

## STUDY OF AESTHETIC FORMS AND SYMBOLIC MEANING OF GAYOR GONG SENEN RELIEF CARVING AT RUMAH KARTINI, JEPARA

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**Abstract.** In 2014, Rumah Kartini created a replica of a historical heritage artwork from Jepara's carving culture and pioneered the reproduction of the Gayor Gong Senen relief. The research location was at Rumah Kartini, Pengkol, Jepara Regency. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and document review. The data were then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. The study aimed to understand the creation process, aesthetic forms, and symbolic meaning of the *Gayor Gong Senen* carved relief. The results showed that the creation process consisted of five stages: research, motif sketching, construction, carving, and finishing. The aesthetic form of the *Gayor Gong Senen* relief lies in the organization of elements such as lines, space, planes, color, texture, and light-dark contrasts, creating an engaging composition. Balance and proportion in the carving, as well as rhythm and dominance in the motif patterns, serve as the main attractions, forming a cohesive artistic piece. The symbolic meaning conveyed through the *Gayor Gong Senen* relief includes religious values and philosophical messages about human life within society, particularly in Javanese culture.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic, Gayor, Relief, Symbol

## 1. Introduction

Rumah Kartini in Jepara is a building established as a form of concern for cultural heritage. In 2014, Rumah Kartini created a replica artwork as a historical heritage from Jepara's carving culture. The reproduction process was undertaken due to the limited historical sources regarding visual art legacies left by Jepara's ancestors. One of the replica artworks created by Rumah Kartini is the Gayor Gong Senen Jepara. Gong Senen is an ancient Jepara carving designed by Citrokusumo, the Duke of Jepara, around the year 1720 (Irsyada & Happy, 2021). The uniqueness of this replica lies in its lengthy production process, which required a considerable amount of time and the involvement of many people in its creation.

The creation process of Gayor Gong Senen was carried out manually from start to finish, requiring the involvement of many people, including artists, photographers, designers, woodcarvers, and even spiritualists. Jepara has a rich history of ancestral heritage, including various artworks, but the lack of historical sources or data on these legacies has caused concern among the community. Therefore, the replica of Gayor Gong Senen created by Rumah Kartini is expected to serve as an educational tool for learning about wood carving, especially for the younger generation of Jepara in the future.

The Gayor Gong Senen replica created by Rumah Kartini is a historical artifact from Jepara, dating back to the Mataram Kingdom era in the 17th century. At that time, the Mataram

Kingdom was ruled by a Duke named Raden Mas Bagus Djiwosoeto. After serving as a Duke, he was later appointed by the King of Mataram as the Regent of Jepara and was given the title Tjitrosomo (Fernanda, 2024). From that moment on, the descendants of Tjitrosomo ruled the Jepara region for seven generations (Kartini, 2019). Raden Mas Bagus Djiwosoeto, also known as Duke Tjitrosomo I, was recognized as a skilled architect and artist. During his time, he created an artistic masterpiece in the form of a Gayor Gong, made of teak wood and adorned with intricate carvings. However, before the Gayor Gong was completed, Duke Tjitrosomo I passed away, and the project was continued by his son, Mas Ngabei Sumowijoyo, who later held the title of Duke Tjitrosomo II.

The artistic masterpiece known as Gayor Gong was estimated to be completed around 1750 and became widely known as Gong Senen (Kartini, 2019). This artwork serves as historical evidence of the existence of wood carving art. According to legend, Gong Senen is believed to be a sacred artifact that could only be played on Mondays and exclusively by residents of Senenan Village. Senenan Village is one of the well-known centers for wood carving and relief in Jepara Regency, specifically located in Dukuh Krajan. Almost all residents of Dukuh Krajan are artisans or craftsmen specializing in wood relief carving. Their carving skills have been passed down through generations, as evidenced by the numerous home-based businesses and companies producing various wood relief artworks and products in the village. Many of these businesses focus on non-narrative relief carvings featuring floral and fauna motifs, although other forms of wood carving, rattan weaving, and sculpture are also prevalent in the area (Rahmawati, 2017). The people of Senenan Village are deeply familiar with the history of Gong Senen, a gong adorned with a *gayor* (ornamental frame) featuring intricate relief carvings. This Gong was originally crafted during the Mataram Kingdom era by the Tjitrosomo I and II dynasties.

Based on the historical significance of Gong Senen, the people of Senenan Village are still widely recognized today as skilled artisans and relief carving artists. As a community deeply concerned with the history, culture, and art of Jepara particularly the history of R.A. Kartini and the wood carving traditions that define Jepara Regency the organization known as "*Rumah Kartini*" was established in 2008 by individuals from diverse educational backgrounds. With a strong commitment to contributing to the study and preservation of Jepara's historical data, Rumah Kartini has collected authentic and verifiable historical records from various credible sources. As a result, Rumah Kartini has become an essential resource for those seeking knowledge about Jepara's culture, the history of R.A. Kartini, and the region's renowned wood carving art.

