

# Analysis Of The Putri Merong Motif On The Yogyakarta Stand From A Feminism and Semiotical Perspective

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**Abstract.** This study aims to determine the meaning of the Putri Merong motif found on the pillars of the Yogyakarta Palace in Yogyakarta feminism and semiotics. The type of research used is qualitative research with descriptive methods. The research method is divided into three stages, namely the first is data collection, data analysis, and data presentation. Data collection is done by conducting observations, interviews, and documentation studies collecting data through observation and direct interviews with informants, as well as conducting a literature study on several books and scientific journals supporting this research. The meaning of the Putri Merong motif is a Putri sitting looking sideways and wanting to be married off by force. Meanwhile, semiotically, the meaning of Putri Merong's decorative motif can be seen from its denotation and connotation. In denotation, Putri Merong's decorative motif can be interpreted as a woman sitting looking away to the side. In connotation, the Putri Merong motif is interpreted as a woman who lives in a patriarchal social system. If viewed by liberal feminism, then a woman is consumed culturally due to the subjectivity of the concept of feminism in society.

**Keywords:** Meaning of Putri Merong Motif, Feminism, Semiotics.

## 1 Introduction

Since the occurrence of the Giyanti agreement which was carried out on February 13, 1755 AD resulted in the Mataram area being referred to as Vorstenlanden [1]. Vorstenlanden is the name of the area for the Sultanate of Surakarta and the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. This happened because in Mataram there was a segregation of power into two parts, namely the Surakarta Sultanate and the Yogyakarta Sultanate [2]. The result of this segregation indirectly confirmed the existence of the Yogyakarta Sultanate. Exactly a year after the agreement, namely in 1756 AD, Bendara Raden Mas Sujana or also known as Prince Mangkubumi began to build the Yogyakarta Palace. After the construction of the Yogyakarta Palace, Prince Mangkubumi received the title Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I [3]

Keraton or also known as Kraton is a term that comes from the Javanese language. Keraton in Javanese can be referred to as the residence or residence of a queen or king. The Yogyakarta Palace is interpreted as a multifunctional place, one of which is the residence of the king or queen [4]. The Yogyakarta Palace or Yogyakarta Sultanate is also known as a cultural center, government center, royal center, and others [5]. As a Cultural Center, it means that the Yogyakarta Palace certainly has a lot of distinctive arts. One of the distinctive arts is an ornament [4]

The Yogyakarta Palace is already very thick with some typical ornaments that are the hallmark of the Yogyakarta Palace. This is supported by the statement given by the courtiers who said that the Yogyakarta Palace had many distinctive ornaments. All of these ornaments are scattered throughout the buildings in the Yogyakarta Palace. Even these ornaments sometimes have a variety of different forms of decoration from Sultan Hamengku Buwono I – X (Abdi Dalem, 2022). Some of the ornaments that exist in the Yogyakarta Palace are Putri Merong. It is named the Putri Merong decorative motif because it describes a woman called Putri who is looking down or looking to the side [4]. In line with this, Abdi Dalem who was in Yogyakarta said that the Putri Merong decoration motif was divided into two motifs. The first motif is the original motif of Putri Merong which depicts a princess who is about to be forced into marriage and then faces downwards. Meanwhile, the second Princess Merong decoration motif is in the form of a dancer which is another replica of the embodiment of the Princess (Abdi Dalem, 2022).

The appearance of Putri Merong as one of the decorative motifs or calligraphy or even the pillars of the palace cannot be separated from the historical context, culture, and meaning that came after [4]. This is supported by the statement given by Abdi Dalem in Yogyakarta who said that all forms of ornaments contained in the Yogyakarta Palace, including Putri Merong, certainly had a very philosophical meaning and were related to the religion embraced by the people of the Palace at that time. Religious dialectics is found in the Yogyakarta Palace which mixes Islam with Hindu and Buddhist cultures (Abdi Dalem, 2022). For example, the historical context of the Yogyakarta Palace cannot be separated from Javanese culture and the influence of several kingdoms that used to be present, such as Demak and Pajang. Meanwhile, the presence of Putri Merong also cannot be separated from the blend of cultures that exist in the Yogyakarta Palace [4]. The blend of cultures that exist in the Yogyakarta Palace can be seen from the use of the building in which there is a pillar supporting the building with carvings or decorations for Putri Merong, which is still considered a ritual place. The ritual turned out to be a combination of rituals or ceremonies in Islam with Hindu and Buddhist cultures [4]. The blend of cultures that exist in the Yogyakarta Palace can be seen from the use of the building in which there is a pillar supporting the building with carvings or decorations for Putri Merong, which is still considered a ritual place. The ritual turned out to be a combination of rituals or ceremonies in Islam with Hindu and Buddhist cultures [4]. The blend of cultures that exist in the Yogyakarta Palace can be seen from the use of the building in which there is a pillar supporting the building with carvings or decorations for Putri Merong, which is still considered a ritual place. The ritual turned out to be a combination of rituals or ceremonies in Islam with Hindu and Buddhist cultures [4].

