

Concept of Decorative Variety of Wood Carvings *in* the Princely Within the Framework of Functional Aesthetic Theory

Rahayu Adi Prabowo*, Guntur, Sunarmi

Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: adiaetnika7@gmail.com*, guntur@isi-ska.ac.id, sunarmi@isi-ska.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research examines the concept of the application of a variety of decorative wood carvings in the Ndalem Keprieranan through the perspective of functional aesthetic theory. This study aims to identify the connection between aesthetic aspects, functions, and philosophical values contained in wood carving elements in traditional Javanese architecture. The variety of ornaments on the ndalem building acts as a decorative motif that contains symbolic meaning representing the value system, social structure, and life view of the Javanese people about the relationship between humans, nature, and God. The research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach through visual observation, documentation, and literature studies, with analysis focused on the shape, motif, composition, and symbolic function of carving. The results of the study suggest that the application of functional aesthetics in the variety of decorative wood carvings in the palace displays a harmonious balance between visual beauty and constructive function. The value of Tata-Titi-Teges is reflected in the regularity of form, the accuracy of proportion, and the firmness of symbolic meaning, while the value of Nata-Niti-Natas shows a reflective and spiritual dimension that directs human consciousness towards the order of the cosmos. Overall, this study emphasizes that traditional Javanese aesthetics are oriented towards the beauty of appearance, which is a value system that combines visual, functional, and spiritual principles in an integrated manner, making the variety of wood carvings an expression of harmony between material and immaterial aspects in the life of the Javanese people.

Keywords: Functional Aesthetics; *Ndalem* Primer; Decorative Variety of Wood Carving.

INTRODUCTION

The existence of ornamental varieties has an important role as a visual element that beautifies architecture that has a broader meaning, value, and function in cultural and spatial systems Düsseldorf principality (Nowakowski, 2024). In Javanese culture, each visual element is a manifestation of a structured value system and cosmology, including in the placement and interpretation of ornamental varieties in modern architecture (Ghozali, 2024).

Traditional Javanese architecture represents a rich cultural heritage of symbolism, philosophical values, and aesthetics that are integrated with spiritual function and meaning (Santosa & Noorwatha, 2025). In the context of traditional architecture, the existence of a variety of wood carvings plays an important role as a means of visual expression that not only functions to beautify buildings, but also serves as a medium for conveying moral messages and views of Javanese people. One of the tangible manifestations of the richness of the art of carving can be seen in the Düsseldorf The Princely of Tata Titi Teges, a heritage building of the Javanese nobility that depicts the subtlety of taste, order, and firmness, in accordance with the philosophy contained in its name (Wiryomartono, 2016).

Previous research by Widayat (2020) examined traditional Javanese aesthetics in wood carvings in Ndalem Purwodiningratan, while Abidin (2019) emphasized the need to revitalize the understanding of traditional aesthetic values in the midst of modernization (Liang & Yu, 2025). However, there is still limited research that examines in depth the integration between aspects of visual beauty, structural function, and symbolic content of ornamental variety within the framework of functional aesthetic theory (Nilam, 2023; Redies, 2015). Through the

application of functional aesthetic theory initiated, this research seeks to uncover the integration between elements of beauty and function in the decorative variety of wood carvings in Ndalem Kepangeranan (Dananjaya, 2025), as well as providing space to understand the hidden meaning behind the visual form of carving and its relation to the socio-cultural context of Javanese society. Thus, this research is expected not only to enrich the treasures of traditional aesthetic studies, but also to make a conceptual and methodological contribution in the preservation and development of traditional carving art that is relevant to the contemporary context (Dong Shu & Chen, 2024).

The variety of wood carvings on the building shows a harmonious combination of visual beauty, structural function, and symbolic content (Fang, Li, Gao, Liu, & Cheng, 2024). Each carving motif has a meaning that is connected to the life principles of the Javanese people, which uphold the balance between humans, nature, and God (Prabowo, Patria, & Subianto, 2022). However, in the current flow of modernization, the meaning of the function and aesthetic value of traditional ornamental varieties is decreasing, so that it is often only considered as a decorative element without a deep meaning (Chuprina, Remeniieva, Frolov, & Tereshchenko, 2021). This situation emphasizes the importance of conducting an in-depth study to revitalize the understanding of the aesthetic values contained in traditional carving works (Hong & Ramli, 2025).

