

THE AESTHETICS OF JEPARA CARVING ON TEAK WOOD CHAIRS AS A FORM OF CREATIVITY AND SKILL OF LOCAL CRAFTSMEN

¹ Tasya Maqsida and Wasis Wijayanto²

^{1,2}Muria Kudus University

Corresponding author:
Tasya maqsida
202433271@std.umk.ac.id
Wasis Wijayanto
Wasis.wijayanto@umk.ac.id

Received: 1 November 2025
Revised: 8 November 2025
Accepted: 15 November 2025
Published: 1 December 2025

Abstract. Jepara carvings on teak chairs are an Indonesian cultural heritage known internationally for their beauty and quality craftsmanship. This study aims to analyze the aesthetics of Jepara carvings on teak chairs and identify the creativity and skills of local craftsmen in developing carving motifs. The study used a qualitative method with a case study approach conducted in Jepara Regency, Central Java. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews with craftsmen, and documentation. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that the aesthetics of Jepara carvings are evident in the beauty of intricate and detailed motifs, inspired by flora and fauna, with harmonious proportions and compositions. Motifs such as lung-lungan, patran, and truntum not only function as decorative elements but also contain philosophical meanings that reflect the culture and spirituality of the Javanese people. The craftsmen's creativity is reflected in their ability to innovate and create new motifs without losing their traditional identity. The craftsmen's skills are formed through a long learning process passed down from generation to generation, requiring years of dedication. Despite facing the challenges of modernization, Jepara craftsmen maintain the aesthetic quality and traditional values in each of their works.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Jepara, Skills, Creativity, Carving.

1. Introduction

Carving art is a type of artwork produced through scratching, printing, or sculpting materials such as wood, shells and other materials (Utami et al., 2021). Teak wood furniture products carved in Jepara are an export commodity that is in demand by the international market because of its unique design and neat workmanship quality (Salsabila et al., 2024). However, in the midst of modernization and industrialization, Jepara carving artisans face challenges in maintaining the aesthetic quality and creativity of their work. This happens because of the pressure to produce products in bulk and quickly. This phenomenon makes people worried that the traditional aesthetic value and authentic skills of local artisans will be diminished.

Based on observations on the carvings in Mulyoharjo, especially the teak wood chair craftsmen, most of them use teak wood materials chosen because they are strong, durable and have a smooth texture, sharp fibers and uniform colors. In addition to teak wood, craftsmen also use mahogany, and other types of wood. Artisans still use hand carving techniques such as chisels, inlays, and wooden hammers, of various sizes in making carvings. The highly detailed and time-consuming work process is also a challenge in meeting the market demand that increasingly wants products that can be produced immediately (Alhidayatullah, 2025). From interviews with artisans named darmono, in terms of the main motifs that are preserved,

namely lung-lungan (plant channels), patran (leaves), and tantrums (geometric) motifs. They strive to maintain the quality of the carving appearance despite facing economic pressures from market competition. The challenges in market competition are such as not agreeing with the target from the beginning, price competition that is too tight and a shift in consumer tastes to minimalist designs.

Several previous studies have discussed the art of Jepara carving from various perspectives. Learn how Jepara carving design has changed in the face of the digital age, especially in terms of the use of technology in the manufacturing process. According to Mutiara et al (2024) it can be said that the design of Jepara wood carvings is made only for trade purposes, without paying attention to the added value of local advantages that should be competitive. According to S. H. Saputra et al (2025) The philosophical meaning of Jepara carving motifs and their relationship with the life of the Javanese Society. However, research that focuses specifically on the beauty of Jepara carvings on teak wood chairs as a reflection of the creativity and skills of local craftsmen is still relatively minimal. This research aims to fill this gap by focusing on aesthetic aspects, creative processes, and technical abilities of craftsmen in creating high-quality carving works (Nurfadhilah & Falah, 2025).

The three studies have similarities in terms of the objects of study that both focus on Jepara carving, recognize the importance of local and Javanese cultural aspects, and use an academic approach in analyzing the phenomenon of Jepara carving. However, there are differences, the first research by Mutiara and her colleagues took a critical perspective by studying how the design of Jepara carvings changed in the face of the digital era, especially in the use of technology in the manufacturing process. The second research on the philosophical meaning of carving motifs takes an anthropological-cultural perspective with a focus on the symbolic dimension of carving motifs and the relationship of these meanings with the life of the Javanese people, emphasizing more on the aspects of cultural and philosophical values contained in them. The third research by Saputra and his team as well as Nurfadhilah and Falah fills the gap that is still minimal with a special focus on the aesthetic aspects of Jepara carved teak wooden chairs as a reflection of the creativity and skills of local craftsmen.

