

# Symbolic and Aesthetic Representation of the Royal Carriage as a Manifestation of Palace Craft Art: Implications for the Study of Cultural Identity in the Archipelago

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## ABSTRACT

*Craft art represents a cultural expression reflecting community creativity, identity, and skills. In Indonesia, craft art has a long historical tradition influenced by Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, and European colonial cultures. One prominent manifestation of palace craft art is the royal carriage (kereta kencana), which serves as ceremonial transportation and a symbol of royal authority, social status, and cultural identity. This study investigates the royal carriage's aesthetic, symbolic, and technical representations as a significant artifact of palace craft art. The research adopts a qualitative approach through literature study, relying on written sources such as books, scientific articles, and historical documents. Findings indicate that the royal carriage reflects exceptional aesthetic quality and technical mastery through high-quality materials such as teak wood, precious metals, luxurious textiles, and intricate carvings, integrating elements of Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, and Western cultures. Symbols such as Garuda, Arabic calligraphy, floral and faunal motifs, and Baroque ornaments represent the royal institutions' philosophical, spiritual, and political values. Nevertheless, this research has limitations regarding the empirical exploration of symbolic meaning shifts in modern contexts. Further studies are recommended to employ ethnographic approaches, material analyses, and conservation strategies utilizing digital technology and artisan regeneration to maintain the relevance of palace craft heritage as a critical part of Indonesia's cultural identity.*

**Keywords:** Keraton's Craft Art, Carriage, Symbols of Power, Multiculturalism, Digital Preservation

## ABSTRAK

Seni kriya merupakan ekspresi budaya yang mencerminkan kreativitas, identitas, dan keterampilan masyarakat. Di Indonesia, seni kriya memiliki sejarah panjang yang dipengaruhi oleh berbagai budaya seperti Hindu-Buddha, Islam, dan kolonial Eropa. Salah satu manifestasi tertinggi seni kriya istana adalah kereta kencana, yang selain berfungsi sebagai alat transportasi dalam upacara kerajaan, juga menjadi simbol kekuasaan, status sosial, serta identitas budaya istana. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap representasi estetis, simbolik, dan teknis pada kereta kencana sebagai artefak kriya istana. Penelitian dilakukan melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka, menggunakan sumber tertulis seperti buku, artikel ilmiah, dan dokumen sejarah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kereta kencana mencerminkan keunggulan estetika dan keterampilan teknis yang tinggi melalui penggunaan material berkualitas seperti kayu jati, logam mulia, tekstil mewah, serta ukiran rumit yang menggabungkan unsur-unsur budaya Hindu-Buddha, Islam, dan Barat. Simbol-simbol seperti Garuda, kaligrafi Arab,

motif flora dan fauna, serta ornamen Barok mencerminkan nilai filosofis, spiritual, dan politik kerajaan. Meski demikian, penelitian ini masih memiliki keterbatasan dalam eksplorasi empiris mengenai perubahan makna simbol dalam konteks modern. Studi lanjutan direkomendasikan menggunakan pendekatan etnografis dan analisis material, serta menyusun strategi pelestarian yang melibatkan teknologi digital dan regenerasi perajin, agar warisan seni kriya istana tetap relevan sebagai bagian penting dari identitas budaya Nusantara.

**Kata Kunci:** Seni Kerajinan Keraton, Kereta, Simbol Kekuasaan, Multikulturalisme, Pelestarian Digital

## INTRODUCTION

Craft is a cultural expression that reflects a community's creativity, skills, and identity. Craft arts encompass various forms of work, such as handicrafts, textiles, metal crafts, wood carving, and jewelry, which often serve both practical function and have high aesthetic value. In Indonesia, these art forms have a long and rich history, with each region's characteristics and traditions passed down from generation to generation (Sunarya, 2021). In this case, craft art reflects ongoing processes of cultural changes. Therefore, the creativity of a craftsman, even in small contributions, will affect how the process of cultural change works (Wahyono et al., 2023)

The practice of craft arts was initially intended to make functional items for both religious purposes and practical needs in human life, such as household appliances (Prihatin, 2022). For example, artifacts from the Stone Age, such as axes and tools, as well as Metal Age relics like nekara, moko, candrasa, vessels, and jewelry-including bracelets, necklaces, and rings- demonstrate both beauty and utility function. These objects were used as jewelry in traditional ceremonies and religious activities such as honoring ancestral spirits (Prihatin, 2022). The development of

craft arts is significantly influenced by the surrounding cultural context (Prihatin, 2022). The creation of many artworks, particularly ornaments, is influenced by society and its culture (Bahrudin et al., 2019; Wahyono et al., 2023).

The arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism into Indonesia brought changes not only in terms of beliefs but also in social system of society. The structure of the kingdom and the caste system gave rise to social status. Hindu-Buddhist influence in Indonesia occurred through the assimilation and cultural adaptation brought by traders and priests from India to prehistoric cultures in Indonesia. The spread of Hindu-Buddhist culture also influenced the development of craft arts in Indonesia. During the Majapahit Kingdom (1293–1527), craft art, especially metal crafts from bronze and gold, reached its golden peak. During this time, metal crafts not only showed technical skills but also reflected the majesty and power of the king. The *keris*, one of the famous crafts of this period, symbolized courage and spirituality, with each *keris* having a unique prestige or pattern that is believed to have magical powers. Similarly, during the Mataram Sultanate (1587–1755), textile crafts such as batik experienced rapid development.

Batik became a symbol of social and spiritual status, with specific motifs that can only be worn by the royal family. Palace batik motifs reflected philosophical and spiritual values, symbolizing greatness and local wisdom (Prabowo et al., 2024; Sucitra, 2015; Zam et al., 2022).

Craft is a branch of art that emphasizes hand-based skills. The term *kriya* is derived from the Sanskrit word "*kr*," which means 'to do.' From this root, the term evolved into work, crafts, and creative activities. In the context of art, *kriya* means doing something to produce an object that has artistic value (Sukarni et al., 2022a). The origin of the word *kriya* in Indonesian reflects its long-uncommon use but still refers to activities related to creating objects of use and aesthetic value (Yulimarni et al., 2024). The word *kriya* in English can refer to energy or strength, however, in the context of art, it is more emphasized on hand skills (Restu & Astuti, 2022). Craft art is identified as a distinctive, meaningful work of art and is a blend of expression, design, and skill (Prihatin, 2022).

These perspectives converge on craft as an intentional practice of making, where skilled, hand-based techniques transform materials into culturally meaningful objects. This shared emphasis on purposeful doing, professional craft, and the produced artifact provides a transparent bridge to the following synthesis. From the descriptions provided, keywords that define craft include work, effort, and action. In this context, it is interpreted as the creation of art pieces supported by high levels of skill (Sunarya, 2022).

Craft art is a unique work of art and

has characteristics that contain aesthetic, symbolic, philosophical, and functional values. Its realization requires a high expertise and belongs to the group of noble arts. It involves manual skills and reflect cultural expressions and values contained in society (F. Setyaningrum, 2020; Sukarini et al., 2019). In this context, craft artworks function practically and aesthetically, intertwining function and beauty (Bahrudin et al., 2021). Mastery of craft skills results in products that are not only commercially valuable but also reflect the innovation and creativity of the performers, strengthening their position as part of the noble arts in Indonesia (Farikha, 2020; Handakara, 2021).

The origins of craft art can be traced back to the treasures of Indonesian culture, exceptionally high Javanese culture, or the culture that developed in the palace and the royal system. Craft art is palace art. Denis Lombard, in his book *Nusa Jawa: Lintas Budaya*, states that the term *kriya*, taken from *kryan*, indicates the existence of hierarchical strata during the Majapahit kingdom: "First there were Mantri, or high officials, and Arya, or nobles, then kryan, who had Kshatriya status, and saints or officers, who also seem to be a kind of inferior nobility" (Masitoh & Kamilah, 2024; Prihatin, 2022; Sukarni et al., 2022a).

Craft is a noble heritage of art and culture that, during the Javanese kingdom, had a higher place than common handicrafts. The nobility and elite society consumed crafts, while they were supported by the general public or the ordinary people, i.e., people living outside the palace walls. Craft art is seen as unique and of high quality because it is supported by high

expertise, while everyday crafts are seen as rough and incomplete (Sunarya, 2021).

