

The Impact of Global Trade on Jepara's Carving Industry Decoration

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Abstract. Jepara's wood carving is an exceptional art form with a long and storied history. With roots dating back to the reign of Queen Kalinyamat, this craft represents the culture, traditions, and religion of the Jepara people. The intricate process of carving speaks to the community's values and way of life. In 1980, Jepara's carvings made their way into the global market, prompting changes in motifs to meet the demands of consumers. This shift enabled Jepara to showcase its artistry to a broader audience. This article will delve into the evolution of Jepara carving using literary sources such as newspapers, books, and related research. This article aims to present a descriptive and narrative account of the changes that have occurred while presenting the data and evidence.

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1 Introduction

Jepara a city in Central Java is known as the City of Carving of the World. Its famous carvings have garnered interest from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Spain, Australia, France, and Hong Kong. Its export value has touched 100 billion US Dollars [1]. The history of carving in Jepara, can be seen until the time of the Queen [2]. The development of the Jepara carving slumped after Queen Kalinyamat died. After three centuries of experiencing a downturn, RA Kartini is here to redevelop the craft of carving in Jepara [4]. This movement began the development of the carving industry in Jepara. However, a new chapter in the existence of the Jepara craft industry occurred in the early 1980s [5].

Jepara carving is often associated with a significant Islamic influence in art. Its influence can be seen in the reliefs depicting animals, which are disguised [5]. Carving has become a representation of the local wisdom of the Jepara people; in its development, the art of carving is influenced by several cultures and religions, such as China, Hinduism, Christianity, Colonialism, and modern times, which are oriented towards international markets [9]. Carving in Jepara has its place in people's lives. This is a form of ancestral heritage that has raised and increased their standard of living [6]

The development of the carving industry in Jepara due to global trade has influenced craftsmen to continue to innovate following market orders. There has been a significant change in Jepara from being a cultural representation to a high-value export commodity. This causes the Jepara carving motifs to change. Carving motifs become more diverse and penetrate all forms of animals, plants, and humans, such as the last supper, carved furniture, etc.

What carving models are selling well in the international market, and how to keep increasing the Jepara carving competition? In this article, we will discuss these two things. Arranged in a descriptive narrative, the data for this article were collected through the literature study method from Scopus-indexed international journals taken from SSO UNDIP, news from foreign newspapers obtained from Trove, and local journals from Google Scholar.

2 Result and Discussion

2.1 Jepara Carving Motif before the Global Trading

Jepara carving motifs can be classified into distinct periods based on historical events, including the Islamic period, R.A Kartini, and the formal school period. Each era boasts its unique carving characteristics, representing progress and advancement over time. During the Islamic period, carvings showcased flora and fauna, such as lotuses, leaves, coral hills, landscapes, lines, and birds, seamlessly integrated into the carving. Calligraphy carvings were also utilized as ventilation, with the gaps serving as an inlet and outlet for air.

The development of Jepara carving must be connected to the influence of R.A Kartini. During his lifetime, R.A. Kartini paid attention to local craftsmen trapped in poverty because of their small income [10]. At this time, Kartini developed motifs for *Wayang*, *Gayong gor senen*, *Macan Kurung*, and so on [11]

During the time of R.A Kartini, the Colonial government showed concern and interest in Jepara carving. Therefore, they provide special schools for craftsmen to study the latest techniques. *Openbare Ambachsschool* is a carving school in Jepara that the Colonial government founded. A formal school for craftsmen continued until Indonesia's independence, which changed its name to Technical School 3. To continue developing young carvers' skills, the Vocational High School of Jepara was founded in 1979. This school produces skilled workers considered more professional, whereas graduates are more skilled and have a definite scientific background compared to the *nyantrik* method. The educational process taught includes constructing furniture and carving decorative motifs in Indonesia [10].

2.2 Carving in the Era of Global Trading

The year of 1980 marked the entry of Jepara carvings to the international market. This is indicated by an order from Singapore of 500 carved doors every month [7]. Within a year, the number of carving craftsmen in Jepara increased dramatically. From 1979 to 1980, the carving industry in Jepara experienced an increase of nearly 200 entrepreneurs, and the number of

artisans increased to 2000 [8]. This condition caused a change for Jepara carvings to become export commodities, not just cultural representations.

The entry of Jepara carvings into the international market has led to changes in carving designs which have caused the carvings to lose their Jepara characteristics. [3] Products that sell well in the international market include cabinets, tables, chairs, carved beds, carved doors, and many more. [12]. Typical carvings, such as the *Macan kurung* model, are less desirable because of the complexity of the process, and the price. As a result, craftsmen and the existence of *Macan kurung* are getting dimmer with time. Buyers of Jepara carvings prefer carvings that are practical, less complicated, and more modern [13]. Carving model that the buyers desire is model that influenced by the Europe. Three-dimensional carving motifs depicting wayang, humans, or animals were also a favorite at this time. One can be found in the village of Mulyoharjo, which was once famous for its *Macan kurung*. In this village, many carving craftsmen produce orders for three-dimensional carvings in various forms of living things [3]. Jepara furniture which more concise, both in terms of size and aesthetics are the most desirable furniture. The strength of Jepara carved furniture has shifted no longer to the complexity and beauty of the carvings but from shapes that tend to be plain or do not have many carved motifs. The high number of enthusiasts of this form of furniture is caused by urbanites who live in cities, where furniture with large shapes and too complicated will reduce the room's aesthetics [13]. In addition, rooms that tend to be minor, such as bedrooms, bathrooms, or living rooms, are why minimalist furniture is preferred [13].

The new paradigm of carving was also accompanied by the acculturation of carving motifs between old motifs and market needs. This acculturation can be seen in the carving on the *gebyok* door. On this door, you can find many original Jepara carvings in the form of various flora [3]. This carving can be found in Blimbingrejo village, the center for *gebyok* carving. In addition to the village of Blimbingrejo, the development of traditional Jepara motifs can be seen in the village of Senenan, which is the center for relief carving. This village has developed many carvings for the Mantingan mosque motif, and from the time of R.A Kartini, such as *trubusan* leaves that come out of the niches and form fans which are developed with new techniques obtained from carving schools [15]

The development of Jepara carving designs must be connected to foreign investment and foreign furniture entrepreneurs who conduct their business activities in Jepara. Foreign entrepreneurs also make design modifications from familiar designs [14]. Although their presence jeopardize the local craftsmen, foreign investors has brought a competitive design and challenge the creativity of local craftsmen. Under this circumstances, various design innovations are needed to respond to competition with foreign investors, which meet market needs, as well as develop and present the characteristic of Jepara. Meanwhile, several craftsmen have made innovations such as the crab chair, which is very popular in China, the *ngluntung* credenza, and the *ndeso* chair, which won the National Jepara Furniture Design Award (NJFDA) [13]

3 Conclusion

Jepara carving and its motifs have undoubtedly been influenced by various eras, ranging from the classical period to the international market, Jepara carving has developed its motifs following the spirit of each era. The influence of global trade has made carving an industry with high economic value and provides income for craftsmen. This has caused the carver to make a living from carving. Due to a shift in meaning, craftsmen must adapt to market needs to continue doing business and make ends meet. The craftsmen consciously absorb various elements of carving motifs, considering market needs.

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