Given this background, the researchers were inspired to conduct an in-depth study of the aesthetic form in the creation process and the symbolic meaning of the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork produced by Rumah Kartini. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the aesthetic form in the creation process of the Gayor Gong Senen relief carving at Rumah Kartini and to explore the symbolic meanings embedded within the artwork. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and document analysis on March 29, 2024, at the location: Jl.

Kartini, Panggang I, Panggang, Jepara District, Central Java. Observations in this study were carried out to collect data on the artwork within a relevant activity or situation concerning the research problem (Rohidi, 2011:182). This direct observation method was used to gather primary data on visual elements such as form, color, and motifs. Interviews were conducted in person with five informants to obtain valid information about the Gayor Gong Senen relief carving at Rumah Kartini. Interviews are a form of interpersonal communication where two individuals engage in a question-and-answer conversation (Widiastuti et al., 2018). Additionally, document analysis was employed to collect data from books, records, journals, magazines, articles, and other sources relevant to the artwork (Heriyudananta, 2021). Through this document review process, the researchers gathered information from Rumah Kartini regarding the Gayor Gong Senen relief carving, including details about the artwork itself and the historical data preserved by Rumah Kartini.

**Table 1.** Identification of informants

No	Name	Gender	Address
1	Ngateman	Male	Jl. Kartini, Panggang I, Panggang, Kec. Jepara
2	Badrus	Male	Jl. Kartini, Panggang I, Panggang, Kec. Jepara
3	Kardi	Male	Jl. Kartini, Panggang I, Panggang, Kec. Jepara
4	Utoyo	Male	Jl. Kartini, Panggang I, Panggang, Kec. Jepara
5	Saniman	Male	Jl. Kartini, Panggang I, Panggang, Kec. Jepara

Data reduction in research is a method of summarizing and selecting essential points, then discarding the unnecessary ones (Noor, 2020). The purpose of this data reduction is to simplify the data collected during fieldwork, which has not been fully organized. After the data reduction process, data presentation is carried out to provide an overview or specific parts of the research. At this stage, the researcher attempts to classify and present the data according to the main issues, starting with coding each sub-issue (Siyoto & Sodik, 2015:123). The data presentation step involves organizing several pieces of information, which can then be used to draw conclusions.

Through the process and passage of time, conclusions that were initially unclear (abstract) are then verified to become more detailed (Rohidi, 2011:238). Drawing conclusions can be done by comparing the consistency of statements from research subjects or informants, research data, with the objects found in the research (Sahir, 2021). The activities of data reduction, data presentation, and data verification are interconnected patterns. These three activities in data analysis can strengthen the qualitative research conducted by the researcher, as the nature of the data collected is in the form of reports, descriptions, and processes to seek meaning or interpretation, making it easier to understand the situation both for the researcher and others.

## 2. The Creation Process of the Gayor Gong Senen Relief

Rumah Kartini, as the main initiator of the reproduction of the Gayor Gong Senen work, had to undergo various spiritual practices in the process of making the reproduction, both outwardly and inwardly. This is based on the tradition of honoring ancestors in Javanese culture. Before starting the reproduction process, Rumah Kartini visits graves and meets with elders related to the history of Gayor Gong Senen. Rumah Kartini also holds a *selamatan* (a prayer ritual) to Allah SWT. *Selamatan* is a mediator for asking for safety in both the worldly life and the hereafter (Awalin, 2018). Initially, Rumah Kartini had planned and calculated the Budget Plan (RAB) for the reproduction project, but they faced a challenge due to an unexpected budget increase from the initial estimate.

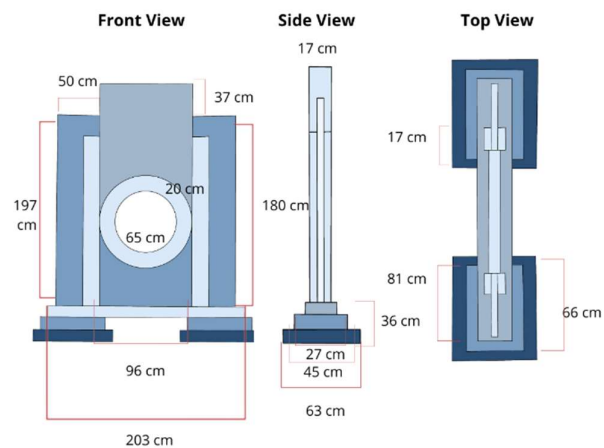
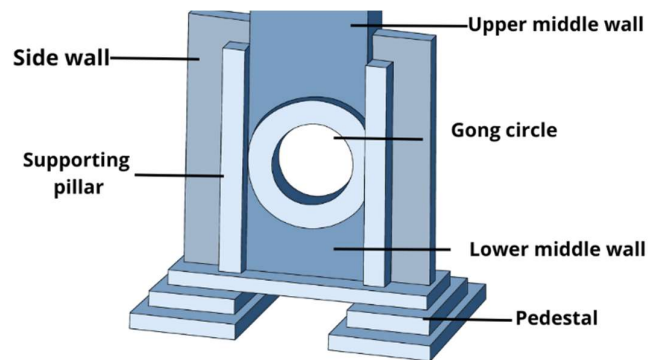
At the beginning of the production process, the planned budget had increased sevenfold. However, Rumah Kartini decided to continue with the creation of the Gayor Gong Senen work. This decision was made because they believed that this work would serve as a reminder to future generations that Jepara once had an extraordinary and impressive carving art tradition. The process of creating the replica of the Gayor Gong Senen relief involved a long and complicated series of steps, including research, designing the motifs, construction, carving, and finishing. Rumah Kartini had already started researching Gayor Gong Senen in 2013. They acquired a black-and-white photo of the Gong from a museum in the Netherlands, which was later corroborated with data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, obtained through the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI). Additionally, Rumah Kartini found a photo from an old magazine written by Notosuroto, along with ancient letters from Kartini that mentioned the existence of the Gayor Gong Senen work. Although the written details were sparse, these sources were very helpful in the data-gathering process.