The difference in crafts can be seen in their professionalism. In the past, crafts in the palace environment were given the title of master to those who made them. In its realization, this is very important to the aesthetic value and the quality of skills (Eskak, 2016). Meanwhile, crafts that grow outside the palace environment are called "*pandhe*". The realization of craft objects only prioritizes function and use, which is intended to support the practical needs of the community (Wicaksono, 2019). Thus, repetition and lack of artistic or aesthetic thought are signs of craft objects (Nabila, 2022).

The history of palace crafts reflects the luxury, power, and aesthetics of kingdoms and palaces in different parts of the world. Palace crafts typically include various arts and crafts made with high skill and often use valuable materials. Through skills and expertise inherited from generation to generation, palace crafts function as tools and decorations and symbolize status, power, and cultural identity (Sunarya, 2021). Thus, the craft palace will always be an essential part of Indonesia's cultural heritage, linking the past to the present and preserving a rich and diverse cultural identity. Crafts in the palace are insight into the splendor and beauty of past cultures, as well as inspiration to preserve and preserve our cultural heritage (Wahyono et al., 2023).

In addition to textile, metal, and wood palace crafts, one of the most remarkable artistic creations is the royal carriage. The carriage is a symbol of status and power. The

carriage's beauty and luxury reflect its owner's high position. The royal carriage is often passed down from generation to generation, symbolizing cultural continuity and heritage. Each decorative element on the royal carriage carries symbolic meaning, reflecting cultural values and beliefs (Basoeki & Mingchang, 2021).

The Yogyakarta Palace has several famous golden carriages, including the Kiai Garudayaksa Carriage, which was created in 1867 and is used in important ceremonies. In addition, there is also the Kiai Jongwiyat Carriage, used by Sultan Hamengkubuwono VIII, and the Kiai Roto Biru Carriage, with a more modern concept and used by Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX. These royal carriages function as ceremonial vehicles and represent the high aesthetic and technical standards of court craftsmanship, as reflected in the unique characteristics of Yogyakarta's traditional arts (Eskak, 2012). The intricate designs and refined details of these carriages underscore the cultural values and artisanal excellence cultivated within the aristocratic environment. Similarly, as Lestari et al. (2021) describe in the context of the Cirebon Palace, such artistic expressions are integral to preserving tradition and showcasing the cultural sophistication and artistic skills of court artisans. This highlights the close connection between craftsmanship, beauty, and cultural heritage in royal institutions.

In addition to the Yogyakarta Palace, the Surakarta Palace has several golden carriages, such as the Kencana Nyai Jimat Carriage and the Kiai Garudayaksa Carriage. As in Yogyakarta, these carriages are used in

major ceremonies. Other examples are the Singa Barong Carriage from the Kasepuhan Palace in Cirebon and the Paksi Naga Liman Carriage from the Kanoman Palace in Cirebon (P. Setyaningrum, 2022).

The palace carriage is an important symbol of Indonesia's rich culture and history. From its function in royal ceremonies to its role in tourism and research, the carriage remains relevant and valued today. Preserving and understanding the carriage helps us appreciate our rich and diverse cultural heritage and ensures that these traditions can continue to be enjoyed by future generations. The above description implies that the royal carriage that symbolizes palace crafts has aesthetic, symbolic, and technical content, thus presenting noble and monumental works throughout the ages.

Based on the above thoughts, it is necessary to examine how the royal carriage represents the existence of palace crafts. The results of this research are very beneficial for the general public, the academic community, and the government. This article aims to explain how this royal carriage represents palace crafts through symbolic, aesthetic, and technical aspects. This paper contributes to studying the art of palace crafts developed in royal carriages and palaces. However, royal carriages in various cultures have their characteristics and uniqueness that reflect the aesthetics and values of each culture. The royal carriage not only reflects the splendor and strength of the past but is also a bridge that connects us with the rich history and traditions of the kingdoms of the archipelago.