The ornate motif of Putri Merong cannot only be related from the aspect of its historical and cultural context. But it can also be seen from the aspect of meaning that is present. As a distinctive ornament, the Putri Merong motif tries to represent the social system found in the Keraton community. The unusual position of the placement of Putri Merong's decorative motifs gives rise to the meaning that Putri Merong can be analyzed comprehensively with a sociological approach through semiotics and feminist studies. The position of the placement indicates that the ornate motif of Putri Merong is below the ornate motif of Alif Lam Nim and this raises a big question. This indirectly illustrates the social strata system in the Yogyakarta Palace community that men have a position above women [5]. This cannot be separated that the Yogyakarta Palace is geographically part of Java which is indeed thick with a patriarchal culture that is thick with the concept of konco winking [6]. Of course,

with this evidence, it turns out that the meaning of the Putri Merong ornament can be studied through a feminist and semiotic review because it is full of cultural, feminist, and semiotic values.

Feminism is an approach or understanding seeing the position of women in various fields of human life to realize equality between men and women [7]. In addition, feminism can also be understood as a form of struggle to stop the oppression that emphasizes sexism. [8]. Feminist theory focuses on three things, namely the unique experience of each woman, positioning women as the central subject, and seeing the world from a woman's point of view. With this, women will be able to think critically and construct a better world [9]

Semiotics can be understood as a science that discusses signs [10] These signs are scattered throughout human life and become a tool in finding something in this world. Semiotics comes from the Greek word *semeion* which can be interpreted as a sign. Semiotics tries to be present to explain the correlation between one sign and another systematically, both in the form of nature, characteristics, and the process of significance [11]. In addition, every sign which is a meeting between form and meaning is not present spontaneously. This is because the sign is present after a convention or social agreement. In addition, the sign in the structuralist view must also be understood as something immutable. In other words, A sign is something that has been passed down from generation to generation. Signs are contained within a larger system mechanism known as language. Language in the structuralist view as a social institution that affects the whole system in society, including culture. Departing from this background, the writer wants to raise the analysis of Putri Merong's decorative motifs from the analysis of Semiotics and Feminism.

## **2. Methods**

The research method used is a qualitative research method which is divided into three stages of research. The first stage is data collection using observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Observation is a technique that is carried out by searching and collecting data to observe an ongoing activity take place [12]. While the interview is a data collection technique carried out by researchers to obtain oral information through conversation and face-to-face with people who can provide information to researchers [13]. Document study is one of the data collection techniques by collecting and analyzing documents, both written documents and electronic documents [14]. The documents used in this study are books, articles, journals, news, newspapers, and magazines that are related to the meaning of Putri Merong's decorative motifs. Meanwhile, purposive sampling was used to determine informants to find suitable informants for this study [14]. The informants obtained were courtiers who knew the ins and outs of Putri Merong's decorative motifs and their meanings. The results of the interview can be used to answer the essence of Putri Merong. Meanwhile, data analysis was carried out by applying a qualitative approach to the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), with the following procedures: 1) data collection, 2) data shrinkage, 3) data presentation, and 4) concluding. The data presentation stage is carried out informally by explaining the results of the data analysis stages clearly and in detail [15], and using tables as a data presentation tool.



