build palace buildings that have a broad philosophical meaning. Based on this, the two ornaments that decorate the palace buildings have aesthetic and semiotic functions as a marker. This research aims to explain the meaning and philosophy attached to awisan ornaments in Tamanan Ward through a semiotic approach. The research method used was descriptive qualitative method with data collection technique in the form of literature study through relevant books and journals. The results of this study indicated that, first, the building ornaments of Tamanan Ward were influenced by the visual identity that was present due to the power of the Sultan as King, Second, the analysis of the meaning and function of awisan ornaments can be described using a semiotic approach. Third, the Keraton Yogyakarta building is one of Indonesia's cultural assets and its existence needs to be maintained and preserved.

Introduction

Keraton Yogyakarta is the official palace of the Sultanate of Ngayogyakarta Hadinigrat (Saarani et al., 2020). Inside the palace, there are buildings that are still used by the sultan and his family as well as the royal courtiers (*abdi dalem*). Babad Nitik Ngayogya described the intelligence of Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I in planning the layout of spaces and buildings including its ornaments. The philosophical and spiritual values designed in each building made Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I dubbed as 'a great builder' whose intelligence was equal to that of Sultan Agung His skill in spatial planning and building decoration reflected a deep understanding of cultural values, history, and spirituality (Subanar, 2020). Ever since Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I established the Keraton Yogyakarta, he was determined to make Yogyakarta distinctive by combining Javanese-European-Chinese architectural styles ("Both Successors of the Islamic Kingdom of Mataram, this is the Difference between Yogyakarta and Solo Palace," 2019).

Tamanan Ward is one of the first buildings that became the beginning of the passage of time and cultural acculturation that has shaped the character of the Keraton Yogyakarta (Ward, 2023). Tamanan Ward is one of the buildings that has prohibited ornament (*awisan*) besides Kencana Ward. The research will review in depth the prohibited ornament (*awisan*) found in Tamanan Ward, focusing on semiotic analysis. Semiotics is used as a tool to uncover the meaning and message contained in the ornaments.

This research is expected to contribute to understanding the cultural and philosophical values contained in the prohibited ornament (*awisan*) of Tamanan Ward. Thus, our understanding of cultural and historical heritage can be enriched, and efforts to preserve the Keraton Yogyakarta can be done more holistically.

Through a deeper understanding of these ornaments, it is hoped to reveal the extent to which the local wisdom as well as the Sultan's wisdom is reflected in every detail of the Keraton Yogyakarta buildings (Thomson, 2023).

Methods

The research method used was descriptive qualitative, which used data collection techniques in the form of documentation, interviews, and literature studies. Each step in the data collection technique is systematically designed to provide a clear picture of the prohibited ornament (*awisan*) in the Tamanan Ward building.

This research continues to develop with a focus on current life by the community as part of the lifestyle (Becker & McCall, 1990), therefore, there is a close relationship between cultural structures and social structures that produce interpretations of the research results. The results of the data collection indicated that the ornaments in Tamanan Ward are the result of cultural acculturation.

The next step involves presenting the data that has been obtained, followed by data analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem. In the final stage, the researcher makes a conclusion based on all the research results that have been obtained. The semiotic theory used in analyzing the data to understand the meaning and relationship of symbol elements in social life.

Results and Discussion

Multiculturalism During the Majapahit Kingdom Period

The attitude of tolerance of the Indonesian people is a legacy of ancestral teachings during the Majapahit Kingdom. Policies made by the authority to accept and comprehend various differences to avoid conflict have been carried out (Mamahit, 2021). The attitude of mutual respect for differences is found in the fragment of Mpu Sutasoma's sentence in the *Sutasoma Kakawin* fiber, written as *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Tan Hana dharma mangrwa*, which means divided but single there is no dual teaching. The phrase is a Shiva-Buddhist concept, which is a view of the *Kenyataan Tertinggi* (Ultimate Reality) that means one or single. Two different things but possess the same context of meaning, is a tribute to the multicultural conditions and religious tolerance during the Majapahit Kingdom.

Every kingdom that was ever existed in Indonesia, such as the Majapahit Kingdom, must had a rich socio-cultural life. Various kinds of art and culture developed rapidly during the reign of the Majapahit Kingdom. One example of the socio-cultural life and activities of the Majapahit Kingdom that flourished was the art of carving (Munandar, 2020).

The art of carving at that time was known for its detail and distinctive characteristics. The carvings that emerged during this period depicted the beauty of nature and fauna, such as birds, dragons, and flowers that were present around the kingdom. The royal buildings at that time were built with beautiful and magnificent designs with its carvings and ornaments.