## METHODS

The article used a qualitative approach through library research or literature study. This research relies on written sources as the primary data, such as books, scientific articles, historical documents, and artworks related to palace crafts. This method was chosen because it is appropriate to explore the symbolic, aesthetic, and technical meanings of palace crafts—particularly the carriage—in the context of cultural representation. The data collected were narratives, descriptions, and interpretations that were studied in depth.

Data analysis was conducted systematically through the stages of data reduction (selecting and filtering relevant information), data presentation (organizing and classifying findings), and interpretation (interpreting the meaning of the data that has been presented). Particular emphasis is placed on the depth of meaning behind the symbols of craft art and their historical and cultural context. This research also applies critical reflection on the literature studies to expand understanding of cultural identity as manifested in the craft art of the golden carriage as a palace artifact. This research relies on various literary works to obtain qualitative data presented in words or descriptions. This research can refer to similar or related research (Fadli, 2021). Researchers are dealing directly with data taken from secondary sources and not first-hand original data; library data is not limited by space and time (Abdussamad, 2022; Ulum et al., 2023).

This method is used because it presents a direct relationship between the author and the respondent, is more sensitive, and can



adapt to the value patterns encountered. The qualitative method pays attention to the depth of information, explores the meaning behind the phenomena, emphasizes case studies, and presents results in narrative form (Moleong, 2016).

Data analysis or interpretation was carried out by systematically compiling a record of research findings through observation and other relevant sources to improve the researcher's understanding of the focus of study. The analysis also provides editing, clarifying, reducing, and presenting the data (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). The data analysis technique involves several steps, namely reducing data, where the researcher chooses relevant data and eliminates unnecessary one. The next step is to present data that has gone through the data reduction process. Moreover, the data that has been presented will be interpreted through the data analysis process. Artistic research provides a different framework for approaching research in the arts in general. This research emphasizes reflection, analysis, and interpretation of the results of artistic practice (Rohidi, 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Development of Palace Craft Arts

Palace crafts have a long and rich history, spanning empires and periods in different parts of the world. Craft art has existed since ancient times in the Mesopotamian and Ancient Egyptian civilizations. In Mesopotamia, crafts were used to create reliefs and carvings on palace walls, while in Ancient Egypt, crafts such as carvings, gold,

and porcelain were used to decorate the Pharaoh's palace. Furthermore, during the classical Greek and Roman periods, palace crafts flourished through marble sculptures, bronze carvings, and mosaics, which were used to decorate palace buildings and places of worship (Andono & Rispul, 2016).

In Japan, palace craft includes *Byōbu* paintings in the form of folding screens often decorated with landscapes, birds, and flowers using the *Sumi-e* ink technique. Another craft is *ikebana*, an elegant flower arrangement art which was often displayed in palace halls. Similarly, Chinese ceramics, including porcelain, have been a symbol of quality and beauty in craft art throughout their history, particularly during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Ceramic techniques and styles experienced significant development in that period (Nor Huda Ali & Yanto, 2020).

During the Middle Ages, Islamic craft art flourished in palaces such as the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. This can be seen from the improved technique and quality of art produced during this period, where various art forms, including calligraphy, carving, and mosaics, were used to decorate palaces and mosques (Ibrahim, 2021). This aesthetic process not only shows luxury but also serves to convey the value and beauty contained in Islamic traditions. Craft arts grew and evolved in Europe, including fine arts such as wood and stone carving, stained glass, and textiles to decorate castles and royal palaces. During the Renaissance period in Italy, craftsmanship flourished in palaces such as the Medici Palace in Florence and the Vatican Palace in Rome. These crafts include paintings, sculptures, and

other decorative artworks. In the subsequent Baroque Period in Europe, which featured the splendor of Crafts in palaces such as the Palace of Versailles in France and the Palace of Schönbrunn in Austria, Baroque Crafts featured magnificent architecture, carvings, ceiling paintings, and luxury furniture (Andono & Rispul, 2016).

In the Middle East, Persia, or modern Iran, craftsmanship has a rich heritage, with carvings, metal crafts, and textile artwork used to decorate palaces like the Golestan Palace in Tehran. Persian craft also includes calligraphy and ceramic art. The Ottoman Empire also had a rich crafts tradition, with wood carvings, metal crafts, and textile arts used to decorate palaces such as Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. Ottoman crafts also included mosaic and stained-glass artwork (Andono & Rispul, 2016).