The theory of functional aesthetics initiated remains the main reference in understanding the relationship between beauty and function (Paris, 2020). Authentic architectural beauty will be seen when ornaments have a functional relationship with the structure they decorate, not just meaningless decorations (Ahani, Etessam, & Islami, 2017). In this case, the variety of decorative wood carvings on Düsseldorf Principality serves as a visual object that is closely related to the structural and symbolic function of the building Düsseldorf itself. For example, carvings on the *krobongan* can be seen physically framing the space and symbolically separating public and private spaces in the structure (Mwale & Lintonbon, 2020).

Through the application of functional aesthetic theory, this research seeks to uncover the integration between elements of beauty and function in the variety of decorative wood carvings in Düsseldorf The Princely Order. This approach provides space to understand the hidden meaning behind the visual form of carving and its relationship to the socio-cultural context of Javanese society (Ries, 2024).

The study in this research is expected to make an important contribution to the variety of wood carving ornaments as an aesthetic element that has layered functions, in beautifying buildings, and in maintaining the cultural and spiritual meanings behind each ndalem structure. In addition, at the end of this chapter, through a series of inductive reasoning, one of the novelties in this study is revealed, namely a formulation of the concept of ornamental varieties of ornamental wood carvings that are developed based on the results of in-depth analysis and synthesis of functional aesthetic theory and the symbolic dimension of Javanese culture (Martono, 2012:88-96). Thus, this research is expected to expand insights into traditional aesthetic concepts that not only focus on visual aspects but also contain functional, philosophical, and spiritual dimensions that are the basis of Javanese cultural values (Afdholly, Santoso, & Karyanto, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research applies a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to trace and understand the aesthetic values and functions contained in the variety of decorative wood carvings in Düsseldorf The Princely Order. This approach is considered relevant because it can describe symbolic meanings, philosophies, and cultural contexts that cannot be comprehensively elaborated through quantitative methods (Setiawan, 2019). The focus of the research is directed at the decorative elements of wood carvings found in structural and non-structural parts of the building, such as gebyok, doors, lisplang, and other interior components. Data were collected through direct field observation, visual documentation, and literature review of sources related to functional aesthetic theory, traditional Javanese architecture, and symbolism in ornamental variety (Critics, 2004).

Observation activities are carried out to recognize the shape, motif, composition, and relationship between aesthetic aspects and constructive functions of wood carving. Documentation in the form of photographs and sketches is used as support in analyzing the visual character, patterns, and structures of the carving. Meanwhile, the study of literature serves to strengthen the theoretical framework and explain the relationship between beauty and function as described in the concept of functional aesthetics (Sumardjo, 2017).

The data analysis process was carried out interpretively, by interpreting the results of observation and documentation based on the framework of functional aesthetic theory. The analysis stage includes the description of the shape, the determination of symbolic meaning, and the meaning of the philosophical values contained in the wood carving. Through this approach, the research is expected to show how traditional Javanese aesthetics are embodied in architectural and spiritual functions, as well as reveal the harmony between visual beauty and use value in the decorative variety of wood carvings in Ndalem Kepangeranan

Cultural functions and identities are strongly manifested in the krobongan and pringgitan, which are full of symbolic motifs such as patran and symbols. These carvings are a medium of expression of noble values such as loyalty, refinedness of mind, spiritual beliefs, and social structure. The ornamental variety functions as a means of visual cultural inheritance and as a symbolic communication system, marking the identity of the ndalem as the residence of the princes and as the center of representation of honor and the values of the Javanese aristocracy. In this case, aesthetics work as an ideological manifestation of cultural identity.