Tamanan Ward



Figure 1. Tamanan Ward

Source: *kratonjogja.id*, 2022

Tamanan Ward is a building located in the Tamanan complex, which is a closed area for the public, as it is an area where the royal family and their guests hang around. Tamanan Ward is a heritage building of Kyai Ageng Paker, a gift from the King of Majapahit (Wibowo et al., 1998). Kyai Ageng Paker was one of the ancestors of Sultan Hamengku Buwana I, the founder of Keraton Yogyakarta. He was a descendant of Prabu Brawijaya V, the last king of Majapahit, who gifted land to Kyai Ageng Paker. The land later became the construction site of Tamanan Ward, one of the historical buildings in the Keraton Yogyakarta complex (laduni.id, 2023). Tamanan Ward is dominated by dark blue, red, white and golden colors, different from any other buildings.

The ornaments on the stiffeners (girders and four main pillars) are figures of dragons, hong birds and deer (ornaments that are familiar with Chinese tradition). These ornaments mark the Tamanan Ward as dating back to before the Keraton Yogyakarta was built.

Tamanan Ward also has other ornaments, namely *saton* ornaments, *praban* ornaments, *tlancapan* ornaments and *putri merong* ornaments (Technical Team of the Culture Office, 2019).



Figure 2. Deer Ornament in Tamanan Ward

Source: *Fajar Wijanarko*, 2022



Figure 3. Hong Bird Ornament in Tamanan Ward

Source: Fajar Wijanarko, 2022

Originally, this building functioned as a school within the palace for the sultan's family and royal court. This school had one of the learning activities that emphasized dance which was taught to both boys and girls. The present-day Tamanan ward has two main roles, namely as a storage place for gamelan and as a place used by women to do batik making on the front porch. Besides that, Tamanan Ward has an interesting architectural style with various ornaments decorating the building.

Prohibited ornament (*Awisan*)

Putri Merong and *Praban* ornaments are sacred ornaments because they have a close relationship with spirituality. The spirituality referred to here is the Javanese spirituality, namely the spirituality of God and the spirituality of belief. Both spiritual elements are seen from the concept of *Manunggaling Kawula Lan Gusti* (Suseno, 1984), that there is a belief in the supernatural realm that comes from animism (Javanese native belief). The *Putri Merong* ornament is sacred because it has a relationship with supernatural powers. The relationship between Panembahan Senopati as the King of Mataram and Ratu Kidul as the Queen of the South. *Praban* ornaments are ornaments that contain religious elements and beliefs, this makes *praban* ornaments become prohibited ornaments (*awisan*).

***Putri Merong* Ornament**

The *Putri Merong* ornament is one of the carvings created by a royal courtiers named Citrasoma (Kholis, 2019). This ornament is the most ancient ornament which is a transitional piece from the late Majapahit period which was then made into something else (KRT Jatiningrat, July 14, 2018). *Putri Merong* or often called *Putri Mirong* in Javanese means the attitude of a person who is very shy or one that is very difficult to leave a place. In a traditional house, it was known as *Putri Mungkur* which means a princess seen from the back side (Wibowo et al., 1998).



Figure 4. Woman with a bun and Mirong Ornament

Source: Nor Kholis, 2019

The origin of the ornament is called *Putri Merong*, at one time there was a *Bedhoyo* sacred dance performance. During the performance, there seemed to be a princess who was secretly watching the performance by sidling up near the main pillar (*soko guru*). In relation to the girl, it turns out that *Bedhoyo* dance has a story about Panembahan Senopati's meeting with Kanjeng Ratu Kidul (Abimanyu, 2015). According to Javanese mythology, *Putri Merong* is interpreted as the embodiment of Kanjeng Ratu Kidul who came to see the performance.

Praban Ornaments

The word *praba* comes from Sanskrit which means light. *Praban/praba* in temples is called *nimbus* or *aureool*, and in puppetry *praban* is the same as *badhong* which means the decoration behind the back of a king. The *praban* ornament in traditional Javanese buildings means a carving that depicts rays or light emanating as the light of God.



Figure 5. Praba Motif Ornament on the Saka Guru Pillar

Source: Author, 2023

Semiotic Analysis of Putri Merong Ornament

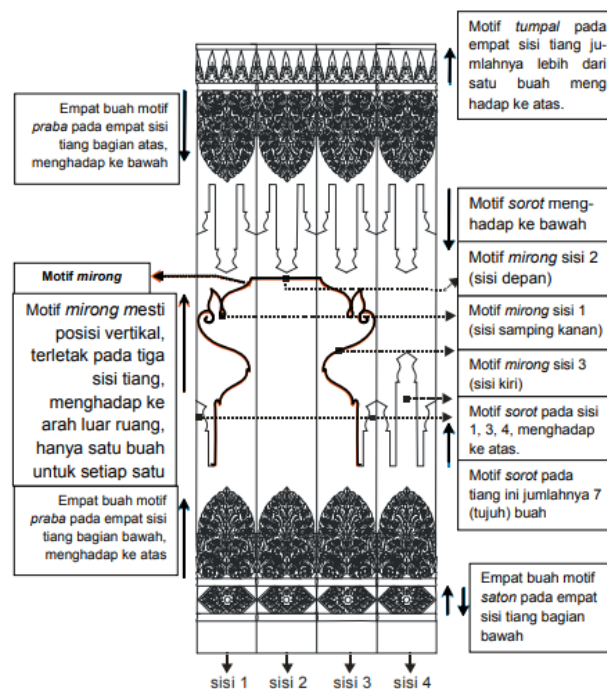


Figure 6. Putri Merong Ornament

Source: Sukirman, 2012

The *Putri Merong* ornament, on each pillar, amounts to one, and is a single motif when placed on three sides of another pillar. The facing direction of the ornament is also oriented towards the space, following the place where the sultan is located.