Data collection was also carried out by meeting two informants related to Gong Senen, who were elderly figures in the Senenan Village and the spiritual guardians of Gong Senen at the time. During the data collection process, the original size of Gayor Gong Senen was still unknown in detail. Therefore, Rumah Kartini sought the assistance of experts and spiritual leaders to determine the size of Gayor Gong Senen. During the motif drawing stage, the artists used a manual technique, which involved several sketching stages. Once the sketch was deemed accurate, the team at Rumah Kartini affixed the sketch to the wood to be carved. After the drawing process, all the sketches were applied to the wood for carving. The carving process also took into account the smoothness and detail (Ismail et al., 2019). An interesting aspect of this work creation is that the carvers had to come from Senenan Village, and only five carvers were allowed to work on it. However, Rumah Kartini also prepared backup carvers in case one of the carvers was unable to continue the work.

The creation of Gayor Gong Senen resembled the construction of a temple that did not use nails or screws, but it was unique because it used a knock-down system. The knock-down system is commonly used to create compact and space-saving products (Hartanto & Sugandha, 2018). Before proceeding with the ornament sketching on the relief, a trial installation of the Gayor Gong Senen construction was conducted to ensure all parts could be

assembled well using the knock-down system. After that, the Gayor Gong was dismantled again and moved to the sketching stage for the ornamentation on the wood.

The lower part, known as *umpak* (the steps), has three levels with different sizes. Then, there are the main support columns, the lower central wall, the upper central wall, the central circle of the gong, and the left and right-side walls.



**Figure 1.** The Structure of Gayor Gong Senen

**Source:** RumahKartini.com

## 2.1 *Umpak* (The Bottom Construction)



**Figure 2.** *Umpak* Construction Process  
**Source:** Documentation of Rumah Kartini

In Javanese architecture, there is a construction or building element that functions as a support for a building at the bottom, called *Umpak* (Hakim, 2011). The Gayor Gong Senen relief work consists of five *umpak* sections: 2 *umpak* at the base, each measuring 81 cm in length, 63 cm in width, and 12 cm in thickness. The 2 middle *umpak* sections each have a length of 66 cm, a width of 45 cm, and a thickness of 13 cm. The top *umpak* measures 203 cm in length, 27 cm in width, and 11 cm in thickness. The carving pattern on the *umpak* sections features repeating leaf motifs that surround the sides of the *umpak*, with small circles enclosing the leaves. This leaf motif is used to enhance the visual appearance (Yusof et al., 2023). The five *umpak* sections were carved by artists from Senenan Village, who are skilled in creating wood relief carvings. The process of crafting the *umpak* took approximately 5 months, with the wood (*umpak*) needing to be positioned upright during the process.

## 2.2 *Soko* (Main Support of Gayor Gong Senen)

The Gayor Gong Senen has two main supports, each support (*soko*) has a length of 215 cm, a width of 17 cm, and a thickness of 17 cm. The *soko* sections feature carvings that look the same in form, but the left and right sections are actually different. Upon closer inspection from the bottom, a flowerpot can be seen with tendrils of leaves and flowers spiraling upward. The carvings on the *soko* use leaf motifs typical of Jepara, which are still found today. There is also a motif resembling cracked coffee beans in the batik pattern on the outer part of the *soko*. An interesting feature of these *soko* sections is the depiction of two figures from the Senenan and Sukodono regions. The right *soko* represents *Tunggul Wulung*, while the left represents *Sentono*. *Tunggul Wulung* has characteristics that make him a role model in wayang performances (Fitriana & Verrysaputro, 2021). Meanwhile, *Sentono* is a relative of Mataram, the child of Wangsaguna (Istiana et al., 2017).





**Figure 3.** The process of carving the main support pillars  
**Source:** Documentation Amelia Hirawan

The relief carving process on the two *soko* sections was carried out by carvers named Mas Ngateman and Mas Badrus. The carving process for the *soko* was not easy and required high precision because the motifs on the *soko* of Gayor Gong Senen are detailed, small, and intricate. Each carver had to refer to images or photos and carve carefully to ensure the carvings appeared smooth, even without polishing.