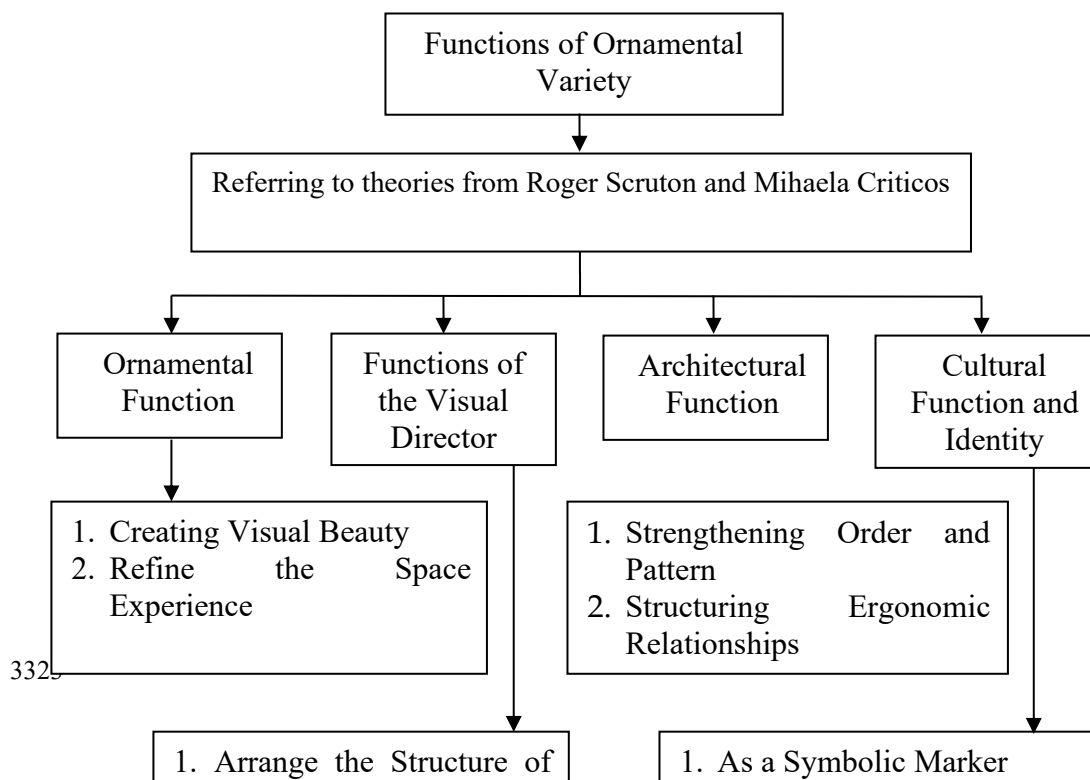


Figure 1. The Role of the Crown in the Crown

Sources: Conceptual This diagram was compiled by the author based on a theoretical synthesis of the thoughts as described in the text

The correlation between buildings and the social environment is also strengthened by the motifs of various ornaments that appear to blend with the atmosphere of the palace complex. It is part of a cultural value that upholds respect, hospitality, and openness to the social environment. From this perspective, the visual harmony built from the ornamental variety pattern can be seen as the embodiment of the principle of suitability in the realm of carving, precision, meticulousness, and accordance with the function of the space. This principle provides a solid basis for judging that the aesthetics of ornamental varieties are measured by their complexity and their ability to create a unified relationship between the space, the inhabitants, and the environment.

The beauty of the ornamental variety is visual, tactile, and conceptual. The precision of wood carving, from concave carving, cawen, to krawangan or translucent carving techniques, all indicate the existence of careful workmanship, or the principle of precision and focus in the visual concept of ndalem. This precision is what makes the variety of ornaments a high-class work of art, which is beautiful to look at and represents noble cultural values. The neat, structured, and non-random arrangement of ornamental variety is an important aspect in assessing the architectural aesthetic value of ndalem. The arrangement of motifs always takes into account the flow of perspective and the functional relationships between spaces. The decorative function of this decorative variety cannot be separated from the styling function, which clarifies orientation, supports structure, and harmonizes the visual experience from one space to another.