Based on this background, the problem discussed in this study is to observe how the aesthetic form of Jepara carving on teak wooden chairs?, how is the Creativity and Skills of Local Craftsmen in the Development of Wood Carving Motifs? The purpose of this study is to analyze the aesthetics of Jepara carvings on teak wooden chairs, identify the creativity of artisans in developing carving motifs, and understand how their local skills are manifested in the carving making process. The benefits of this research can theoretically help enrich the study of traditional Indonesian art, while it can practically become a material for the documentation and preservation of Jepara carvings, as well as provide insight for craftsmen in increasing the creativity of their works (S. H. Saputra et al., 2025).

2. Results and Discussion

The discussion of the results of this research uses three main concepts, namely aesthetics, creativity, and skills. According to Stuart (2021) Aesthetics is something that has to do with beauty and all aspects of what is called beauty. Creativity according to Ainurrafa

et al (2025) It is a process that aims to create something new by taking advantage of various existing elements. While Skill is the ability to work with reason, ideas, and imagination to work on, modify, or create something more significant so that the work produces value (N. A. Saputra et al., 2024). This concept is used as a basis for analyzing Jepara carvings on teak wooden chairs as a form of local craftsman's ability.

2.1 The Aesthetic Shape Of Jepara Carving On Teak Wooden Chairs

According to Magdalena et al (2022) Aesthetics is a part of philosophy that studies the beauty and feeling of art, how it is formed, and how people enjoy it. Jepara carving as one of the traditional arts of the archipelago has been widely known both at the national and international levels because of the beauty of the motifs and the subtlety of the sculptures produced. The existence of Jepara carvings cannot be separated from the use of teak wood as the main medium, which has strong, durable characteristics, and has beautiful fibers. The combination of the quality of teak wood raw materials with the high skill of Jepara craftsmen produces works of art with high aesthetic value, especially in furniture products such as teak wooden chairs.



Figure 1. Aesthetics of Engraving on Teak Wooden Chairs

Source : <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1KK1TAFsdg/>

The aesthetic value of Jepara carvings also lies in the fineness of the finishing and the details of the workmanship which shows the high level of patience and precision of the craftsmen (Utami et al., 2021). Every curve, every curve, and every detail of the motif is worked with high precision using chisels and other traditional tools. The texture produced from the carvings on teak wood gives a tactile dimension that adds an aesthetic experience for the connoisseur. Additionally, the natural color of teak wood that ranges from golden brown to dark brown provides the perfect backdrop to highlight the beauty of the carving. The finishing process with the use of melamine or polish not only protects the wood but also strengthens the contrast between the carved parts and the plain parts, so that the carved motifs appear more prominent and dramatic.



Picture 2. Teak Wood Chairs Before Finishing

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1G7r2fNNsi/>

From a philosophical perspective, the aesthetics of Jepara carvings on teak wooden chairs also contain a deep symbolic meaning (Irsyada & Happy, 2021). Many of the carving motifs used have certain philosophies and expectations, for example the jasmine flower motif that symbolizes purity, the phoenix motif that symbolizes resurrection and immortality, or the dragon motif that symbolizes strength and protection (Hendriyani, 2024). The presence of these symbols makes Jepara carved chairs not only functional furniture, but also a medium for cultural expression and spirituality

of the Javanese people. In the modern context, the aesthetics of Jepara carving have adapted by combining traditional and contemporary elements to meet the wider market's tastes, while still retaining the distinctive characteristics that are the identity of Jepara carvings.

2.1.1 Creativity and Skills of Local Craftsmen in the Development of Teak Wood Carving Motifs

Creativity according to Al-Quddus & Dona (2021) is the ability of a person who in daily life is related to the achievement of the Special in creating something new or turning something existing into a different concept, finding ways to solve problems that ordinary people cannot find, generating ideas that have never existed before, and being able to see many possibilities that can happen. Meanwhile, according to Naini et al (2020) The skill of traditional craftsmen is procedural knowledge that is stored in motor memory and is usually passed on orally as well as through direct demonstration from one generation to the next. In the context of Jepara wood carving, the creativity and skill of local craftsmen are two inseparable elements and reinforce each other in producing high-quality artworks. Jepara carving craftsmen not only inherit traditional techniques from previous generations, but also continue to develop and innovate to create new motifs that are in accordance with the times (Masabdi, 2023). This process of regeneration of knowledge and skills generally takes place from generation to generation in the family environment or through an apprenticeship system, where young artisans learn directly from more experienced senior craftsmen.