During the creation of the statues of the two figures, *Tunggul Wulung* and *Sentono*, there is an interesting story. Initially, the statue carving was done by a Jepara sculptor, but after about a week of work, the sculptor asked to stop, as no progress was visible. Upon further investigation by Rumah Kartini, it was found that the sculptor had experienced strange occurrences, such as sudden darkness while carving, among other odd events. The carving of the statues was then continued by Mas Badrus, and the total work took about four months to complete.

### 2.3 Lower Central Wall

The lower central wall of the Gayor Gong Senen measures 88 cm in length, 96 cm in width, and 5 cm in thickness. The carving motif on this section features a symbol of a makara, which in Hindu-Javanese tradition functions as a gate or entrance. The makara, carved using a stylized technique, creates a beautiful impression enhanced with various shapes such as niches, leaves, and tendrils surrounding it. Additionally, at the top of the lotus flower, there is a carving of a figure sitting cross-legged, believed to be a protector of Jepara. The figure depicted is Adipati Citrosomo I, a leader of Jepara (Tsaabita, 2024), wearing royal attire and holding a sacred heirloom.



**Figure 4.** Carving Process on the Lower Central Wall

**Source:** Documentation of Rumah Kartini

The right and left sections of the wall carving feature tendrils with a flexible and detailed form. There are several leaves and fruits filling the area of the lower central wall of the Gayor Gong Senen. The design of these motifs, which are unique and characteristic, visually represent the region where the work originated (Wibowo & Satria, 2015). This section was carved by three artists from Senenan Village, who worked in turn: Mas Badrus, Mas Ngateman, and Mas Kardi. This method was employed to avoid monotony in the carving process. In addition to the intricate motifs, seriousness and attention to detail were required from the artists to create the relief carving, which was based on photo references of Gayor Gong Senen.

## 2.4 Gong Placement Circle

At the center of the Gayor Gong, there is a circle that functions as the space for placing the gong. This circular section appears strong and solid, as it is shaped like a Javanese serpent in a coiled position. The circle measures 65 cm in diameter, 20 cm in width, and 9 cm in thickness.



**Figure 5.** Sketch Process of the Snake Scale Motif

**Source:** Documentation of Rumah Kartini



The drawing process on the wood used for the gong circle took quite a long time. The total number of scales on the gong circle is 3,674, with the drawing process involving mathematical scale calculations to ensure the front and back sides align and meet. *Rumah Kartini* entrusted this drawing process to Mas Saniman (a renowned artist who also crafted the "*Macan Kurung*" sculpture). The drawing of the gong circle took two days, but it had to be redone several times because some of the snake scales did not meet. The re-drawing took an additional two weeks. This was done with precision and care to ensure the scales of the two snakes were identical and met at the left, right, front, and back.



**Figure 6.** The process of engraving Gayor's circular snake scales  
**Source:** Documentation of Rumah Kartini

After going through the lengthy and exhausting drawing process, the next stage was carving. For this process, *Rumah Kartini* entrusted the carving to Mas Utoyo, a carver from Senenan Village who was trusted with the task. This decision was made because achieving optimal results required a high level of carving skill and expertise.

The circle features carvings that resemble snake scales in one direction, but upon closer inspection, the gong circle reveals carvings of two snake bodies meeting and enclosed by a belt or ring made of leaves and flowers. While it may appear simple at first glance, the carving process also required a significant amount of time. As the artist, Mas Utoyo had to ensure that the snake scales on each side were identical, which required a special technique called "*getak cawen*." The center of the gong circle is shaped like a belt or hook, while the top and bottom sections feature floral and leaf motifs resembling European-style designs.

## 2.5 Upper Middle Wall

The upper middle section of the Gayor Gong Senen features symbols of flora and fauna, as seen in the carving of a peacock spreading its wings and tail. In Hinduism, the peacock is regarded as the vehicle of the war god, Skanda or Kartikeya, and also the vehicle of his mother,

Parvati (Sugianto, 2019). In addition to being a symbol of the upper world, the peacock also represents purity. The carved peacock depicted here appears magnificent and beautiful to behold.



**Figure 7.** The process of carving peacock ornaments  
**Source:** Documentation of Rumah Kartini

Each part of the peacock has a philosophical meaning, such as the three layers of feathers on its tail, from top to bottom. The uppermost layer of feathers contains 21 feathers, the middle section has 11 feathers, and the bottom section has 6 feathers, with each feather on the peacock featuring 10 markings. When viewed closely, the peacock is adorned with a crown shaped like a lotus flower on its head. The Lotus flower is believed to symbolize fertility (Wijayaningputri & Regina, 2020). The peacock's beak has a hook, which is used to place the gong mallet. On the left and right sides of the peacock, there are beautiful floral motifs. These motifs are used to embellish the carving and support the upper part of the peacock.

## 2.6 Side Walls

On the side wall of Gayor Gong Senen, there is a figure of a snake wearing a *Badhog* crown, with its tail attached to each pillar. The *Badhog* snake is considered a symbol of protection and guardianship by the Javanese community (Irsyada & Happy, 2021). The side wall features carving motifs in the form of flora, which gracefully intertwine and connect. The side wall measures 197 cm in length, 50 cm in width, and 5 cm in thickness. The work on the side wall of Gayor Gong Senen was carried out by five carvers from the village of Senenan, working alternately.

