

Interpreting Javanese aesthetics through a qualitative hermeneutic and symbolic analysis of tayuman wood (*bauhinia purpurea*) keris hilts



Tejo Bagus Sunaryo ^{a,1,*}, Lasiyo ^{a,2}, Sindung Tjahyadi ^{a,3}

^a Faculty of Philosophy, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

¹ krttejobagussunaryossnma1981@mail.ugm.ac.id*; ² lasiyo@ugm.ac.id; ³ sindungtjahyadi@ugm.ac.id

* corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

Javanese aesthetics embody the concept of beauty as experienced through *rasa*, a sensibility that integrates physical perception, spiritual intuition, and cultural meaning. Rooted in Javanese philosophical and mystical traditions, *rasa* serves as the essential criterion in defining aesthetic value. This study explores the manifestation of Javanese aesthetics in the craft of keris hilts made from *Tayuman* wood (*Bauhinia purpurea*), believed to possess spiritual potency (*tuah*). Beyond its fine texture, rich brown hue, and workable density, *Tayuman* wood is valued for its mystical energy. The *unssyeng-unyeng* motif, that concentric grain patterns formed by dormant branch knots, is considered the visual and spiritual core of its aesthetic appeal. Using a qualitative research method with a Javanese aesthetic construction approach, this study applies hermeneutic interpretation and symbolic analysis to reveal the multilayered meanings embedded in the artifact. The analysis identifies both exoteric (technical and visual) and esoteric (spiritual and metaphysical) dimensions that converge harmoniously in the crafting process. The *Tayuman* wood keris hilt thus emerges not merely as an object of visual beauty but as a symbolic expression of Javanese cultural identity, linking humans, nature, and the spiritual realm through the unity of art, belief, and tradition.



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1. Introduction

From an artistic viewpoint, the Javanese *keris* represents a quintessential form of craft, particularly celebrated in the broader Nusantara archipelago, and especially among the Javanese. The *keris* is a composite crafted artwork, brought into being through the combination of various materials. Its two primary material components are metal and wood. The metal elements include the *wilahan* (the blade or the weapon's core that exhibits both functionality and artistry) and the metal fittings of the scabbard or sheath (*warangka*), which encompass the *pendhok*, the *mendhak*, and the *selut*. The *pendok* is a metal sleeve that envelops the wooden scabbard that originally serving as protection, the *mendhak* is a ring situated between the blade and the carved hilt, which may include intricate ornamentation, and the *selut* is a decorative and functional fitting placed above the hilt, intended to secure the handle to the blade while enhancing aesthetic appeal; it is frequently elaborately adorned. Meanwhile, the keris elements that are made from wood consist of the sheath (*warangka*), that typically carved from wood, and the hilt or handle of the *keris*, made from various materials but often intricately carved wood. The unification of all these elements is called a Keris [1]. In contemporary Javanese society, the keris no longer functions as a stabbing weapon but is instead regarded as an artistic creation of profound aesthetic value. Beyond its artistic qualities, the keris embodies deep symbolic and spiritual meanings. It is believed to contain mystical power (*tuah*), which may provide protection, courage, or charisma to its possessor. The majority of keris enthusiasts in Java perceive the keris not merely as a craft

product forged from iron, steel, and *pamor* (the lines that form certain motifs on the keris blade which are produced by the folding of certain metals during forging), complete with its sheath and hilt carved from wood in artistic forms, but also as an object that embodies an inner essence, namely, a mystical force or spiritual energy believed to be beneficial to its owner [2]. Functionally, the keris is appreciated both as a work of refined metal craftsmanship with high aesthetic value and as a medium for meditation, prayer, and a conduit through which one may draw closer to the Divine.

For the attainment of the *tuah* values or the “mystical power” of a keris, every element that constitutes the unity of the keris is also directed toward those values of the *tuah* in order to support the realization of its mystical function. This includes the selection of specific metals that are often combined with precious metals, the choice of particular motifs engraved on the *pendhok*, the *mendhak*, and the *selut*, as well as the selection of certain types of wood for crafting the *warangka* (sheath) and the hilt. All of these are intended to achieve esoteric qualities of a more spiritual and metaphysical nature. Wibawa *et al.* also noted that the categorization of the spiritual values contained in a keris is influenced by the caliber of the materials utilized in it [3]. Certain types of wood, believed to possess particular mystical properties, have consistently been used as the primary material for crafting the *warangka* or sheath of the keris. For instance, a *warangka* made of sandalwood (*Santalum album*) is believed to attract benevolent spirits and repel malevolent ones [4]; a *warangka* crafted from *Timaha* wood (*Kleinhovia hospita*) is thought to possess supernatural powers that ensure personal safety [5]; a *warangka* made of *Trembalo* wood (*Dysoxylum acutangulum*) is regarded as a medium for attaining inner and outer tranquility [6]; a *warangka* made from *Awar-awar* wood (*Ficus septica*) is believed to neutralize venom or toxins from animals and insects [7]; while a *warangka* fashioned from *Adhem* *Ati* wood (*Litsea chinensis*) is associated with cultivating patience, inner peace, and protection from magical influences [8]. In addition, *warangka* sheaths are also produced from various other types of wood that are considered to embody specific mystical qualities [9]. Beliefs regarding the spiritual potency of these woods further contribute to the aesthetic value of the keris.

Not only the sheath, but also the hilt of the keris is made from selected wood. In Java, the Surakarta-style keris hilt is called *jejeran*, while the Yogyakarta-style keris hilt is called *deder*. The selection of the best wood for the hilt of both styles is carried out or attempted by both keris craftsmen and keris enthusiasts. This effort is made to achieve both exoteric value, which leads to aesthetic beauty, and esoteric value, which is spiritual. One wood considered good for making keris hilts is *Tayuman* wood (*baubhinia purpurea*) [10]. *Tayuman* wood is a favorite material for making keris hilts because of its toughness, sturdiness, beauty, and mystical symbolic values. *Tayuman* wood has a fine texture, beautiful grain, and a reddish-brown to dark color. The base color of the wood depends on its age; the older the wood, the darker the color. Its grain is soft and malleable, and its low coefficient of expansion and contraction makes carving easy while remaining durable. This wood is quite heavy and has a high density, so it will sink when immersed in water. This wood also has a high prestige due to its rarity and difficulty in obtaining [11]. An intriguing aspect of the keris hilt crafted from *Tayuman* wood lies in the natural motifs produced by the wood's inherent grain. These motifs appear as small circular forms that develop into concentric patterns. The concentric formations of these wooden rings are generated from the presence of knots, shoots, or branches that once grew within the tree. Such motifs in *Tayuman* wood are traditionally referred to as the *unyeng-unyeng*. Artisans of keris craftsmanship often explore and highlight the *unyeng-unyeng* patterns by positioning them strategically on the hilt of the keris. The placement of these motifs on specific sections of the hilt is imbued with mystical significance for the Javanese people, particularly for enthusiasts and appreciators of keris craftsmanship.