Figure 3. The Sculpting Process in the Making of Carving Motifs

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1Fdaj39Ur/>

The skills of local craftsmen in Jepara are formed through a long learning process and require high dedication (Shidqi, 2024). A beginner craftsman usually starts by learning basic techniques such as how to hold a chisel correctly, recognize the types of chisels and their functions, understand the characteristics of teak wood, and practice hand strength and control in sculpting. Over time, craftsmen will develop muscle memory and a sensitivity to materials that allows them to produce more delicate and detailed sculptures. This process can take years, even decades to reach a master's or expert level. According to Anggiriani & Andani (2025) Technical skills include the ability to sketch designs, move designs to wooden surfaces, sculpt with various depths and angles, smooth sculptures, and provide perfect finishes.



Figure 4. Peacock Carving Motifs

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/share/17ZQBusWqP/>

Peacock motifs are included in the variety of fauna ornaments. This shape is a variation of the shape of the peacock. In art, peacock motifs undergo a process of stylization and distorting from their original form (Rahmadi & Sakre, 2020). In the stylization stage, the peacock motif comes from the shape of the peacock which is changed by adding details without losing its original features. Meanwhile, at the distorting stage, the shape of the animal is enlarged and enriched by combining plant motifs, so that the shape looks more beautiful and elegant. Based on research, peacock motifs are part of the variety of fauna ornaments. The shape of the peacock has been added to the detail so that the shape looks larger and awesome, but still retains the characteristics of the peacock.

The creativity of a craftsman is reflected in his ability to develop designs, explore various techniques, and adapt traditions to the demands of the times (Aulia et al, 2024). The creativity of local artisans in developing wood carving motifs can be seen from their ability to continue to innovate without losing their traditional identity (Zulhuda et al., 2025). The aesthetics of Jepara carvings on teak wooden chairs can be seen from several important aspects that complement each other. The first is the aspect of form, where Jepara carvings have characteristics in the form of intricate and detailed motifs with a high level of difficulty in their work. The motifs used are generally inspired by nature such as flora motifs in the form of flowers, leaves, and tendrils, as well as faunal motifs such as birds, dragons, and other mythological animals (Susanti et al., 2025). Each chisel stroke on teak wood produces depth and dimension that creates a stunning three-dimensional visual effect. The second is the aspect of proportions and composition, where the placement of carvings on teak wooden chairs is designed in such a way as to create a harmonious visual balance. The carvings are not only placed randomly, but consider the parts of the chair such as the backrest, seat, hands, and legs of the chair to create a complete design unit. Jepara carving motifs have the meaning of beautifying life with beauty, because that beauty is the result of integration, balance and harmony in the living environment with the community (Amalia et al., 2024).

3. Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that the aesthetics of Jepara carvings on teak wooden chairs represent the creativity and high skills of local craftsmen that have been passed down from generation to generation. The aesthetic form of Jepara carving is seen in the beauty of intricate and detailed motifs, inspired by nature such as flora (flowers, leaves, tendrils) and fauna (birds, dragons, mythological animals), with harmonious proportions and compositions. The finesse of finishing and detail of the workmanship shows a high level of patience and precision, while the philosophical meaning contained in each motif makes the carved chair not only functional furniture but also a medium of cultural expression and spirituality of the Javanese people. The creativity of local artisans is reflected in their ability to innovate to create new motifs such as lung-lungan, patran, and truntum without losing traditional identity, adapting to the times and modern market tastes. Craftsmanship skills are formed through a long learning process that involves a system of apprenticeships and the inheritance of knowledge from generation to generation, requiring years of dedication to master basic techniques to reach an expert level. Despite facing modernization challenges and economic pressures, Jepara artisans remain committed to maintaining aesthetic quality and traditional values in each of their carvings, making Jepara carvings an export commodity that is in demand by the international market.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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

Funding Information

None

Acknowledgement

The author would like to express his gratitude to the informants who have been involved in writing this article

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