## 2.7 Finishing

After going through the lengthy carving process, the final stage, which is finishing, begins. However, before starting the finishing process, *Rumah Kartini* first conducted an analysis of the Javanese artwork or heritage from ancient times. After the analysis, *Rumah Kartini* was able

to determine the right color to be used to coat each part of the Gayor Gong Senen, and the finishing process utilized natural materials.



**Figure 8.** The process of coloring works  
**Source:** Documentation of Rumah Kartini

Generally, the finishing process uses sandpaper in various grades (Darmono, 2010). However, in the wood smoothing process, *Rumah Kartini* did not use sandpaper but instead used dried banana leaves. The coloring stage involves the fermentation of tobacco and tea, which undergoes a traditional process to achieve the perfect color. The first step is boiling the tobacco, followed by fermentation for about 4 months, which results in a dark brown color. In addition to being used as a base color, the function of the fermented tea is to serve as a protection against pests or termites.



**Figure 9.** The process of coloring works  
**Source:** Documentation of Rumah Kartini

After the tobacco coloring is completed, it is followed by coloring with a solution of tea that has been fermented for 2 months. The final stage involves coating the entire piece with a

liquid resin produced from a mixture of natural materials such as pine sap, paloh sap, and coconut oil. The finishing process of the Gayor Gong Senen artwork takes approximately 1.5 years to complete.

### **3. Aesthetic shape of the Gayor Gong Senen carved relief**

The aesthetic form found in works of art represents a value of beauty that can be seen and felt through the senses (Suryawati et al., 2018). Art is a symbol and identity for the creator or its society, then used as a means of communication to express humanity and human nature through aesthetic forms (Triyanto, 2018). The Gayor Gong Senen relief sculpture can be considered an aesthetic work of art if there is beauty in its form, design, or motif. Many factors influence the beauty of a work of art, especially in relief sculpture, including the use of tools, materials, and techniques. The use of tools and materials greatly affects the authenticity and quality of a relief sculpture, as the selection of quality wood materials like teak significantly impacts the quality of the relief. The making of the Gayor Gong Senen relief sculpture is done with intricate carving techniques by experienced artists from the Senenan Village. This intricate carving art is highly sought after in Indonesia (Ghaida, 2021).

In the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork, the aesthetic form must refer to the visual elements within the relief sculpture. The visual elements applied in the artwork consist of the components and principles of fine art, aimed at ensuring the artwork is of high quality and possesses beauty. The elements of fine art are physical forms created through the arrangement of physical components that relate to one another in an organized manner. In organizing these visual elements, they are arranged with attention to the principles of art creation, known as the principles of fine art (Creativany et al., 2020). These principles are applied in the relief sculpture artwork because art will not be attractive or have aesthetic value if the visual elements have been arranged without adhering to the principles of fine art (Salam, 2020:31).

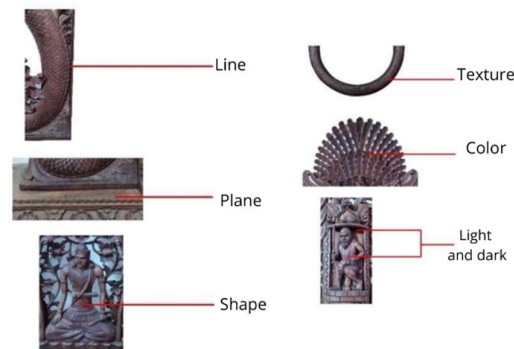
Gayor Gong Senen is an artifact or inscription made from teak wood, surrounded by various carvings, created by Adipati Tjitrosomo I and II in the 17th century during the Mataram Kingdom. The Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork above is one of the reproduction works produced by Rumah Kartini in collaboration with Jepara woodcarvers. The researcher is interested in the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork at Rumah Kartini as an object of study because it is one of the reproduction works of Jepara's carving heritage or historical legacy.

The Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork is a type of high relief craft, with carvings that nearly resemble sculptures (Suryahadi, 2016:354). In its creation process, this work requires very intricate techniques, as the entire construction uses a knock-down technique without nails or screws. The material used in making this artwork is high-quality teak wood with length and thickness that are adjusted accordingly. Additionally, for coloring materials, Rumah Kartini uses natural substances such as fermented tobacco and tea to achieve a natural color.

The basic form of the Gayor Gong Senen relief consists of several parts, starting from the pedestal, support column, upper wall with peacock, lower wall, side walls (dragon shape), gong circle, and the gong itself. The creation process begins with research on the shape of the Gayor

Gong Senen from ancient times, followed by the sketching process and then the carving stage using manual carving tools, ending with the finishing stage of the artwork. Rumah Kartini took approximately 2 years to produce the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork, which has a high artistic value, making the researcher interested in analyzing the aesthetic form of this work.

Below, the elements and principles of fine art will be explained to analyze the aesthetic form of the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork.