The presence of the *unyeng-unyeng* in specific positions on the keris hilt is believed to embody distinct mystical values (*daya tuah*), each of which conveys a particular efficacy depending on its placement. As noted by Haryoguritno, these values include: (1) the *unyeng-unyeng* located at the crown of the hilt, known as *Sunggi*, is believed to serve as a medium of concentration that strengthens the intellectual capacity of its owner; (2) the *unyeng-unyeng* positioned on the forehead of the hilt, called *Pupuk* or *Sotya*, is regarded as a medium of prayer for the accumulation of wealth, particularly for merchants; (3) the *unyeng-unyeng* found at the center of the hilt's chest, referred to as *Bopong*, symbolizes strength dedicated to service and loyalty to the state; (4) the *unyeng-unyeng* at the abdominal section of the hilt, known as *Puser*, is associated with prayers for prosperity in the fulfillment of basic needs such as food and clothing; (5) the *unyeng-unyeng* located at the middle of the hilt's back, termed *Satriya Wibawa*, functions as a medium of prayer for elevated status and

dignified authority; (6) the *unyeng-unyeng* situated at the lower back of the hilt, referred to as *Lenggah*, is believed to provide efficacy in prayers for career advancement and the attainment of a stable and prestigious position; (7) the *unyeng-unyeng* positioned at both the upper and lower middle back of the hilt, called *Satriya Pinayungan*, is considered a medium of prayer for protection in military contexts, conferring authority and respect from both superiors and subordinates; and (8) the *unyeng-unyeng* arranged horizontally across the middle back of the hilt, known as *Satriya Kembar*, is believed to channel prayers for the enhancement of the owner's social standing [12].

The *unyeng-unyeng* located at various positions on the keris hilt, together with the beliefs surrounding the specific mystical powers (*tuah*) attributed to each, demonstrate an inseparable relationship between visual aesthetics and mystical symbolism. This interrelation reflects the Javanese understanding that artistic beauty is never merely ornamental but is inherently imbued with layers of spiritual and symbolic meaning. Such a synthesis between form and metaphysical belief represents one of the central features of Javanese aesthetic richness, where visual motifs function simultaneously as artistic expressions and as vehicles of spiritual efficacy. Java has always maintained an intrinsic relationship with symbols. Every form that embodies prayers, hopes, philosophies, and life teachings is projected and represented through symbolic expressions, both verbal and non-verbal. The artistic productions of the Javanese are thus never merely aesthetic objects; rather, they are deeply embedded within systems of symbolic representation that embody cultural values, spiritual aspirations, and philosophical worldviews. In this context, the placement of the *unyeng-unyeng* in specific positions on the keris hilt functions as a mode of ritual projection and cultural embodiment, symbolizing prayers and hopes directed toward the continuity of human existence. Such symbolic configurations illustrate how Javanese aesthetics integrates visual form with metaphysical meaning, thereby reinforcing the inseparability of art and spirituality [13]. From an aesthetic standpoint, the Javanese consistently employ the concept of the "*rasa*" as a central mode of apprehending beauty. The notion of the "*rasa elok lan ora elok*", literally "the sense of beautiful and not beautiful", extends beyond ethical considerations in Javanese culture, where judgments of good and bad are informed by moral norms, and enters into the realm of aesthetics. In this framework, beauty is not merely apprehended through the sensory faculties but is also mediated by what may be described as an aesthetic consciousness that integrates spiritual discernment. Thus, beauty is conceived not simply as a perceptual experience but as a dimension of spiritual aesthetics in which artistic forms are evaluated through both material and metaphysical criteria. In other words, the Javanese understanding of beauty requires a balanced evaluation that harmonizes exoteric perception with esoteric insight.

The beauty of the keris is always evaluated through the balance between exoteric aesthetics and esoteric aesthetics [14]. The same principle applies to the keris hilt crafted from *Tayuman* wood. The exoteric *rasa* of a *Tayuman* wood keris hilt refers to its visual qualities: the refinement of its carvings, the clarity of its artistic details, its color, texture, and density that conform to traditional Javanese aesthetic criteria for hilt-making, as well as the presence of the *unyeng-unyeng* in specific positions. Meanwhile, the esoteric *rasa* refers to the mystical powers (*daya tuah*) believed to be embodied in the *Tayuman* wood keris hilt. The balance between exoteric and esoteric *rasa* in the aesthetic evaluation of the *Tayuman* wood keris hilt produces what is termed *Rasa Adiluhung*, that is, a sense of sublime harmony that emphasizes a gentle equilibrium between the physical and the metaphysical, where aesthetics and mystical power are united within *Tayuman* wood, thereby transforming the keris hilt into a work of art that is simultaneously spiritual. From the foregoing background, several key points can be identified for further examination and discussion. These points may be formulated into the following research questions: (1) How is Javanese aesthetics projected in the selection of *Tayuman* wood for keris hilts? (2) What is the cultural and spiritual significance of the mystical values (*tuah*) embodied in *Tayuman* wood keris hilts within Javanese society? and (3) How are aesthetic values and mystical efficacy integrated in the Javanese craft art of keris hilt-making? These questions constitute both the focus and the analytical framework of the present study. In reviewing previous studies concerning Javanese aesthetics in relation to the mystical values (*tuah*) of the *Tayuman* wood as the primary material for Javanese keris hilt craft, the author has not found books or articles that specifically address this theme. Nevertheless, several prior studies in the form of books and articles demonstrate relevance and alignment with the present topic. These related studies are employed as references to provide the scholarly foundation for the analysis undertaken in this article.