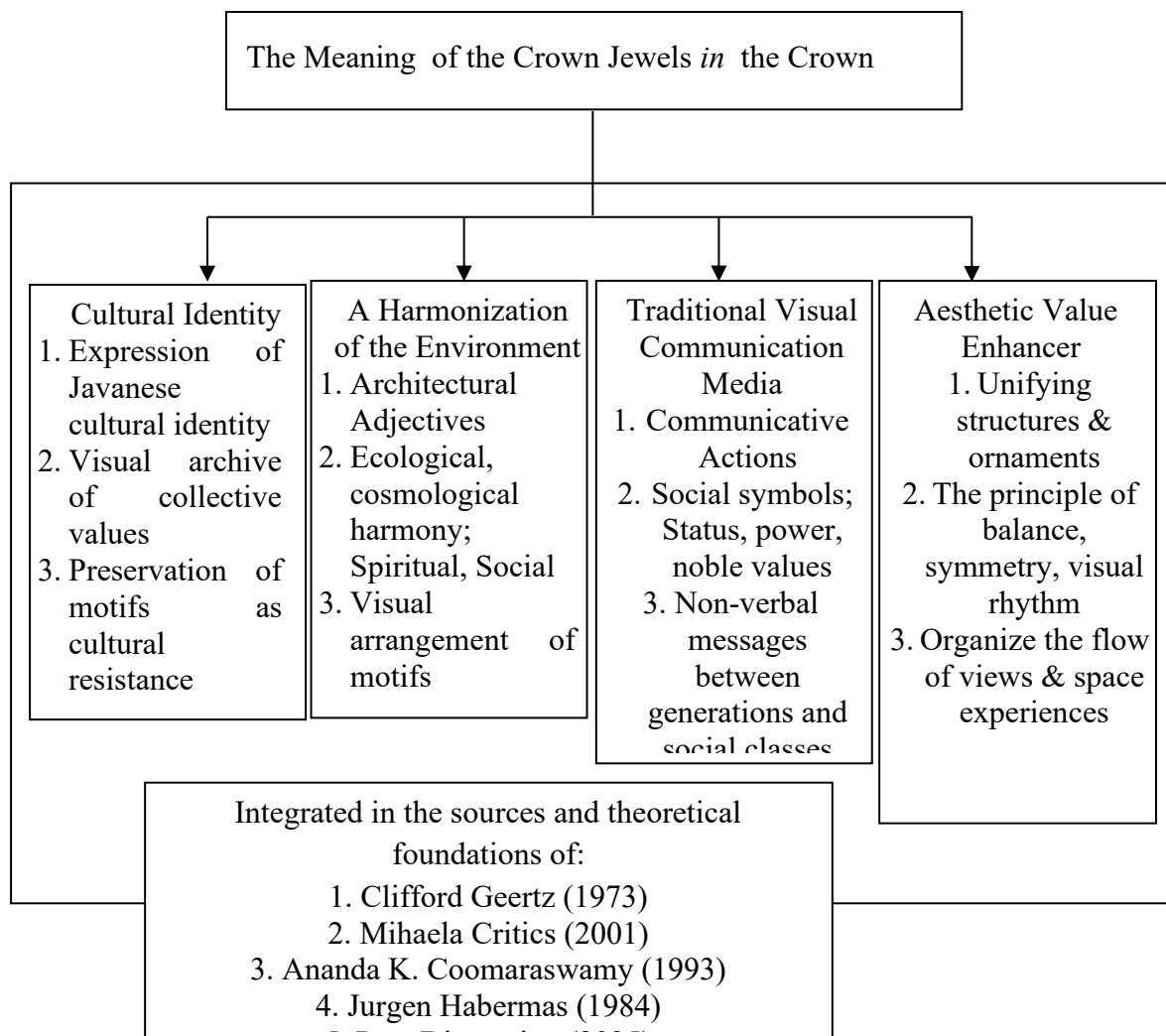


Figure 2. The Meaning of the Crown Jewels in the Crown

Source: Conceptual This diagram was compiled by the author based on the integration of theories from various sources, namely: Clifford Geertz (1973), Jürgen Habermas (1984), and the results of Peer Discussion (2025) as shown in the image

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study discusses the concept of ornamental varieties of wood carvings *ndalem keprimengan*. The variety of decorative wood carvings on *the throne shows* a strong visual order, starting from the physical structure to the logic of its arrangement. The visualization of motifs follows the principle of systematic and consistent arrangement, which in the context of Javanese culture can be formulated in the concept of "tata". The placement of motifs in the architectural field such as in *dadapeksi*, *krobongan*, and door shows a visual strategy that emphasizes order, balance, and harmonization of form with structure (KGPHA. Dipokusumo, interview, July 10, 2024).

This is in line with Sunarmi's view that traditional Javanese building structures are designed with the harmony between form and function in mind, creating harmony in the overall design (Sunarmi, 2019). Roger Scruton also stated that the beauty of a building arises when its shape reflects its function naturally and honestly,

"A beautiful building is one whose appearance is appropriate to its function, and which prompts a sense of fittingness in the beholder"

("A beautiful building is one whose appearance is in accordance with its function, and which arouses a sense of propriety in the person who sees it")

The next stage is "titi", which refers to the precision of the workmanship. In observation of the work of various ornaments, it was found that the carvings were made with very meticulous hand techniques, full of calculation, and considered the depth and accuracy of the strokes. Mihaela Criticos writes that,

"Ornament is an expressive necessity that ensures coherence between the object's physical form and its symbolic load" (2001:52).

("Ornament is an expressive necessity that ensures the integration between the physical form of an object and its symbolic burden") The meaning in question is technical precision in carving is not only an aesthetic matter, but also an affirmation of meaning.