**Figure 10.** Element visual relief Gayor Gong Senen

**Source:** Documentation of Rumah Kartini

In the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork above, there are actual or real lines, which can be seen in several parts that adorn the ornamentation. For example, the lines on the peacock's chest feathers, wings, and tail, displaying curved lines. The dragon's body is adorned with scales using curved lines. The gong circle, which has a snake scale motif, also uses curved line strokes.

The fields used in the relief artwork consist of geometric and organic forms. The geometric form is represented in the shape of the gong circle, which forms a snake body wrapping around, and the flat surface of the pedestal's bottom, which has four sides. This geometric form is also used in the construction of the Sunan Bonang Mosque (Izah & Malasari, 2021). The organic field appears in almost the entire ornamentation of the relief, starting with the forms of *Tunggulwulung* and *Sentono* on the left and right sides of the support column, and the figure of Citrosomo in the middle of the wall. The organic field also appears in the peacock, dragon, and plant forms, which style the relief's various corners.

Form refers to the physical shape, depiction, or arrangement visible in a work of art (Susanto, 2011:54). In the above relief artwork, the visible forms range from the peacock, consisting of its head, wings, body, and legs, to the dragon, scales, and other characters that can be seen in the Gayor Gong Senen relief. The texture in the relief artwork can be grouped into two categories: real texture, which is rough and smooth (Santoso et al., 2007). The rough texture can be seen in the upper and lower middle walls, the support column, the side walls, the dragon's crown, and the ornament on the pedestal. Meanwhile, the smooth texture can be seen on the gong circle, the scales of the dragon and snake, the three characters

(*Tunggulwulung, Citrosomo, and Tunggulwulung*), the feathers and beak of the peacock, and the surface boundaries on the pedestal.

The colors used in the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork come from natural wood dyes made from fermented tobacco and tea, aimed at achieving a natural wood color. The resulting wood color is a reddish-brown. Then, in the final stage, all parts of the artwork are coated with a resin solution made from pine sap, sarah paloh, and coconut oil. The light and dark contrasts in the relief carving are created by the height and depth of the carving motifs. Carved motifs with concave shapes produce a dark impression, while raised or protruding motifs give a light impression when exposed to light. The dark impression can be seen in the backgrounds of the three characters, the area around the peacock's neck and feather spaces, and the background formed by curling plants. The light impression is visible in the shape of the gong circle, the peacock's face and chest, the dragon's body, and the flower pots on both support columns.

The structure of a work of art cannot be separated from the principles that must be considered to create a harmonious work. The balance in the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork applies a formal (symmetrical) balance type, as seen in the left and right parts of the ornament, where they mirror each other (Suryahadi, 2016: 233). For instance, the dragon and support column are identical on both sides, and the peacock flaps both wings in parallel. Thus, the balanced impression in both parts at the center of the artwork can be felt.

The rhythm in the relief artwork above has a flowing type, obtained through the repetition of elements that show continuous movement. This can be seen from the curling plant motifs on the support columns that are interconnected, the undulating shape of the peacock's wings, the winding curves of the dragon's body, and the curling ornamental background. Dominance in the artwork is seen in the peacock, which appears large and majestic, spreading its wings and tail positioned at the top. The gong circle, in the shape of a snake's body in the middle, also becomes a focal point, making both objects the largest and most influential visual elements.

Proportion in this work is another factor that must be considered in organizing the artwork to achieve harmony. In this relief, proportion can be seen in the size comparison between parts of the objects. For example, the pedestal gradually narrows from the bottom to the top, and the proportions of the dragon's body, from the head to the body, align with the support column. Similarly, the proportions of the peacock's head, body, wings, and tail relate to the overall shape of the carving. Unity in the relief artwork above is achieved by fulfilling the principles that make up the work. The value of unity in the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork is created through the arrangement or organization of several elements that support and complement each part, resulting in success in this artwork.

Based on the analysis above, the Gayor Gong Senen relief artwork has visual elements and principles that are organized within it. This can be seen from the arrangement of each element such as lines, space, fields, colors, texture, and light and dark contrasts, creating an engaging work. The balance and proportion in the carving forms, along with rhythm and dominance in the motif design, create the primary appeal, resulting in the unity of the artwork. Thus, the



Gayor Gong Senen relief can be said to be an aesthetically valuable artwork because the entire shape and motif of the carving contain the elements and principles of fine art.

#### **4. Symbolic meaning of the Gayor Gong Senen carved relief**

The following is the relief artwork of Gayor Gong Senen created by Rumah Kartini as a form of preservation of historical artifacts or legacy carvings in Jepara. This relief artwork is considered a sacred heirloom by the people of Jepara from ancient times. Therefore, behind the visual beauty of the ornamentation, there is a meaning or message contained within it. Through symbols, humans can grasp the meaning of the phenomena or values that the artwork aims to convey (Murtiyoso, 1999).

According to Tinarbuko in (Pradana, 2020), symbolic meaning refers to a message or sign that provides the subject with an understanding of an object, which is conveyed by the artist through the external form or content of the artwork. In the relief above, there is a connotative meaning, which is a symbolic meaning embedded in the form elements and related to societal norms (both social and religious norms) (Widagdo & Arifin, 2019). Based on the ornament sections of the Gayor Gong Senen relief above, an explanation of the meaning contained within these ornaments will be presented.