The article authored by Irawan and his team discusses the structure, functions, and associated activities concerning the keris. While it briefly touches upon the *warangka* (sheath) and hilt of the

keris, it does not elaborate on the materials in specific detail [15]. The article written by Pamungkas and his colleagues examines the determination of the selling price of *warangka* made from wood, with criteria based on the types of wood, their quality, and the patterns of their wood grains [16]. Another article by Darmojo explains the techniques of making *warangka* as well as painting (*tata sungging*) with motifs of the *Wayang Beber* on the *warangka* of the keris. In this study, several types of wood used for making the *warangka* are discussed, though it does not specifically address woods used for keris hilts [17]. In a separate work, Darmojo also explores the symbolic power associated with the types of wood employed in crafting *warangka*; however, this article likewise does not provide a detailed discussion on Javanese keris hilts made from *Tayuman* wood [18]. Several other sources may also serve as references for this study. Among them is a book authored by Sudrajat and Wibowo, which discusses the keris, the techniques of keris-making, and the crafting of keris accessories, including the *warangka* (sheath). The book also reviews several types of wood used as raw materials in the production of *warangka* [19].

Another relevant work is an article by Suharyono, which focuses on the types of wood employed in crafting *warangka* in Surakarta, Central Java [20]. Additionally, a book by Gustami explores the mystical power, magical force, and monumental artistic value of the keris, emphasizing that a keris is considered complete only when accompanied by its accessories, namely the sheath or *warangka* [21]. More specifically, writings that address the mystical values (*tuah*) of the *Tayuman* wood in Javanese keris hilts include works by Haryoguritno [12] and Harsrinuksmo [22]. Broadly speaking, both books discuss various aspects of the keris, including the types of wood used in the making of *warangka*, while also examining the mystical values of *Tayuman* wood in Javanese keris hilts. Nevertheless, these works do not provide a detailed exploration of Javanese aesthetics as interpreted through the mystical values of *Tayuman* wood as a material for keris hilt craft. This study, of course, also has specific objectives. The objectives are as follows: (1) to analyze Javanese aesthetics as projected in the selection of *Tayuman* wood motifs that commonly referred to as the *unyeng-unyeng* as the material for crafting keris hilts; (2) to describe the symbolic representations embodied in *Tayuman* wood keris hilts; and (3) to rearticulate the mystical values (*tuah*) of *Tayuman* wood in keris hilts through an analysis of *rasa* within Javanese aesthetics, highlighting the synthesis between aesthetic values and mystical efficacy in the Javanese craft tradition of keris hilts.

2. Method

2.1. Type of Research

The method employed in this study is a qualitative approach with the perspective of Javanese cultural aesthetics. The research focuses on symbolic analysis, the interpretation of aesthetic values, as well as the mystical virtues (*tuah*) embodied in the keris hilts made from the *Tayuman* wood.

2.2. Research Design

The nature of this research is descriptive-analytical, which systematically describes the facts related to the *Tayuman* wood motif (*unyeng-unyeng*) in the keris hilts of Java. These facts are then analyzed based on the Javanese aesthetic concept of *rasa* to uncover the integration between the *exoteric aspects* (physical or outward appearances) and the *esoteric aspects* (mystical values that are more inward and spiritual).

2.3. Data Sources

- **Primary Data:** The primary data in this research include direct observations of keris hilts made from *Tayuman* wood, covering aspects such as form, the *unyeng-unyeng* motif, texture, color, and the craftsmanship quality of the keris hilts of Java. In addition, interviews were conducted with artisans of sheath (*warangka*) and keris hilts as well as keris enthusiasts, in order to explore their symbolic interpretations and the mystical virtues (*tuah*) they believe to be inherent.
- **Secondary Data:** The secondary data consist of a literature review of books, articles, and scholarly works discussing the keris, Javanese craftsmanship, Javanese aesthetics, as well as studies on symbols and the mystical values of wood.

2.4. Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using a hermeneutic and symbolic-semiotic approach. The detailed explanation is in the following:

- **Hermeneutic Approach:** The hermeneutic approach is employed as a means of uncovering thought within a text (both verbal and non-verbal), translating it, and taking further action toward understanding its meaning. This approach seeks to comprehend something considered unfamiliar and then communicate it into a more accessible linguistic form. Moreover, it serves as an effort to rearticulate less explicit ideas into more concrete expressions [23]. In this study, the hermeneutic approach is utilized as an analytical tool for interpreting aesthetic values based on the concept of *rasa* in Javanese culture.
- **Symbolism Approach:** A symbol is an object endowed with meaning by human beings. Humans are capable of assigning meaning to any object related to thought, ideas, and emotions. The primary form of human symbolization is through language. However, humans also communicate by means of signs and symbols manifested in painting, dance, music, architecture, facial expressions, gestures, body posture, ornaments, clothing, rituals, religion, kinship, nationality, spatial arrangements, ownership of goods, and many other forms. Humans can attribute meaning to any event, action, or object associated with thought, ideas, and emotions. Consequently, humans do not merely live within a physical universe, but rather within a symbolic universe. Symbols or signs can be understood as concepts that represent something else, either through analytical-logical qualities or through associations in the mind or in reality. A symbol stimulates or conveys a message that encourages thought or action [24]. The *unyeng-unyeng* motif of *Tayuman* wood in the Javanese *keris* hilts represents such a symbol, which requires further analysis in this study.

From the analysis of data using these two approaches, it is possible to reformulate the relationship between the exoteric aspects, that is, the visual forms of the *unyeng-unyeng* motifs of *Tayuman* wood in the *keris* hilts, and the esoteric aspects, which involve the understanding of beauty values rooted in mystical *rasa*. This synthesis ultimately reveals a harmony referred to as the “*Rasa Adiluhung*”.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

To facilitate the processing and analysis of data, a conceptual framework is required, which is depicted in diagram form, and can be seen in Fig. 1.