In Indonesia, the palaces of Yogyakarta and Surakarta developed batik as ceremonial attire for the *sultan* and his family. Other palace crafts include gold and silver jewelry and accessories worn by members of the royal family. In addition to Yogyakarta and Surakarta palaces, several other palaces in Indonesia have craft art products that are no less interesting (Wahyono et al., 2023).

In general, the craft arts developed in the palace reflect the beauty, subtlety, and high skill possessed by the artists and *kriyamen*-traditional palace craftsmen- of this aristocratic milieu. Palace craft artworks serve as decorations and everyday fixtures in the lives of palace residents and as symbols of royal power, status, and wealth.

The role of craft art has grown, not only

as a component of belief or religion but also for the consumption of the aristocratic elite as a marker of social status. This condition gives craft art a high status because it occupies a respectable position in its time, in contrast to crafts that tend to grow among ordinary people or the lower class (Zam et al., 2022). This stratification reflects the craft arts' past position and existence. Craft art is not highly intense but by high-quality aesthetic values and skills. Meanwhile, craft grows based on practical needs, using available materials and skills through everyday experience. As an art form, craft often involves the use of local materials that are accessible and follows methods resulting from traditions and individual experiences in creating products that are both useful and aesthetically valuable (Sukarni et al., 2022).

One of the landmarks of palace crafts is the royal carriage. In Indonesia, especially in palaces such as Yogyakarta and Surakarta, the aesthetics displayed on golden carriages are often influenced by Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic cultures. Motifs such as *kala-makara* (mythological creatures) and reliefs from the Ramayana and Mahabharata stories are often seen in the wood carvings of royal carriages. In addition, lotus flower motifs, kalpatara trees, and animals such as garuda and dragons carry symbolic meaning in Hindu-Buddhist culture.

In addition to Hindu-Buddhist influences, Islamic culture also shows considerable significance in palace craft. In Malay kingdoms, such as the Sultanate of Palembang and Yogyakarta, the influence of Islam can be seen in the use of Arabic calligraphy and geometric motifs. Carriage decoration in this

region often avoids figurative representations and focuses on abstract and arabesque motifs.

The influence of European colonialism can be seen in the design and decoration of the royal carriage. For example, in Indonesia during the Dutch colonial period, some carriages adopted European baroque and rococo styles. The styles are marked by intricate and decorative ornaments, with arches and scrolls characteristic of the baroque and rococo styles.

The royal carriage represents the pinnacle of expertise and aesthetics dedicated to the kingdom and the palace. The royal carriage, often used in official ceremonies, processions, and parades, symbolizes luxury, status, and power. The craftsmanship of the royal carriage includes a wide range of techniques and decorative elements that are crafted with great care and beauty. The following are some of the aesthetic aspects of craft art that are commonly found in royal carriages:

1. Wood carving is the dominant element in crafting royal carriages. Intricate and symbolic motifs on the train include the chariot body, wheels, and poles.
2. Metal decoration is also an important part of crafting royal carriages in the form of precious metal crafts such as gold, silver, and copper. This metal decoration usually includes ornaments, upholstery, and accessories, beautifying the chariot.
3. Textile and fabric crafts are made of velvet, silk, and brocade.
4. Variety of jewelry and additional ornaments enhance chariots' beauty and splendor.

The craftsmanship aesthetic of the carriage reflects the exceptional skill and creativity of the artisans. Every detail, from the wood carvings to the metal decorations, shows the luxury and high status of the carriage owner. The royal carriage is a means of transportation and a work of art with high historical and cultural value, symbolizing royal majesty and power. In addition, the craftsmanship of the royal carriage reflects both high technical and aesthetic skills, as well as the cultural and historical influences inherent in each kingdom or palace.

### **Representation of Palace Craft Techniques on the Royal carriage**

The materials used in the carriage manufacture are high-quality and reflect the status and wealth of the owner. For example, teak wood is used as the main structure of carriages due to its strength and ability to be carved with intricate details (Gunada, 2021). Gold, silver, or other precious metals are used for ornaments and decorative coatings, giving an impression of luxury and prestige. To complement interior, high-quality fabrics such as silk and velvet are used for upholstery to enhance comfort and visual beauty (Rahmayanti et al., 2021).