## **3. Results and Discussion**

The semiotics used in discussing the meaning contained in the decorative motifs of Putri Merong is the semiotics of Ferdinand De Saussure. According to Saussure, the sign of the meeting between form and meaning [16] Structuralists such as De Saussure use the signifier as a form of the sign and the signified in terms of its meaning. It can be concluded

that De Saussure and other structuralists see the sign as something structured (the process of meaning in the form of a link between the signifier and the sign) and structured (the result of the process) in human cognition [16]

Furthermore, Sausussure said that every sign is a meeting between form and meaning that does not exist spontaneously. This is because the sign is present after a convention or social agreement [17]. In addition, the sign in the structuralist view must also be understood as something immutable. In other words, a sign is something that has been passed down from generation to generation. Signs are contained within a larger system mechanism known as language. Language in the structuralist view as a social institution that affects the whole system in society, including culture. In Saussure's structural semiotics, several things make up signs, including elements, positions, relations, totalities, and systems [18]

**Table 1.** Putri Merong Decoration Motifs viewed by Semiotical Perspectives

 <p>Figure. 1. Putri Merong Decoration Motifs</p>	 <p>Figure. 2. Alif Lam Nim Decoration Motif</p>
<p>Element</p>	<p>The element seen in the picture of Putri Merong is a girl bun</p>
<p>Position</p>	<p>The position of the female bun is seen facing to the left or to the side which indicates that the Princess is depicted facing to the side</p>
<p>Relation</p>	<p>In relation, several interactions are well-known in the study of semiotics, namely metaphor and metonymy (Piliang, 2010). Metaphors are sign interactions that are present after interacting with other signs. While metonymy is an interaction on something that refers to general assumptions. Meanwhile, relations can be divided into two parts, namely direct relations and indirect relations (Piliang, 2010). Direct relationships cannot be interpreted singly if you don't see how the pattern of relationships seen in Putri Merong's decorative motifs with other motifs. Other motifs, such as Alif Lam Nim, which was placed above the Putri Merong motif,</p>

	signaled that the Keraton community was a paternalistic society by placing men above women.
Totality	All the markers that are constructed from the existence of these decorative motifs blend harmoniously into the meaning that is trying to be conveyed through visuals. These markers will then build several markers which will be combined into a single unit
System	Of the four things in the end merged into a system. The system is formed from several components which are a sign system. This sign system will consist of a signifier, a signified, and finally will form a new sign. While the second level of the sign system is the embodiment of meaning in the form of denotation and connotation. Meanwhile, all the components that have been analyzed are provisions for disclosing the meaning of the second level.
Denotation	Denotation can be interpreted as meaning that can be directly reviewed based on the five senses [20]. In this case, the denotation can be seen from the decorative motif of Putri Merong which depicts a princess who is sitting looking sideways. Meanwhile, Alif Lam Nim's decorative motif depicts a man.
Connotation	Connotation can be interpreted as meaning that is present because of the interpretation of human cognition [21]. In this case, the connotation refers to the depiction that a daughter who is about to be married off forcefully does not have the power to maintain her feminine side, so she is forced to marry a man represented by the decorative motif of Alif Lam Nim. In addition, another meaning that can also be captured is that the Keraton community is a society that places men above women.

Putri Merong, which is located on the pillar of the Yogyakarta Palace, is a green decorative motif that depicts a princess sitting down or looking to the side. This was done by the princess at that time when she was about to be married off by a man forcibly without any consensual feelings. She could not refuse a marriage that occurred because her nature as a woman was to obey a man. This caused the Princess to just sit quietly without doing anything.

This indicates that the problems of a very patriarchal structure still occur in Indonesian civilization at that time, especially in the Yogyakarta area. Patriarchy is a social

system that tends to position men as superior and regarded as the dominant sex [22]. Patriarchy does not only refer to the social system but is also reflected in the form of ideology, mechanism, and social structure that can perpetuate the power of men over women. In other words, patriarchy refers to the superiority of men and the inferiority of women.