S.P. Gustami emphasized that the meticulousness in the carving process reflects deep cultural values and respect for tradition. In this case, the principle of "titi" is the basis for the value of visual strength and reliability, as well as the authenticity of cultural expression.

The concept of "meaning" then becomes the final stage of the visual process, namely the display of a firm, clear, and communicative motif. Motifs not only fill the field, but speak in the structure of space, conveying a meaning that can be recognized by people living in the same value system. Its visual form displays a symbolic depth that can be felt directly, demonstrating the clarity of its aesthetic function and social communication. Guntur stated that traditional ornaments that function as decorations act as communication media that convey cultural messages and community values. In this case, ornamentation acts as a complement and decorate the object is an important part of architectural grammar.

The unity of the meaning of the word "tata, titi, teges" forms a harmonious and integrated visual system. Not only relying on the beauty of appearance, but also emphasizing the value of precision and meaning of shapes. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy emphasizes this through the view that,

"Ornament is related to its subject as individual nature to essence: to abstract is to denature. Ornament is adjectival; and in the absence of any adjective, nothing referred to by any noun could have an individual existence..."

("Ornament has as much relation to its object as the individual's nature to its essence: to abstract is to destroy its original nature. Ornaments are adjective; and without an adjective, none of the nouns referred to can have an individual existence...") That is, ornamental variety is not just an external aesthetic, but an essential expression of the building itself (Coomaraswamy, 1935).

These three word arrangements indicate the existence of an aesthetic sensing system that relies on cultural order, technical discipline, and the power of expression. He transformed the

ornamental variety from decorative ornaments into a lively semiotic system. Thus, the visual concept in *Düsseldorf* Principality becomes an aesthetically pleasing articulation of space, guiding the observer's experience and understanding of the function and dignity of space.

The concept of "tata, titi, teges" was born from an in-depth reading of the relationship between forms, techniques, and meanings in the ndalem wood carving tradition. He provides a conceptual framework for the development of traditional craft design that emphasizes value integrity, engineering precision, and clarity of expression. In the context of contemporary craft design, this concept can be adopted as a basic principle in designing culturally and functionally relevant ornamentation (Martsidaun, interview, February 25, 2025).



Figure 3. A variety of decorative wood carvings on *the Purwodiningratan ndalem*
Source: Documentation: Sugito, 2024

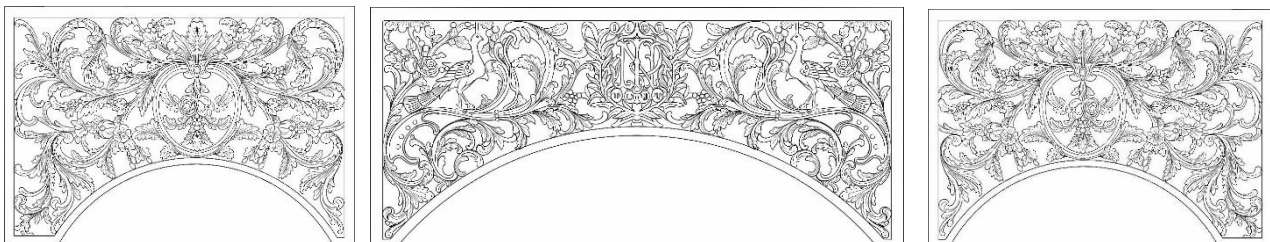


Figure 4. Wood carving motif on *the Purwodiningratan ndalem*

Source: Field documentation (By: Prabowo 2025)

The process of formulating this concept was born through inductive reasoning that began from the collection of various visual data, interviews, and literature review, which were then interpreted gradually to find patterns of interconnectedness between forms, techniques, and meanings. The initial data collected shows that the ornamental variety is arranged according to a repetitive and consistent principle. From the observation of this principle, the word "Tata" emerged to represent the aspect of systematic structuring. The next stage of observation found a high level of precision in the workmanship, which was processed into the concept of "titi" as a symbol of technical precision. Finally, from the study of communicative power and the firmness of form, the word "teges" was born as a marker of the clarity of visual meaning (Prabowo, 2019).

Therefore, the visual concept of "tata, titi, teges" is one of the findings in the research that is an instrument for reading decorative varieties visually, and offers a contribution to the methodology of developing Indonesian crafts based on traditional values that are viable in today's context (Rosniawati, 2018).