In contrast to crafts identified with general people, palace crafts are practiced within the scope of the palace (kingdom) and created by artisans who are granted the title of master. Meanwhile, the craft derived from the word "diligent" is outside the palace environment, performed by the general public, and the practitioner is called a craftsman or *panda* (Gustami, 2007). Craft is the root of



visual art. *Kriya* is a visual work of art that is distinctive, full of meaning, and results from a combination of expression, design, and high skill (Wahyono, 2024).

Palaces are characterized by complex and aesthetically pleasing relief carving techniques. These techniques create a vivid and dynamic three-dimensional effect with the images carved to stand out from the background. This technique is widely used in train carvings in Europe and Asia, giving depth and detail to the carved motifs. This technique is called *intaglio*, in which images are carved into the material's surface to reveal fine details and writing. The *intaglio* technique is often seen in small parts and details of carriages, such as metal ornaments and accessories.

In addition, the creation of palace crafts involve high skill and expertise. Each palace craft artwork is made with great care and using high-quality materials. Palace crafts are a manifestation of the creativity, skill, and identity of a kingdom. In Indonesia, palace crafts possess a long and rich history, reflecting each kingdom's characteristics and uniqueness (Bahrudin et al., 2021).

Technically, the royal carriage as a palace craft involves a complex process and artisans with special skills. These include wood craftsmen who are responsible for carving motifs on the wooden parts of the carriage, such as the body and wheels, metalworkers who make ornaments out of metal, including gold and silver plating, and additional accessories. Painters and cloth artisans decorate the cars with luxurious paintings and fabrics to give them an aesthetic finish.

## **Symbolic Representation of Palace Craft Art on the Royal carriage**

The golden carriage serves as a means of transportation and symbolizes power and status. In many cultures, the chariot is used in official processions to emphasize the legitimacy and splendor of rulers. The use of royal carriages in royal ceremonies, such as coronation or royal weddings that used to transport kings or queens is undoubtedly intended to show royal power and splendor.

The craftsmanship of royal chariot is a manifestation of its rich culture and history. These chariots are not only vehicles but also work of art that reflect the luxury and beauty of the palace. Through carvings, metal decorations, paintings, and textiles, each carriage tells a story about the traditions and values upheld by the community (Wibawanto & Prihatin, 2023). Careful preservation and conservation efforts ensure that future generations can enjoy and learn about this heritage, connecting us to a past full of beauty and cultural richness. Nevertheless, many cultural artifacts may also be affected by modern interpretations and the use of technology (Prada Núñez et al., 2024).

The palace carriage is an important symbol in history of Indonesian kingdoms. The chariot served as a means of transportation and a symbol of royal power, grandeur, and luxury. Historically, the royal carriage was first introduced by Europeans, especially the Dutch and Portuguese, who brought the tradition of horse-drawn carriage to Indonesia in the 16th and 17th centuries. The kingdoms in the archipelago then adapted this influence to show their wealth and majesty.

The influence of European colonialism, especially the Dutch, played significant role in developing Indonesia's golden chariot. The Dutch introduced carriage-making technique and Western aesthetics, which were then adapted to the local style—for example, gold decorations and Javanese or Balinese carvings combined with Western-style chariot designs.

In Indonesian royal tradition, the royal carriage is usually used in various ceremonies, such as coronations, weddings, and other important events. These chariots are often decorated with gold ornaments, beautiful carvings, and various royal symbols (Wibowo, 2018). Due to their sacredness and high historical value, palace carriages are usually well-preserved and regularly maintained. They are often exhibited in palace museums as part of cultural collections preserved for future generations. This is warranted, as the golden chariot is a means of transportation and a symbol of the king's power and sovereignty. The ornaments and decorations on these chariots often have deep philosophical and religious meanings, reflecting the cultural beliefs and values of the people (Basoeki & Mingchang, 2021). The Indonesian royal carriage is valuable cultural heritage, reflecting the long and rich history of the archipelago's kingdom. Each carriage has its own story and meaning, contributing as an important part of the royal identity and traditions.