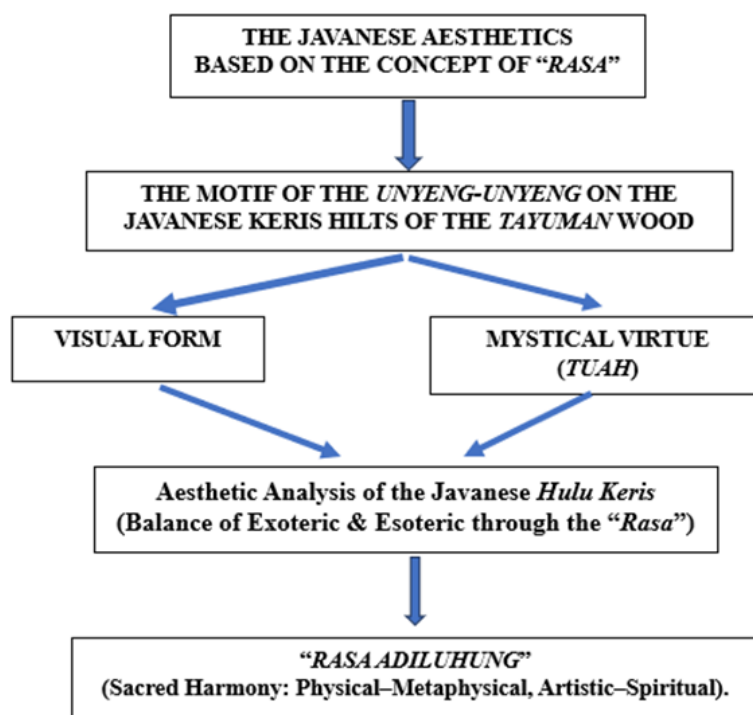


Fig. 1. Diagram of Conceptual Framework

From the diagram mentioned, the flow of thought in this research can be explained by the theoretical foundation employed is Javanese aesthetics based on the concept of the “*rasa*”. In Javanese tradition, beauty is not only understood through the outward senses but also through inner and spiritual

judgment. Javanese aesthetics emphasizes the balance between the exoteric dimension (“*rasa*” expressed through visual elements, form, texture, and carving) and the esoteric dimension (“*rasa*” manifested in spiritual meaning, prayer, and the *tuah* or mystical virtue). The Javanese *keris* hilts that are made from *Tayuman* wood with its *unyeng-unyeng* motif, as the material object of this research, are analyzed both visually and symbolically. The natural grain motif of *Tayuman* wood (*unyeng-unyeng*) is regarded not merely as decorative ornamentation, but as a representation of prayers, hopes, and the spiritual values of Javanese society. The placement of the *unyeng-unyeng* on the *hulu keris* is believed to determine differing mystical meanings. The deeper analysis in this study lies in the exploration of the balance between exoteric aspects (visual beauty) and esoteric aspects (mystical virtue). Through the lens of *rasa*, Javanese aesthetics in the *keris* hilts made of *Tayuman* wood can be understood as a harmonious synthesis between visual beauty and mystical power. This integration gives rise to the “*Rasa Adiluhung*”, a form of sacred harmony that unites the physical and metaphysical, the artistic and the spiritual, within the crafted art of the Javanese *keris* hilts. Thus, the “*Rasa Adiluhung*”, as the synthesis of aesthetics and spirituality, constitutes the key outcome of this research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Javanese Aesthetics in the Perspective of “*Rasa*”

In general, aesthetics is a branch of philosophy concerned with the concepts of beauty, art, and aesthetic experience [25]. Aesthetics may also be understood as a human formulation in cultivating the “sense of pleasurable beauty,” alongside ethics, which is defined as a human formulation in cultivating the “sense of pleasurable goodness.” Matters that may evoke a sense of pleasurable beauty are classified into two categories: (1) natural beauty (a form of beauty not created by human beings) and artistic beauty (a form of beauty created and manifested by human beings). The five senses play an essential role in shaping the perception of aesthetic pleasure. Such pleasure arises through the function of the senses, which possess the capacity to capture external stimuli of beauty. These stimuli are then processed into impressions, which subsequently enter into the realm of feeling, culminating in the experience of aesthetic enjoyment. Thus, the senses serve as the initial bridge leading toward an aesthetic experience [26]. Based on the foregoing discussion of aesthetics, Javanese aesthetics may be defined as the worldview and understanding of the Javanese people regarding concepts of beauty, art, and aesthetic experience. Javanese aesthetics may also be interpreted as the Javanese formulation for cultivating the sense of beauty or the delight of beauty. Within Javanese culture, the concept of the “*Rasa*” serves as the fundamental basis for the cultivation of aesthetic delight and the experience of beauty. The term “*Rasa*” itself derives from the Sanskrit word “*ras*”, meaning “to cry out,” “to resound,” or “to echo.” Over the course of extensive discourse, the meaning of *rasa* developed into a concept encompassing everything perceived by the senses. In the Indonesian language (which is also understood by the Javanese), *rasa* is defined as: (1) bodily experience, or internal stimuli, understood as biological impulses; (2) sensory responses to external stimuli; and (3) responses that emerge as the synthesis of both internal and external stimuli [27].

In Javanese cultural understanding, particularly in relation to aesthetics and the arts, *rasa* constitutes one of the most essential concepts. *Rasa* does not merely involve the intention to apprehend beauty through the sensory faculties; rather, it is an intuition inherent in every individual, understood as a spiritual potential of humanity that distinguishes human beings from other creatures. “*Rasa*” is a key concept for the Javanese in the appreciation of many aspects of life, including aesthetics. As explained by Sugiarto *et al*, *rasa* encompasses feeling in all its dimensions: from sensations perceived through the bodily senses, to feelings that arise within the field of human interaction, to the sense of unity with the universe, and finally to the feeling of determining one’s own existence through destiny, culminating in an ever-deepening awareness of the self [28]. Nevertheless, for the Javanese, the first stage in recognizing beauty is through the *panca indera* (the five sensory faculties). At this stage, the function of the senses is required as the fundamental medium of the “*Rasa*” in apprehending beauty based on its form (*wujud*). The term *wujud* refers to a reality that appears concretely or can be perceived by the senses, particularly by sight. The sensory elements of beauty within *wujud* are manifested through form and arrangement or structure [29]. This initial stage of recognizing beauty, in Javanese terminology, is referred to as *Rasa Indera*, meaning beauty apprehended only through the five sensory of senses. In addition to being grounded in sensory-physical beauty, the aesthetic dimension is also founded upon the *bobot* (inner weight or value). In this context, the *bobot* no longer refers to the visible aspects of *wujud* (form), but rather to feelings and states of emotion [29].