Table 1. Semiotic Analysis of *Putri Merong* Ornament

	The <i>Princess Merong</i> ornament
Position/location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On the <i>saka guru</i> pillar of Tamanan Ward and Kencana Ward, Keraton Yogyakarta. ● On the <i>saka penanggap</i> pillar. ● On the <i>saka panatih</i> pillar.
Visualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Putri mangkur</i>, a princess seen from behind. ● It symbolizes a loveless marriage as there was never any love between the two. ● Stylization of a series of Arabic letters: <i>alif</i>, <i>lam</i>, and <i>mim</i> which means Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah. ● The Javanese beliefs in Ratu Kidul as the ruler of the ocean who has a relationship with the King of Mataram.
The function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a decoration to beautify the appearance of the building. ● As a symbol. ● As an asset of cultural diversity.
The shape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stylized image of a sultan. ● In the form of Arabic calligraphy. ● In the form of a princess behind a building pillar
Symbols and meanings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The image of <i>Putri Mungkur</i> ● An image of a princess facing backwards. ● A figure of a princess with a Javanese bun. ● The decoration of the building that is specifically reserved for the Sultan. ● The presence of <i>Ratu Kidul</i> (Queen of the South)
The color character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alif-lam-mim calligraphy, in green color, means fertility, growth and prosperity. ● Princess Merong, in golden color, means glory and splendor. ● The tooth or triangle, in red color, means defense, strength, courage and test.

(Source: Septarina, 2023)

The results of the semiotic analysis of the Putri Merong ornament have become a communication tool between its creator and the public in conveying their ideas and concepts. Princess Merong ornaments are an expression of the soul of the people contained in timeless and beautiful architectural elements.

Semiotic Analysis of *Praban* Ornament



Figure 1.7 Stylization of *Praba/Praban* Ornament

Source: Author, 2021

The word *praba* comes from Sanskrit which means light. *Praban/praba* in temples is called *nimbus* or *aureool*, and in puppetry *praban* is the same as *badhong* which means the decoration behind the back of a king. The *praban* ornament in traditional Javanese buildings means a carving that depicts rays or light emanating as the light of God.

Table 2. Semiotic Analysis of *Praban* Ornament

	The <i>Praban</i> ornament
Position/location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At the bottom of the <i>saka guru</i> of Tamanan Ward and Kencana Ward, which is in the form of relief or embossed paintings. ● On the <i>saka penanggap</i> pillar ● On the <i>saka emper</i> pillar
Visualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A ray, a shadowy light from behind. ● The color is golden yellow, means nobility. ● Patterned like a peacock's tail.
The function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a decoration to beautify the appearance of the building. ● As a symbol. ● As an asset of cultural diversity.
The shape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shaped like a triangle, the top or main apex is almost spherical or convex. ● Shaped like a lotus flower ● Resembles the tail of a peacock being spread out
Symbols and meanings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The flower decoration reflects the beauty inherent in Javanese culture. ● The isosceles triangle represents the concept of unity or balance, which is often found in Hindu-Buddhist cultures. ● <i>The Praban</i> ornament of a golden yellow color that symbolizes nobility.
The color character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The Praban</i> flower motif, in golden color, means glory, prosperity and nobility.

Source: *Septarina, 2023*

As such, this object is not only a decorative element, but also contains rich symbolic meaning, reflecting cultural values and nobility in the context of Javanese culture. It is not just an aesthetic element, but also a symbolic representation that encompasses aspects of the life and beliefs of the local community.

Conclusion

The Majapahit Kingdom left four main legacies that are considered significant to this day, namely harmony, tolerance, cosmopolitanism and creativity. *Princess Merong* and *Praban* ornaments are prohibited (*awisan*) ornaments found on the pillars of the Tamanan Ward building. These ornaments have important meanings and functions, namely as a seat for the sultan on the golden throne during sacred ceremonies.

Ornaments such as *Praban* and *Putri Merong* are not just visual embellishments, but they also carry profound messages that are part of the cultural and historical identity of the Keraton Yogyakarta. *Princess Merong* with its visualization of a princess symbolizing a loveless marriage, and *Praban*, with its golden triangle motif depicting the beauty of Javanese culture, both add a spiritual and philosophical dimension to the structure of Tamanan Ward.

By using semiotic analysis, this research succeeds in revealing and describing the meaning and function of the prohibited ornament (*awisan*). In conclusion, Tamanan Ward is not only a silent witness to history, but also a place that carries the values of local wisdom and spirituality in each of its details.

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