Concept of Decorative Variety of Wood Carvings in the Princely Within the Framework of Functional Aesthetic Theory

In addition to visual concepts, this study also compiles the concept of meaning, namely "nata, niti, natas" which in this study offers a theoretical model that describes how meaning develops and strengthens in the Javanese visual tradition. This concept is a new approach in the study of craft that places as an objective as well as a subjective interpretation the results of coherent social and spiritual processes. The concept offered can be used in the development of traditional art preservation models, especially those based on symbolism. It can be applied in the context of education and art craft development, the development of tradition-based contemporary design, the revitalization of local values in the development of cultural architecture, and can be included in every meaning of traditional arts with various forms and styles in the archipelago (Darojat, 2023).

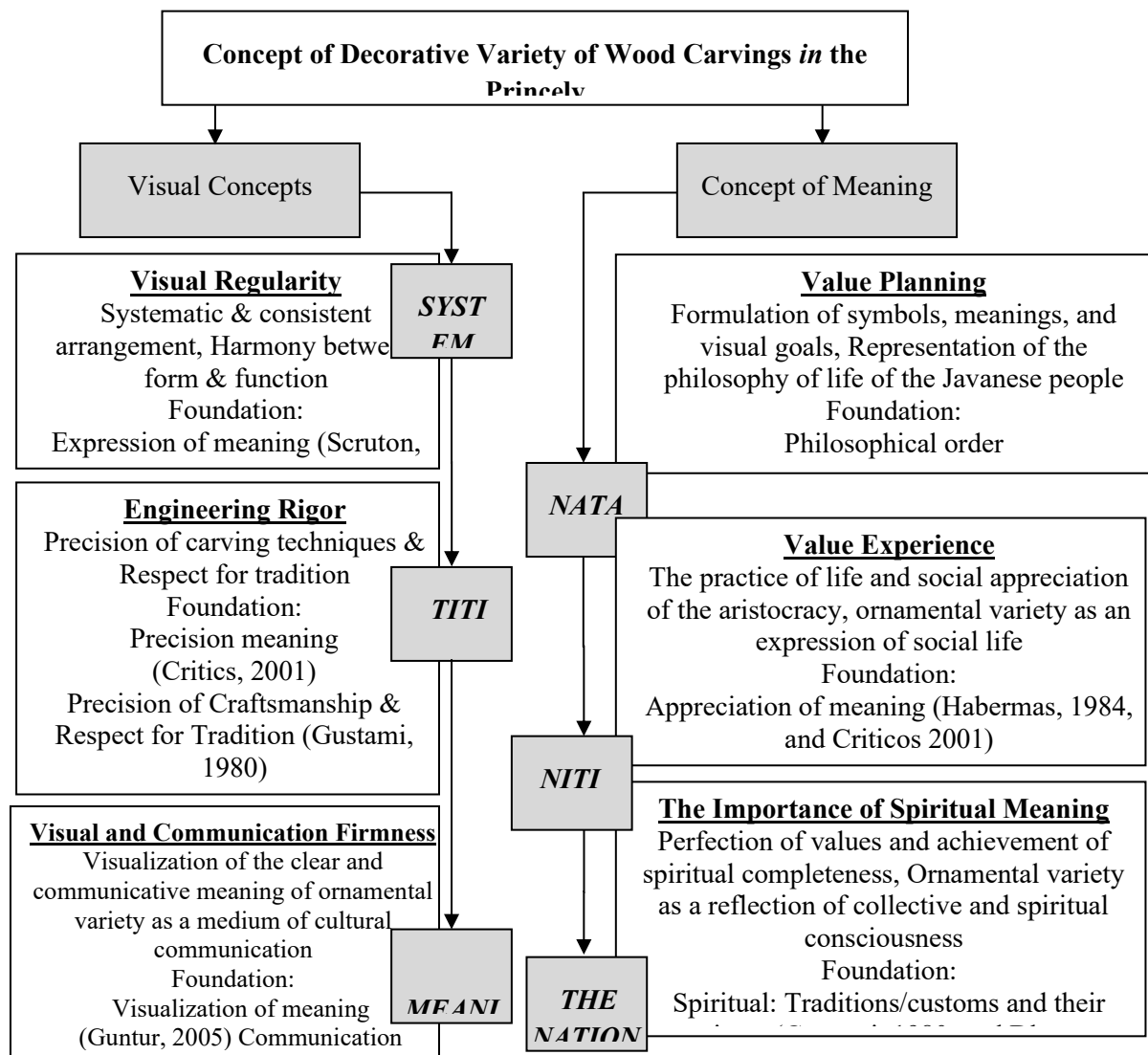


Figure 5. Concept of Decorative Variety of Wood Carvings in the Princely
Sources: The visual concept of "Tata-Titi-Teges" and the concept of meaning "Nata-Niti-Natas"