##### **4.1 Foundation (*Umpak*)**

The first part of the creation of the Gayor Gong Senen begins with the *umpak*, as the *umpak* serves as the foundation or the main base in the construction of the Gayor Gong Senen to ensure it stands strong. The foundation or *umpak* consists of three layers, each decorated with the same floral ornament motif (repeated), but with a different number on each layer.

The symbolic meaning of the three layers of the *umpak* in the Gayor Gong Senen relief is that humans, in living life, must be able to carry out three things and leave behind three things. On the lowest layer of the *umpak*, there is a floral ornament motif with a total of 36 pieces. When these two numbers (3+6) are added, the total sum is 9. According to Nardi in (Irsyada, 2021), this number holds the symbolic meaning of the 9 great saints who were present on the island of Java at that time, known as "*Walisongo*." The community believes that the foundation for the spread of Islam on the island of Java was through the preaching of *Walisongo*.

##### **4.2 Soko (Supporting Pillar)**

On the supporting pillars, there are two columns standing on the right and left sides of the Gayor, both of which have the same shape and size. The symbolic meaning of these two pillars or supporting columns is a concept of balance, pairing, and harmony, similar to the life in the world where there are men and women, good and bad, and other things that relate to the concept of balance and pairing. However, upon closer inspection, these two supporting columns have differences in the upper ornamentation, which features figures or characters and plant motifs shaped like tendrils. The symbolic meaning of the difference in ornamentation on the pillars is that humans, people, or society, in living life, are bound to be different, with some living simply, some with sufficiency, some with wealth, and some with lack.

On both pillars or supporting columns, there are ornaments in the form of two figures. On the left pillar, there is a figure named Sentono, and on the right pillar, there is a figure named Tunggulwulung. The figure of Mbah Sentono is depicted holding a weapon (sword) in his right hand, with his left hand on his hip, and wearing a head covering (*blangkon*). On the right pillar, the figure of Tunggulwulung is depicted with his left hand holding a weapon (sword) and his right hand on his hip, with a slightly plump body and curly hair.

The symbolic meaning of the figure of Sentono is as a symbol of the ancestors for the people of Jepara, particularly from the village of Senenan. According to the story, he was one of the people who contributed and worked hard to help Jepara become a more advanced city, along with the figures and scholars of his time. The symbolic value of the figure of Tunggulwulung is as a protector or unifier of various religious communities in Jepara, not only for Muslims but also for non-Muslims and other belief systems.

On both pillars (supporting columns), there are ornamental flowerpots at the bottom, from which two plant stems grow with several leaves and flowers stretching upwards in a crossing pattern, a style known as tendrils. The ornament of the flowerpot on both pillars has a symbolic meaning that humans should live their lives according to rules (within boundaries). This is because humans are social beings who cannot live alone and must interact and help one another. Additionally, the plant tendrils crossing above the pots have different numbers of crossings. The plant tendril below the figure of Sentono has 4 crossings, while the plant tendril below the figure of Tunggulwulung has 5 crossings. The difference in the number of crossings symbolizes the different lives of humans, each having its own unique aspects.

#### 4.3 Peacock

On the upper wall, there is a carved ornament in the shape of a peacock spreading its wings and tail. The carving of the peacock consists of many layers of feathers, with the tail having three layers, each containing a different number of feathers. According to Nardi in (Irsyada, 2021), the meaning of the three layers of feathers on the peacock's tail symbolizes the three stages of life that humans go through: the realm in between (spirit), the womb, and ending in the mortal world. The body of the peacock is the central point of all the feathers on its wings and tail, which carries a message of hope from the artists or creators of the Gayor Gong Senen for the people of Jepara to remain united and caring for one another.

On the last layer of the peacock's tail, there are 21 feathers, which symbolize the worldly, mortal life (Supatmo & Syafii, 2019). According to Nardi's explanation, the number 21 represents two things becoming one, a symbol of the Javanese philosophy of "*manunggaling kawulo Gusti*," taught by the figure Syeikh Siti Jenar. Based on the explanation by Dr. Fahrudin Faiz, "*manunggaling kawulo Gusti*" means that when a human (the servant) faces God (Allah), they must be able to set aside their own desires and align their will with God's (Allah's) will. Therefore, when a person can remove their own desires and is left only with God's will, they have become one with God (*manunggaling kawulo Gusti*). In Sufi language, for example, if you walk, it is Allah who becomes your feet; if you act, it is Allah who becomes your hands; if you

speak, it is Allah who becomes your mouth. This means that everything we do is done with the approval of Allah SWT.

#### 4.4 Figure of *Citrosomo*

On the lower middle wall, there is a carving of a figure named *Citrosomo*, who is sitting cross-legged or performing a meditation ritual. He was a figure or carving artist who created the Gayor Gong Senen during the Mataram Kingdom period in the 17th century. According to Nardi in (Irsyada, 2021), *Citrosomo* is depicted performing the meditation ritual to determine the date or day (market days in the Javanese calendar) for the creation and naming of Gong Senen. Above the figure of *Citrosomo*, there is a carving of a Kala, with an open mouth, resembling the Kala found on temples in Indonesia. Kala serves as a decoration and is usually located at the entrance of a temple's staircase. The Kala symbolizes safety or acts as a ward against evil spirits and is also interpreted as a symbol of time, representing the inevitable decay of human life, which will "*perish*" with time (not eternal).