The Javanese also employ the “*Rasa*” to apprehend *rasa indah* (the sense of beauty) associated with emotional sensations [30]. Something considered *angker* (evoking an eerie impression), *lungit* (conveying loftiness), *agung* (projecting majesty), *wingit* (suggesting sacredness), or *prasaja* (simplicity) is likewise imbued with an aesthetic sensation. Such modes of *rasa* are especially cultivated in the experience and/or interpretation of aesthetic delight in Javanese *karawitan* music. Feelings such as *sereng* (emotional intensity), *regu* (a sense of composure and pride), *sedhih* (sadness), *prenes* (a “coquettish” impression), *gecul* (playful humor with a mischievous element), and other emotional states are also imbued with the delight of beauty [31]. This corresponds with Berndtson's statement that beauty, or the aesthetic fact within a work of art, constitutes the expression of inner feeling [32]. For the Javanese, the enjoyment and evaluation of beauty based on such emotional *rasa* represents the second stage of aesthetic apprehension. In Javanese terminology, this stage is referred to as “*Rasa Driya*”, meaning beauty that touches the emotional realm, “the beautiful of the feeling.” The “*Rasa*” of the Javanese in apprehending beauty within a work of art is consistently connected with symbols. A work of art is regarded as beautiful and possessing aesthetic value not merely when it presents outward, sensory aesthetics, but more importantly when it symbolically represents hopes that serve as provisions for the enthusiasm of life [33]. Objects of art, or anything apprehended through *rasa*, are also considered profoundly beautiful when they are made from natural materials believed to possess *daya tuah* (spiritual efficacy) and supernatural powers, inspiring their owners to persevere in life and to cultivate enthusiasm for a higher and more meaningful existence [34]. The evaluation of beauty as a symbolic representation of hopes for sustaining life constitutes the third stage of aesthetic judgment. In Javanese terminology, this stage is referred to as “*Rasa Kajeng*”, meaning beauty that touches the realm of aspiration as a provision for life's enthusiasm, “the beauty of the life wish.”

Beyond this, the understanding of *rasa* in relation to aesthetic concepts is always connected to notions of the *Adiluhung*, which refer to transcendental qualities. From the perspective of traditional Javanese society, something is considered beautiful if it fulfills the criteria of moral nobility and spirituality. The concept of art, together with its notion of exalted beauty, is inherently bound to ritual values containing mystical elements, thereby being revered and sacralized [21]. Objects endowed with the sense of beauty function as ritual instruments, serving as a *yantra* (media of concentration) directed toward the exalted. The term “*adi*” in Javanese is understood as an image of intelligence and moral excellence, encompassing character and personality, whereas *luhung* denotes an image of elevated status or value in life [35]. Furthermore, the term “*luhung*” in Javanese may also be interpreted as supreme nobility, the highest form of virtue, which points toward religiosity and a divine spirituality [36]. This constitutes the highest stage in the Javanese evaluation of beauty. At this level, based on the concept of *rasa*, it is referred to in Javanese as “*Rasa Adiluhung*” beauty, which is transcendental, spiritual, mystical, and sacred. Javanese aesthetics based on the concept of the “*Rasa*” constitutes the Javanese formulation for cultivating the sense of beauty or *rasa nikmat indah* (the delight of beauty). This formulation can be elaborated into four dimensions: “*Rasa Indera*” (the apprehension of beauty evaluated according to what is perceived by the senses), “*Rasa Driya*” (the apprehension of beauty understood primarily through symbolic meanings related to particular hopes beyond its physical form), “*Rasa Kajeng*” (the apprehension of beauty that embodies symbolic elements of life aspirations), and “*Rasa Adiluhung*” (the apprehension of beauty grounded in religiosity and divine spirituality). In the Javanese understanding of beauty as possessing the highest aesthetic value, these four dimensions are inseparable and form a unified whole.

3.2. The Visual Form of *Unyeng-unyeng* in *Tayuman* Wood on the Hilt of the Javanese Kris

Broadly speaking, two primary stylistic forms of the Javanese kris hilt are recognized within Javanese society, particularly among kris connoisseurs Surakarta style, Fig. 2 (a), and the Yogyakarta style, Fig. 2 (b), both referred to in Javanese as *gagrak*. Each *gagrak* exhibits distinctive formal characteristics, governed by its own rules and principles of craftsmanship, known in Javanese terminology as *patra* or *patran*.



Fig. 2. (a) Form of the Keris Hilt in the Surakarta *Gagrak*; (b) Form of the Keris Hilt in the Yogyakarta *Gagrak*

The *patra* or *patran* of the Javanese *keris* hilt, whether in the Surakarta or Yogyakarta *gagrak*, comprises parts that are metaphorically likened to the anatomical structure of the human body. The names of the *patran* components of the *keris* hilt in the Surakarta *gagrak* are as Fig. 3.

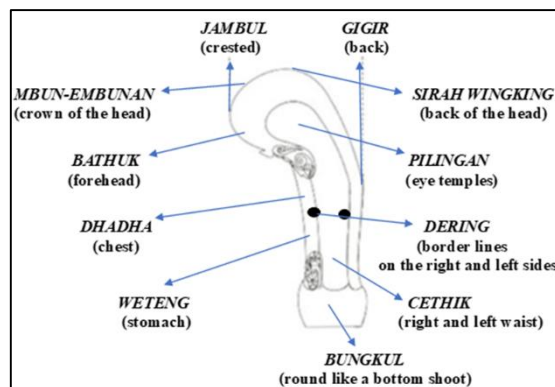


Fig. 3. Diagram of The Anatomical Keris Hilts of Surakarta *Gagrak*

The *patra* or *patran* of the Javanese *keris* hilt in the Yogyakarta *gagrak* is generally smaller in size compared to that of the Surakarta *gagrak*. Moreover, the nomenclature of its *patran* components is relatively simpler. The names of the *patran* parts of the *keris* hilt in the Yogyakarta *gagrak* are as Fig. 4.

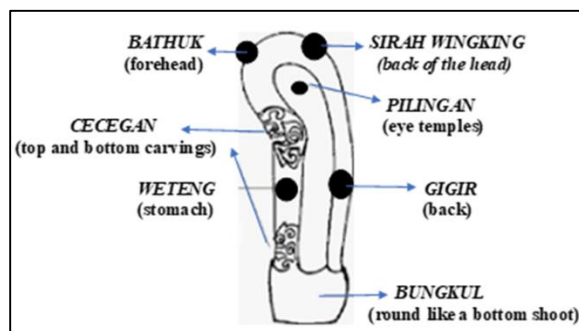


Fig. 4. Diagram of The Anatomical Keris Hilts of Yogyakarta *Gagrak*

The distinctiveness of the Javanese *keris* hilt crafted from *Tayuman* wood lies in the presence of the *unyeng-unyeng* motif, which appears at various anatomical parts of the hilt. The term *unyeng-unyeng*, literally denoting a hair whorl, refers in this context to naturally occurring circular or spiral wood-grain patterns. These patterns are formed by the growth orientation of fibers in the trunk or branches of the *Tayuman* tree, Fig. 5.