Gold carriages are usually crafted with intricate details and require high skill from the artisans. Palace carriage ornaments and carvings often serve intricate designs that tell stories from traditional epics, mythology, or royal history. Floral motifs, mythological








animals, and royal symbols are common elements in these carvings (Wibowo, 2018). At the time, the royal carriage was often used in various traditional ceremonies and royal events, such as coronations. During this occasion, the royal carriage was used to transport the new king in a grand procession, marking the start of a new reign. Beyond coronation, the royal carriage is usually used for events such as royal birthday, and wedding, enhancing a grand and sacred impression of ceremonies (Lahelma, 2023).

Over time, many royal carriages have become historical artifacts preserved in palace museums. For example, the Yogyakarta Palace and the Surakarta Palace have notable museums that display their golden carriages. The Yogyakarta Palace Railway Museum houses various collections of historical golden carriages (Ratnasari, 2023). Although royal carriages are rarely used in modern times, they still have a strong symbolic role. The royal carriage is often used at official royal and national events, such as Independence Day celebrations or welcoming guests. Although transportation technology has evolved, traditional and cultural values are still respected and maintained. Sanggit is a form of reproduction with innovative works and serves the concept of revitalization. This Sanggit work is important for preserving traditional art by providing alternative works with innovative reproduction techniques (Zam et al., 2022).

In addition to the palaces of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, several other kingdoms in the archipelago also had royal carriages with unique characteristics. For example, the Royal

**Table 1. Some common symbolisms in carving carriage decorations from different cultures.**

No	Form	Picture	Meaning	Applications
1	Lotus Flower		In many Asian cultures, the lotus flower symbolizes purity, enlightenment, and awakening. In the context of chariots, lotuses were often carved to show the nobility and wisdom of the ruler.	Lotuses are often seen on royal carriages in Indonesia and China, decorating the body and roof of the carriage.
2	Dragon		Dragons are a symbol of strength, courage and protection in Asian culture, especially in China. Dragons were also considered protectors of the emperor and symbols of the empire.	Carvings of dragons often adorned the carriages of Chinese emperors, giving the impression of power and grandeur.
3	Garuda		Garuda is a mythological creature that symbolizes wisdom, strength and majesty. In Hindu-Buddhist culture in Indonesia, Garuda is the vehicle of God Vishnu.	Royal carriages such as the Kiai Garudayaksa Chariot at the Yogyakarta Palace are decorated with Garuda carvings, showing the power and glory of the king.
4	Phoenixes		In Chinese culture, the phoenix symbolizes resurrection and immortality. Phoenixes are often carved together with dragons, symbolizing the balance of yin and yang forces.	Carvings of crowns and thrones are often found on European royal carriages, while phoenixes and dragons often adorn Chinese carriages.
5	Arabic calligraphy and Arabesque		In Islamic culture, Arabic calligraphy is often used to write verses of the Koran, bringing blessings and protection. The arabesque, with its geometric patterns and scrolling plants, symbolizes the beauty and infinity of God's creation.	Golden carriages in the Sultanates of Yogyakarta and Surakarta are often decorated with calligraphy and arabesques, reflecting grandeur and spirituality.
6	Batik patterns such as kawung and parang		Batik patterns such as kawung and parang have philosophical meaning in Javanese culture. Kawung symbolizes justice and wisdom, while parang symbolizes strength and courage.	Carvings with batik patterns are often seen on golden trains in Java, providing a deep touch of local culture.
7	European chariots, crosses and Christian symbols		European chariots, crosses and Christian symbols were often carved to show piety and divine protection.	Carved crosses on coronation carriages in Europe.