#### 4.5 Dragon Pillar

On both the right and left sides of the Gayor Gong Senen, there are carvings of a dragon statue, with its head down and its tail standing upright. The dragon's body twists around the two supporting columns of the Gayor, with the bottom of its head touching the base. The meaning of the dragon carving is a symbol of unity and cooperation among the people of Jepara in uniting ideas and thoughts. According to Nardi in (Irsyada, 2021), the people of Jepara are expected to follow the Javanese philosophy of "*oyo gung binathara, oyo adigang adigung adiguna*," which translates as "do not overly boast of power, strength, fame, or wisdom." The dragon carvings on the right and left sides of the Gayor Gong Senen represent the Javanese dragon, depicted as a giant serpent without legs and uniquely wearing a crown ("*badhog*") on its head. The function of the Javanese dragon in temple architecture is as a symbol of protection and guardianship (Haryanto & Prasetyo, 2015).

#### 4.6 Circle where the gong is placed

In the center of the Gayor, there is a carving in the shape of a scaled serpent's body that wraps around the gong in the middle. This carving of the serpent's body has a symbolic meaning as an element of the worldly realm, signifying that humans must work together and help one another. The gong, located at the center, is part of the entire Gayor Gong Senen work and is made from bronze, as is typical for gongs. According to Nardi in (Irsyada, 2021), the meaning of the gong at the center is as a focal point, symbolizing that all creatures and the universe bow down to God Almighty (Allah SWT). This interpretation is drawn from the word "*Agung*," whose pronunciation is similar to "*gung*" and "*guongg*."

The next object is a "*tabuh*," which is a mallet or striker used to hit the gong, struck against the "*pencu*" (the protruding part of the gong). The *tabuh* on Gayor Gong Senen has five circular or ring-shaped motifs at the top and seven circular motifs at the bottom. The symbolic meaning of these numbers is that the number 5 represents the five days in the Javanese market

calendar: *Kliwon, Legi, Pahing, Pon, and Wage*. The number 7 represents the days of the week in the Gregorian calendar: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (Irsyada, 2021).

#### 4.6 Decorative motifs of tendril ornaments

In the filling section of the Gayor Gong Senen, there are ornamental vines shaped like motifs of leaves, flowers, and fruits. These motifs symbolize the journey of life, suggesting that humans must continue to grow. The forms of leaves, stems, fruits, and flowers that continuously grow and spread above represent human life, which is expected to continually grow and become wise in actions and decision-making.

### 5 Conclusions

In the creation process of the Gayor Gong Senen artwork, Rumah Kartini had to go through several stages in the making of the work. The first stage in the creation process began with research conducted by the Rumah Kartini team, followed by the design and construction phase of the work. The Gayor Gong Senen artwork has its own uniqueness, particularly in its construction, which uses a "knock-down" system, or disassembly without bolts and screws. After the construction stage, the next step is the drawing of the ornamental carvings, followed by the carving process itself. During the carving stage, all the carvers working on the piece are residents of Senenan Village, as the tradition says that this artwork should only be carved by the people of Senenan. The final stage of the artwork's creation is the finishing process, using natural materials to maintain the quality of the work.

In the Gayor Gong Senen relief, the aesthetic form of the work lies in the media used, including tools, materials, and techniques. This is because the use of media and techniques in the relief work greatly influences the beauty of its visual form. The aesthetic form in the Gayor Gong Senen relief is found in the structure of the work (lines, fields, shapes, texture, light and dark contrasts, color) and the principles of form, including rhythm, balance, dominance, proportion, and unity, all of which are fulfilled in the Gayor Gong Senen relief. This can be seen in the beauty of the carved motifs and the selection of objects in the work.

The ornamental forms of the Gayor Gong Senen relief, with their visual beauty, convey meanings or messages through each ornamental carving presented. The Gayor Gong Senen relief holds values about the philosophy of human life in society, particularly in the Javanese community. For example, the dragon ornament symbolizes unity and cooperation among the people of Jepara. Additionally, there are religious values conveyed through the carved motifs, such as the pedestal, which represents the beginning of the spread of Islam in Java. Therefore, all the ornamental forms in the Gayor Gong Senen relief carry meanings or messages of goodness within them.

It is recommended that the residents and people of Jepara take the messages from the Gayor Gong Senen relief to implement in their community life and appreciate the carved works in Jepara more. Furthermore, Rumah Kartini and future researchers are encouraged to continue

studying the carved works in Jepara Regency, to preserve the history and legacy of Jepara's carving tradition and to make it known to the broader public. Finally, the local government is expected to show more concern for Jepara's carved heritage and play a role in encouraging artists and the community to preserve Jepara's carving culture.

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The authors state that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article

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