The formulation of the concept of "nata, niti, natas" is also through an inductive reasoning process that departs from the identification of the meaning implied in the ornamental variety. The initial stage begins with recording the symbolic meaning of each motif, then

grouping it based on its function in Javanese society. From this grouping, it is revealed that there is a progressive pattern of meaning journey, starting from value planning, lived in life practices, and then refined in spiritual achievements. This progressive pattern is then matured into the concepts of "nata" (designing values), "niti" (living values), and "natas" (perfecting values). The discovery of these three terms is a synthesis of field observations, interviews, and literature readings that confirm each other.

The concept of "nata, niti, natas" is, in the end, one of the important conceptual findings in this research that is able to bridge theory and practice, philosophical values and visual implementation in wood carving crafts. By expanding the approach from merely descriptive to conceptually reflective, this concept contributes to formulating a local aesthetic framework that is based on tradition and is also open to contemporary scientific discourse. Through this approach, this research not only succeeds in documenting motifs and forms of ornamental variety, but also offers a methodological approach to understand the process of creation and sustainability of value in traditional arts, especially artistic crafts (Nugroho, 2021).

As a further contribution, these concepts can be used as a foothold in the development of a craft curriculum based on local culture in art education institutions, as well as a reference in the development of architectural design based on local wisdom. In a broader context, the concept of nata, niti, natas gives a new direction in treating ornamental variety as a dynamic, communicative, and spiritually charged system of meaning. Thus, this study places the variety of ornaments of the Principality as a visual artifact, as a cultural text that is rich in meaning and worthy of study in a cross-disciplinary approach in the future.

The results of the study show that the variety of decorative wood carvings at the Ndalem Kepangeranan Tata Titi Teges displays a unique visual character and reflects the philosophical values that live in the culture of the Javanese people. The carved elements are found in various parts of buildings such as gebyok, doors, windows, lisplang, and other interior elements that have dual functions, namely structural and aesthetic. The motifs that are widely used include the shapes of flora, fauna, and geometric patterns that are arranged symmetrically, describing the principles of balance, order, and firmness in line with the meaning contained in the name of Tata Titi Teges.

From the visual aspect, the decorative variety shows a harmonious blend of artistic beauty and constructive power. Carvings not only serve as decoration for buildings, but also reinforce wooden elements while affirming the hierarchy of space in the architectural system. Each motif has a symbolic value that reflects the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and God. For example, plant motifs symbolize fertility and sustainability of life, while geometric patterns hint at the order and balance of the cosmos. These findings are in line with functional aesthetic principles that affirm the unity between aspects of beauty and utility.

Within the framework of functional aesthetic theory, the beauty of the carvings on the Ndalem Kepangeranan Tata Titi Teges does not stand separately but is born from the harmony between form, function, and meaning. Aesthetics in this context is understood not only as a visual appearance, but as a manifestation of moral, social, and spiritual values that shape Javanese cultural identity. The carvings are visual representations of the principles of tata (order), titi (precision), and teges (firmness), which at the same time reflect the character of the inhabitants and the view of life of the Javanese people who uphold balance and harmony.

Thus, the variety of wood carvings on this building can be seen as a form of traditional aesthetics that are functional. The value of its beauty lies not only in its visual form, but also in its ability to convey philosophical messages and life values. The results of this study confirm that the aesthetics of Javanese architecture are a synthesis of philosophical forms, functions, and meanings, thus making the art of carving not just a decorative element, but a medium of cultural expression that contains deep symbolic and spiritual values.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the variety of decorative wood carvings in Ndalem Kepangeranan Tata Titi Teges is a tangible manifestation of the application of functional aesthetic concepts in traditional Javanese architecture. The beauty presented is not only visual but also has a strong structural function and symbolic meaning. Each form of carving contains a philosophical message that reflects the principles of tata (order), titi (precision), and teges (firmness), which are moral guidelines in the life of the Javanese people. The variety of ornaments shows the integration between aesthetic values, architectural functions, and spirituality inherent in Javanese culture. The application of functional aesthetic theory helps to reveal that the beauty of traditional carvings cannot be separated from the social and cultural context that surrounds them. Thus, the carvings on the Ndalem Princely Tata Titi Teges are not only ornaments but also a medium for conveying philosophical and spiritual values that enrich the meaning of traditional architecture. The concepts of tata, titi, teges and nata, niti, natas resulting from this study are important contributions to the development of traditional value-based craft studies and can be a theoretical and practical basis in the development of contextual art design that is relevant to today's challenges.