Fig. 5. Visualization of *Unyeng-unyeng* Motif on Wood Trunk

The placement of the *unyeng-unyeng* motif on each anatomical part of the keris hilt (whether in the Surakarta or Yogyakarta *gagrak*) carries specific names that distinguish one from another. A more detailed explanation is in the following:

- *Sunggi*: The term *sunggi* in Javanese also means carrying an object on the head. In relation to the Tayuman-wood keris hilt, *sunggi* refers to the *unyeng-unyeng* located in the *mbun-embunan* area (the crown of the head) of the hilt.
- *Sotya* or *Pupuk*: The term *sotya* in Javanese means “eye,” while *pupuk* means forehead. In the context of the Tayuman-wood keris hilt, *sotya* or *pupuk* denotes the *unyeng-unyeng* situated in the *bathuk* or forehead area of the hilt.
- *Bopong*: The term *bopong* in Javanese means to carry or cradle something in front of the chest. In the keris hilt, *bopong* designates the *unyeng-unyeng* located in the chest part of the hilt.
- *Puser*: The term *puser* in Javanese refers to the navel or the center of the abdomen. In the keris hilt, *puser* is the *unyeng-unyeng* positioned at the *weteng* or abdomen area.
- *Asmarandana*: Etymologically, the Javanese term *asmarandana* derives from two words: “*asmara*”, meaning love or passion, and “*dana*”, meaning to give and receive. Thus, *asmarandana* can be understood as mutual giving of love, or the flame of passion. In the Javanese cultural context, *asmarandana* also refers to one type of traditional Javanese *Macapat* song depicting affection [37]. On the Tayuman wood keris hilt, *asmarandana* refers to the *unyeng-unyeng* located at the front of the *bungkul* (the rounded section) of the hilt, Fig. 6.



Fig. 6. Estimated Placement of the *Asmarandana* Position on the Keris Hilt

- *Sumping*: The term *sumping* in Javanese refers to an ornament or accessory typically worn or placed on the upper side of the ear. On the Tayuman-wood keris hilt, *sumping* denotes the *unyeng-unyeng* located at the *pilingan* part of the hilt, either on the left, right, or both sides.
- *Kempit*: The term *kempit* in Javanese means carrying or concealing something by clamping it under the armpit. In the Tayuman-wood keris hilt, the *kempit* motif refers to the *unyeng-unyeng* located around the *dering* part of the hilt, metaphorically likened to the armpit, either on the left or right side.
- *Satriya Sinaraja*: Etymologically, in Javanese, *satriya* means warrior, while *sinaraja* denotes one who is authoritative and revered like a king. In the Tayuman-wood keris hilt, the *Satriya Sinaraja* motif refers to the *unyeng-unyeng* located at the *cethik* part of the hilt, metaphorically

likened to the waist, either on the left, right, or both sides. The designation *Satriya Sinaraja* arises from its resemblance to a Javanese warrior commander traditionally wearing a keris in the *dihanggar* style, that is, tucked at the left or right side of the waist.

- *Gembol*: The term *gembol* (or *nggembol*) in Javanese means carrying, storing, or concealing something in the right or left trouser pocket. On the *Tayuman*-wood keris hilt, the *gembol* motif refers to the *unyeng-unyeng* located at the side of the *bungkul*, either on the left, right, or both.
- *Pikul*: The *pikul* motif on the *Tayuman*-wood keris hilt refers to the *unyeng-unyeng* positioned at the rear shoulder of the hilt, between the lower part of the *sirah wingking* and the upper part of the *gigir*. In Javanese, *pikul* means carrying something on the shoulder. The motif is thus named because it resembles someone carrying a burden.
- *Satriya Wibawa*: *Satriya Wibawa* means a warrior of dignity and authority. On the *Tayuman*-wood keris hilt, this motif refers to the *unyeng-unyeng* located in the middle of the *gigir* (back) of the hilt. It is named *Satriya Wibawa* as it symbolizes the representation of a dignified Javanese warrior in traditional attire, carrying a keris tucked at the back, Fig. 7.



Fig. 7. Example of the *Satriya Wibawa* Motif on a *Tayuman*-Wood Keris Hilt

- *Lenggah*: On the *Tayuman*-wood keris hilt, *lenggah* denotes the *unyeng-unyeng* located at the rear of the *bungkul* section of the hilt. In Javanese, *lenggah* means sitting. The motif is named *lenggah* as it is interpreted as resembling the posture of someone sitting, Fig. 8.



Fig. 8. Estimated Placement of the *Lenggah* Position on the Keris Hilt

- *Satriya Pinayungan*: In Javanese, *Satriya Pinayungan* means a warrior shaded by a royal parasol. On the *Tayuman*-wood keris hilt, this motif refers to two *unyeng-unyeng* motifs located vertically (upper and lower) along the middle of the *gigir* (back) of the hilt. It is named *Satriya Pinayungan* as it symbolizes the imagery of a Javanese warrior under the protection of a ceremonial parasol, Fig. 9.



Fig. 9. Estimated Placement of the *Satriya Pinayungan* Position on the Keris Hilt

- *Satriya Kembar*: In Javanese, *Satriya Kembar* means twin warriors. On the *Tayuman*-wood keris hilt, this motif refers to two *unyeng-unyeng* motifs located horizontally, side by side, on the middle of the *gigir* (back) of the hilt. It is called *Satriya Kembar* as it is perceived as representing two twin Javanese warriors, Fig. 10.



Fig. 10. Estimated Placement of the *Satriya Kembar* Position on the Keris Hilt

These descriptions provide an overview of the visual presence of *unyeng-unyeng* motifs recognized by the Javanese community, particularly keris cultural enthusiasts. Aesthetically, the placement of each *unyeng-unyeng* on the keris hilt reflects a diversity of visual beauty. For Javanese keris connoisseurs, these forms embody not only external visual appeal but also convey deeper layers of aesthetic value.