8	Mantras and religious symbols of Hindu-Buddha		Mantras and religious symbols such as Om, swastikas, and mandalas are often carved on royal carriages in South and Southeast Asia.	The Om symbol on a chariot in India.
9	Lions		Lions are often carved as symbols of courage, strength, and justice. In many cultures, lions are considered powerful guardians.	The royal carriages of England and several other European countries are often decorated with lion statues to emphasize the power and authority of the king.
10	Sun and Moon		The sun represents power, energy, and vitality, while the moon represents calm and spiritual influence. Both are often used to reflect cosmic balance and divine power. Carvings of the sun and moon are often seen on chariots in India and Japan, reflecting the concept of natural balance and the relationship between the ruler and the universe.	Carvings of the sun and moon are often seen on chariots in India and Japan, reflecting the concept of natural balance and the relationship between the ruler and the universe.
11	Water and Waves		Water symbolizes life, fertility, and the flow of time. Waves and water currents are often used to show the abundance and power of nature.	Water wave carvings are often seen on chariots in Japan and China, symbolizing the harmonious relationship between humans and nature.
12	Fire and Flame		Fire symbolizes transformation, passion, and enlightenment. The flames are often carved to show courage and purity.	Motifs of fire and flame are often found on chariots in India, symbolizing spiritual power and cleansing.
13	Swans and Peacocks		The swan symbolizes elegance and spirituality, while the peacock symbolizes beauty and pride. These two birds are often carved to show the glory and beauty of royalty.	Carvings of swans and peacocks often adorned the chariots of India and Persia, reflecting the beauty and splendor of their cultures.
14	Roses		Roses are often associated with love, beauty, and mystery. In a royal context, roses can symbolize elegance and refinement.	Chariots in Europe, especially in England, were often decorated with rose motifs, which were also an important heraldic symbol.

15 Skulls and Bones



Skulls and bones, although rare, are sometimes used to symbolize death and transition. This could indicate the power over life and death that the ruler possessed.

Some chariots in Europe at certain times may have had this symbol, especially in the context of war or conquest.

carriage of the Pagaruyung Palace in West Sumatra was used by the King of Minangkabau, and the Royal carriage in the Sultanate of Palembang with designs influenced by Malay and Islamic cultures.

As a work of palace craft art, the royal carriage is characterized by decorative carvings that serve both decorative element and deep symbolism. The motifs and symbols carved on the chariot reflect the cultural values, beliefs, and power of the kingdom or palace that owns it (Wahyono et al., 2023). Table 1 are some common symbolisms in carving carriage decorations from different cultures.

The data above reveals the various symbols that adorn the palace carriage, each bearing a specific philosophical meaning and function in the context of power and culture. Floral motifs such as lotus (purity, wisdom) and fauna such as Garuda (strength, glory) reflect the noble values of the ruler, while Arabic calligraphy and arabesque affirm Islamic spirituality. Multicultural influences are evident in the combination of Hindu-Buddhist symbols (Om, swastika), Chinese motifs (dragon, phoenix), and European elements (cross, lion), showing cultural acculturation in the palace's craft art. The elements of nature (sun, moon, fire, water) symbolize the cosmic balance and the harmonious relationship between the ruler and the universe.

These symbols serve not only as decorative elements but also as markers of status, political legitimacy, and spiritual protection. However, this study has not examined the shifting meaning of these symbols in the modern context or their material preservation techniques. Hence, it needs to be complemented by ethnographic studies and material analysis for sustainable preservation.

A significant contribution to these findings is a comprehensive map of royal carriage symbolism that connects aesthetics, power, and cultural identity, highlighting the urgency of documenting before this traditional knowledge disappears.

## CONCLUSION

This article examines the carriage's symbolic, aesthetic, and technical representation of royal carriages as a manifestation of palace craftsmanship, especially in Yogyakarta and Surakarta. The carriage serves as a means of transportation and a symbol of power and cultural identity that combines Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, and European colonial influences through ornaments such as Garuda motifs, Arabic calligraphy, and Baroque carvings. Its production involves high-quality materials and the high skill of the palace artisans,



distinguishing it from the more functional folk crafts. Although this study explores in unraveling the cultural and technical dimensions of the train, limitations in empirical data and analysis of the impact of modernization open up opportunities for further studies. Future research can deepen ethnographic approaches, material analysis, and exploration of the transformation of carriage functions in contemporary contexts and formulate conservation strategies involving digital technology and artisan regeneration. Thus, the heritage of the palace's craft art can remain relevant as part of the cultural identity of the archipelago in the future.

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