In addition, patriarchy causes other gender problems such as marginalization, burden, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and so on [23]. A marginalization is a form of gender inequality in the form of exile or eviction [24]. It should be understood that the marginalization of women has occurred through small things and one of them starts from the closest environment, namely the family. Marginalization is also reinforced by customs and religious interpretations. Subordination refers to the notion that women are emotional beings, which is one example of the subordination that occurs to women. Of course, this subordination occurs in various forms and also occurs at different levels according to their respective spatial aspects. For example, in Java there is an assumption that women do not have to go to high school, this is because only men can get top priority. This is what causes what is called gender inequality. Stereotype refers to the labeling of a particular group and in this case, is women. For example, in society, there is an assumption that women dress up to attract the attention of the opposite sex, so there are cases of violence or sexual harassment that are always associated with this stereotype.

Meanwhile, if it is related to the story of Putri Merong herself and the meaning that is present in it, it can be seen that this decorative motif can be studied through the approach of Liberal Feminism. Liberal feminism is a feminist movement that has the assumption that men and women have the same opportunities and rights, namely as beings who have logic, morals, and the right to fulfill their own needs both in the public and domestic world [25]. However, this is not felt by women because of the injustice they experience as a form of violation of individual freedom. This is done through the development of the concept of a woman [26]. This can be seen in the decorative motifs of Putri Merong where the Princess is consumed by the cultural values contained in society and the values of femininity built by the community about her. These feminist values are manifested in stereotypes or the assumption that being a woman must be submissive, gentle, and so on. This is a support for the creation of cultural values which are manifested through asymmetrical relationships between men and women.

However, most women are not aware of it. This is because women think it is natural. If viewed from a feminist approach, especially in Betty Friedan's *Liberal Feminist*, to be honest, the woman is trapped in a commitment to herself to fulfill the values of feminism shaped by society. For example, women must obey men, women must be able to cook, women cannot go to high school, and so on are forms of a woman's trapping of feminist values formed by society [27]. If it is associated with Javanese culture, then actually Putri Merong is one form of a concrete example of a Javanese woman. This is because Putri Merong herself either forced or voluntarily agreed that the position of men is superior as something natural, [28]. One of the characteristics of Javanese women is passivity and serenity which does not show the turmoil of rebellion but shows femininity, so this creates a culture that emphasizes gentleness and subtlety and from this, it becomes a feminine force to express more freely [29]. Coupled with sex directors (a term conveyed by Betty Friedan) such as formal institutions tend to perpetuate the hegemony of men over women. The concept of hegemony implies that the class succeeded in persuading other classes in society to accept moral values,

This is also supported by the concept offered by Louis Althusser in his thoughts on ideology. Ideology is a comprehensive and systematic collection of ideas, ideas, beliefs, and beliefs that involve and regulate the behavior of a particular group of people in various fields of life. According to Althusser, ideology is a representation of an individual's imaginary relationship to his real existence. This is the main factor for a person or group of people to take certain actions, including the marginalization of women and the subordination of women. Its basis is a patriarchal ideology [30].

#### 4 Conclusion

Putri Merong is one of the decorative motifs that contain many meanings, cannot be separated from the historical context of culture, and includes the meaning that comes after it. Historically, the decorative motif of Putri Merong cannot be separated from the context of the Islamic Mataram kingdom which was divided into two parts due to the Giyanti Agreement. Meanwhile, from the cultural context, it cannot be separated from the religious context present in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. This can be seen from the religious dialectic mixed into one, namely *kejawen* which consists of the values of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. Meanwhile, regardless of the context of meaning that comes after, namely the sociological meaning which is full of semiotics and feminist values. The semiotic value can be seen from the visualization of the Putri Merong decorative motif, both in terms of notation and connotation. In denotation, Putri Merong's decorative motif contains a meaning that depicts a woman sitting sideways. Meanwhile, in connotation, the visualization of Putri Merong cannot be described singly, but can only be explained if there are other objects. In connotation, the meaning of Putri Merong is a description of the patriarchal structure during the palace period. While liberal feminists view Putri Merong is described as a woman who is culturally consumed as a result of the subjectivity of the concept of feminism in society. In connotation, the meaning of Putri Merong is a description of the patriarchal structure during the palace period. While liberal feminists view Putri Merong is described as a woman who is culturally consumed as a result of the subjectivity of the concept of feminism in society. In connotation, the meaning of Putri Merong is a description of the patriarchal structure during the palace period. While liberal feminists view Putri Merong is described as a woman who is culturally consumed as a result of the subjectivity of the concept of feminism in society.

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