3.3. Symbolic Interaction in the *Unyeng-unyeng* Motif of the Javanese Kris Hilt Made of *Tayuman* Wood

As a symbol, the *unyeng-unyeng* motif on the Javanese keris hilt made of *Tayuman* wood is an object endowed with meaning. The significance of this motif is closely related to the thoughts, ideas, and emotions of the Javanese people, particularly keris enthusiasts. Both in terms of its visual form and the symbolic values attributed to it, the *unyeng-unyeng* motif on the Javanese keris hilt crafted from *Tayuman* wood embodies interconnected symbolic interactions. The description of these symbolic interactions is presented in Table 1. The table illustrates the classification and placement of the *unyeng-unyeng* motifs on the Javanese keris hilt made of *Tayuman* wood. Each term used to designate a motif does not merely refer to a specific anatomical position, often analogized to the human body, but also conveys symbolic meanings that represent Javanese cultural values. Through these designations, the Javanese interpret the existence of the *unyeng-unyeng* motif not simply as a natural wood grain pattern, but as a symbol imbued with Javanese aesthetic values.

Aesthetically, the diverse placements of the *unyeng-unyeng* motif display visual variations that enrich the form of the keris hilt. Philosophically, this symbolization reflects emotions and aspirations for balance, harmony, authority, and noble values of heroism. Thus, the *unyeng-unyeng* motifs on the *Tayuman* wood keris hilt may be understood not merely as a natural phenomenon of wood fibers, but as a medium for representing cultural and spiritual values embedded in Javanese tradition. In terms of

spirituality, they specifically embody the belief in *tuah*, the mystical efficacy contained in each *unyeng-unyeng* motif.

Table 1. Classification and Placement of *Unyeng-unyeng* Motifs on the *Tayuman*-Wood Javanese Keris Hilt

Term	Literal Meaning (Javanese)	Anatomical Reference (Metaphor)	Placement on the Keris Hilt	Symbolic/Interpretive Meaning
<i>Sunggi</i>	To carry on the head	Crown of the head	<i>Mbun-embunan</i> (upper/crown area)	Intelligence
<i>Sotya / Pupuk</i>	<i>Sotya</i> : eye; <i>Pupuk</i> : forehead	Forehead	<i>Bathuk</i> (forehead area)	Perception and vision
<i>Bopong</i>	To cradle or carry on the chest	Chest	Chest section of the hilt	Nurturing, protection
<i>Puser</i>	Navel/center	Abdomen	<i>Weteng</i> (abdomen area)	Stomach full and prosperous
<i>Asmarandana</i>	<i>Asmara</i> : love; <i>Dana</i> : giving/receiving	Vital organs or genitals Passion/Love	Front <i>bungkul</i> (rounded section)	Flame of love; Javanese <i>tembang</i> of affection
<i>Sumping</i>	upper ear decoration or accessory	Side of the head	<i>Pilingan</i> (side, left/right/both)	Ornamentation, refinement, wisdom
<i>Kempit</i>	To carry under the armpit, holding someone's hand under the armpit	Armpit	<i>Dering</i> area (right/left)	Concealment, safeguarding, close brotherhood
<i>Satriya Sinaraja</i>	<i>Satriya</i> : warrior; <i>Sinaraja</i> : authoritative like a king	Waist	<i>Cethik</i> (waist area, left/right/both)	Warrior commander with a keris at waist (<i>dihanggar</i>)
<i>Gembol</i>	To carry in the pocket	Side pocket	Side of <i>bungkul</i> (left/right/both)	Carrying/keeping something hidden
<i>Pikul</i>	To carry on the shoulder	Shoulder	Rear shoulder (between <i>sirah wingking</i> and <i>gigir</i>)	Burden-bearing, resilience
<i>Satriya Wibawa</i>	Dignified warrior	Back	Middle <i>gigir</i> (back)	Noble warrior with a keris at the back
<i>Lenggah</i>	To sit	Sitting posture	Rear <i>bungkul</i>	Stability, rest, composure, position
<i>Satriya Pinayungan</i>	Warrior shaded by a parasol	Protected figure	Two motifs, vertical in the middle <i>gigir</i>	Symbol of authority and protection

3.4. The Concept of *Tuah* in *Unyeng-unyeng* Motifs on the Javanese Keris Hilt

The term *tuah* can be understood as a belief in sacredness, good fortune, and mystical power. In Javanese belief, an object possessing *tuah* is considered or believed to embody values of sacredness, fortune, and supernatural efficacy [38]. A keris hilt crafted from *Tayuman* wood, particularly when adorned with the *unyeng-unyeng* motif, is regarded as an artifact imbued with *tuah*. Based on the data obtained regarding the *tuah* values embodied in each *unyeng-unyeng* motif of *Tayuman* wood on the Javanese keris hilt, several symbolic formulations can be identified. E

ach motif is associated with certain mystical properties and aspirations of its owner, reflecting the Javanese worldview that beauty (Javanese Aesthetic) is not merely visual but also deeply rooted in mystical-spiritual dimensions. From the data collected on the *tuah* values inherent in the various *unyeng-unyeng* motifs of *Tayuman* wood applied to the Javanese keris hilt, a conceptual formulation can be systematically outlined in Table 2. From this perspective, each *unyeng-unyeng* motif in *Tayuman* wood not only enhances the physical or visual beauty of the keris hilt but also represents particular aspirations and symbolic expectations of its owner. This demonstrates that Javanese aesthetics transcend mere visual appreciation and are profoundly intertwined with mystical and spiritual significance.

Table 2. *Tuah* Values of *Unyeng-unyeng* Motifs on the Javanese Keris Hilt (*Tayuman* Wood)

Position (<i>Unyeng-unyeng</i>)	Believed Mystical Value (<i>Tuah</i>)
<i>Sunggi</i>	Bestows intelligence and sharp memory.
<i>Sotya / Pupuk</i>	Enhances sharp memory, discernment in choosing companions; favored by traders for sharpening business intuition.
<i>Bopong</i>	Strengthens character to serve society and/or act as a spiritual advisor.
<i>Puser</i>	Facilitates the acquisition of sustenance and provides prosperity in food and clothing.
<i>Asmarandana</i>	Enables ease in social interaction (especially with the opposite sex and household harmony (husband and wife).
<i>Sumping</i>	Cultivates solidarity, fairness, and tolerance toward others.
<i>Kempit</i>	Bestows the ability to act kindly toward others in the surrounding community.
<i>Satriya Sinaraja</i>	Provides protection and shelter; facilitates prosperity and sustenance.
<i>Gembol</i>	Encourages secrecy and frugality.
<i>Pikul</i>	Endows responsibility in carrying out important duties, attracting sympathy and trust of superiors; sought after by palace courtiers and officials.
<i>Satriya Wibawa</i>	Enhances authority and elevates the social standing of the owner's family.
<i>Lenggah</i>	Facilitates career advancement, rank, and stable social status.
<i>Satriya Pinayungan</i>	Increases authority, ensures protection in battles, and brings favor from superiors.
<i>Satriya Kembar</i>	Elevates rank and social status.