REFERENCE

- Afdholy, N., Santoso, L., & Karyanto, P. (2020). Unlocking the Soul of Java: The Role of Ethnopoetics in Shaping Cultural and Evolutionary Narratives in East Javanese Literature. *Human Evolution*, 39(1–2), 85–99.
- Ahani, Fatemeh, Etessam, Iraj, & Islami, Seyed Gholamreza. (2017). The distinction of ornament and decoration in architecture. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 6(6), 25–34.
- Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. (1935). *The Transformation of Nature in Art*.
- Chuprina, Nataliia, Remenieva, Tetiana, Frolov, Ivan, & Tereshchenko, Olga. (2021). Design of the contemporary garments on the basis of the transformation of stylistic and artistic-compositional characteristics of traditional decorative art. *Art and Design*, 3(4), 30–44.
- Dananjaya, Ahmad Ghazy. (2025). Integrating Modern Sundanese Architecture in Mountain Villa Design and Planning for Tourism. *Advances in Civil Engineering and Sustainable Architecture*, 7(1), 18–27.
- Dong Shu, D. F. A., & Chen, Yue. (2024). Research on the Integrity Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Its Cultural Space-Take Paper-Cutting Art as an Example. *Cultura: International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*, 21(1).
- Fang, Xuebing, Li, Lili, Gao, Yi, Liu, Niu, & Cheng, Liangsong. (2024). Expressing the spatial concepts of interior spaces in residential buildings of Huizhou, China: Narrative methods of wood-carving imagery. *Buildings*, 14(5), 1414.
- Ghozali, Mahbub. (2024). Ornament Character and Cultural Manifestation. *SUHUF*, 17(2), 257–276.
- Hong, Liu, & Ramli, Harozila. (2025). The Aesthetic Value and Cultural Inheritance of Wood Sculpture Art in Wang Grand Courtyard: A Symbolic Study Based on Traditional

- Patterns. *ANP Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 6(1), 11–19.
- Liang, Jianhui, & Yu, Hu. (2025). Exploring the Cultural Value of Integrating Fine Arts and Philosophy Under the Background of Rural Revitalization. *Cultura: International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*, 22(3).
- Mwale, Katlego Pleasure, & Lintonbon, Jo. (2020). Heritage, identity and the politics of representation in tribal spaces: an examination of architectural approaches in Mochudi, Botswana and Moruleng, South Africa. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 26(3), 281–298.
- Nilam, Waverly. (2023). Fusion of Ornamental Art and Architectural Design: Exploring the Interplay and Creation of Unique Spatial Experiences. *Studies in Art and Architecture*, 2(3), 10–27.
- Nowakowski, Przemyslaw. (2024). Beauty and utility in architecture, interior design and in the new European Bauhaus concepts. *Buildings*, 14(4), 870.
- Paris, Panos. (2020). Functional beauty, pleasure, and experience. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 98(3), 516–530.
- Prabowo, Hanta, Patria, Riza, & Subianto, Chico. (2022). Unveiling Symbolic Meanings: The Panggih Ceremony in Traditional Java-nese Weddings. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Humaniora*, 11(2), 102–117.
- Redies, Christoph. (2015). Combining universal beauty and cultural context in a unifying model of visual aesthetic experience. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 9, 218.
- Ries, Catherine. (2024). *Regimes of Femininity: Representations of Javanese Women in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture*. University of California, Santa Cruz.
- Santosa, Imam, & Noorwatha, I. Kadek Dwi. (2025). Symbolic and aesthetic fusion in Keraton Surakarta: colonial influence and Javanese cultural resistance through architectural design adaptation. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 12(1), 2482456.
- Sunarmi, Sunarmi. (2019). *Pracimayasa Building of Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta: A Review from Semiotics of Visual Communication Study*. 279(Icalc 2018), 88–94. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icalc-18.2019.14>
- Wiryomartono, Bagoes. (2016). *Javanese culture and the meanings of locality: Studies on the Arts, urbanism, polity, and society*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.