3.5. The Content of Javanese Aesthetics Based on the Concept of "Rasa"

The creation of keris hilts made from *Tayuman* wood, with selected "*unyeng-unyeng*" motifs naturally embedded in the wood, can be seen as a representation of the Javanese cultural connoisseurs' understanding of Javanese aesthetics. This appreciation is fundamentally rooted in the concept of the "*rasa*", which encompasses four interrelated aspects that are "*Rasa Indera*" (sensory perception), "*Rasa Driya*" (emotional intuition), "*Rasa Kajeng*" (symbolic of wish or hope), and "*Rasa Adiluhung*" (transcendental or noble value). Each of the *unyeng-unyeng* motifs found in the *Tayuman* wood, based hilts of the Javanese keris, fulfills all four aspects, forming a holistic interpretation of beauty and meaning. The details are presented in Table 3. The Javanese formulation of beauty is comprehensively expressed through the analysis of each *unyeng-unyeng* motif on the keris hilts made from *Tayuman* wood. The four evaluative aspects, that are "*Rasa Indera*", "*Rasa Driya*", "*Rasa Kajeng*", and "*Rasa Adiluhung*", constitute an inseparable unit of aesthetic assessment. These dimensions collectively articulate how Javanese people perceive and embody beauty not only visually, but also emotionally, symbolically, and spiritually.

Table 3. Javanese Aesthetic Interpretation of *Unyeng-unyeng* Motifs in *Tayuman* Wood Keris Hilts

Motif	<i>Rasa Indera</i> (Sensory Perception)	<i>Rasa Driya</i> (Emotional Intuition)	<i>Rasa Kajeng</i> (Symbolic Meaning)	<i>Rasa Adiluhung</i> (Transcendental Value)
<i>Sunggi</i>	Form suggests an object placed on the head	Impression of intellect and thoughtfulness	Hope for intelligence and a strong memory	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for focus, prayer, and effort to gain intelligence
<i>Sotya / Pupuk</i>	Resembles eyes and forehead	Impression of alertness and vigilance	Hope for memory sharpness and dedication to others	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for enhancing awareness and social service
<i>Bopong</i>	Represents someone carrying an object on the chest	Evokes nurturing and patience	Hope for patience in service and spiritual guidance	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for attaining patience and spiritual wisdom
<i>Puser</i>	Depicts the human navel or center	Impression of balance and prosperity	Hope for ease in livelihood and sufficiency	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for abundance and well-being
<i>Asmarandana</i>	Suggests the human sexual organ	Impression of love and desire	Hope for harmonious relationships and marriage	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for social ease and romantic harmony
<i>Sumping</i>	Form suggests ear ornaments	Impression of wisdom and empathy	Hope for solidarity, justice, and tolerance	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for social harmony and moral growth
<i>Kempit</i>	Represents hiding or holding something under the armpit	Impression of brotherhood and loyalty	Hope for benevolence and friendship	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for cultivating kindness and closeness

Motif	<i>Rasa Indera</i> (Sensory Perception)	<i>Rasa Driya</i> (Emotional Intuition)	<i>Rasa Kajeng</i> (Symbolic Meaning)	<i>Rasa Adiluhung</i> (Transcendental Value)
<i>Satriya Sinaraja</i>	Suggests a warrior's waist with a keris tucked	Evokes security and authority	Hope for leadership and prosperity	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for protection and noble leadership
<i>Gembol</i>	Depicts someone storing an item in their pocket	Impression of frugality and security	Hope for secrecy and thriftiness	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for character formation in discretion
<i>Pikul</i>	Represents someone carrying a burden	Evokes a sense of responsibility	Hope for fulfilling duties and gaining trust	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for leadership and accountability
<i>Satriya Wibawa</i>	Suggests the back of a noble warrior	Evokes authority and dignity	Hope for social status and family honor	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for enhancing prestige and respect
<i>Lenggah</i>	Represents someone in a sitting position	Evokes calmness and stability	Hope for career advancement and stability	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for success and a stable position
<i>Satriya Pinayungan</i>	Suggests a noble warrior under a ceremonial umbrella	Evokes protection and majesty	Hope for safety, dignity, and trust from superiors	Prayer and <i>Yantra</i> for leadership, protection, and grace

4. Conclusion

In Javanese aesthetics, beauty is not merely a matter of visual form; rather, it is the result of an integration between sensory perception (“*Rasa Indera*”), inner emotional experience (“*Rasa Driya*”), symbolic-philosophical meaning (“*Rasa Kajeng*”), and profound spiritual values (“*Rasa Adiluhung*”). These four elements constitute an inseparable unity in evaluating and understanding the beauty of a cultural work, including the keris hilt made of *Tayuman* wood with its distinctive *unyeng-unyeng* motif. Each *unyeng-unyeng* motif in *Tayuman* wood on selected Javanese keris hilts not only possesses artistic value but also conveys symbolic messages deeply rooted in Javanese local wisdom. The various forms of *unyeng-unyeng* represent essential aspects of human life, ranging from intelligence, vigilance, compassion, patience, and responsibility to authority and social stability. All of these motifs ultimately lead to a central goal in Javanese aesthetics: the attainment of harmony in grandeur. Harmony is understood as a balance between the physical and the spiritual, the worldly and the sacred, function and symbol. Meanwhile, grandeur (*adiluhung*) represents the culmination of a refined emotional process, wherein visual form serves as a contemplative medium through which one draws closer to noble values, prayers, and the ideals of life.

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Declarations

- Author contribution** : TBS: Conceptualized the research topic and formulated the main research questions; designed and applied the hermeneutic and symbolic-semiotic methodology; conducted fieldwork and collected data on Tayuman wood keris hilts; wrote the initial draft, including the Introduction, Methodology, and Discussion sections; revised the manuscript based on co-author feedback; submitted the manuscript to the journal, communicated with the editor during the review process, and ensured all required documents were complete and properly submitted.
L: Contributed conceptual ideas and presented the theoretical framework and results to academic audiences. Managed the use and citation of references meticulously to acknowledge prior research and ensure originality.
ST: Verified the accuracy of the presented data and ensured that all findings were supported by reliable evidence. Verified the accuracy of the presented data and ensured that all findings were supported by reliable evidence.
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