

Multicultural Visual Communication in Yogyakarta Palace Building, Case Study of Padma Ornament

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Abstract. Cultural diversity in Indonesia has occurred since the founding of the Majapahit Kingdom. Ornaments are a form of Indonesian cultural diversity which is a cultural heritage. The existence of ornaments on parts of the Yogyakarta Palace building proves the period of cultural acculturation. Padma ornaments contain philosophical content resulting from acculturation to local culture and the influence of Hindu-Buddhist culture. Padma ornaments can be found in traditional Javanese buildings as decorative elements. This research explains one of the cultural products that was formed due to cultural influences that entered Indonesia. Descriptive qualitative methods are used to describe padma ornaments in historical and philosophical stories. The results of the analysis of the padma ornament concluded that the basic shape was taken from the red lotus flower which has meaning based on its physical appearance. The benefit of research is to increase knowledge regarding the value contained in padma ornaments as works of art created from the acculturation process of local Javanese culture and Hindu-Buddhist culture.

Keywords: Multicultural; Ornament; Padma

1 Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a rich diversity, and multiculturalism is a manifestation of its cultural richness, serving as the wealth and strength of the Indonesian nation. The cultural diversity in Indonesia gives rise to numerous cultural identities, and the development of Indonesian culture has deep historical roots in this diversity, dating back to the time of the Majapahit Kingdom and even earlier periods.

The influence of Hindu-Buddhist religion, particularly in the Yogyakarta Palace, reflects the cultural acculturation between local Javanese traditions and the values of Hindu-Buddhism. The influx of Hindu-Buddhist culture originated from India and China through the silk route. The silk route facilitated cultural exchanges, including art, religion, philosophy, technology, language, science, and architecture, which were crucial for the progress of civilization [1]. This created a unique cultural harmony that has become an integral part of Indonesia's cultural heritage. One tangible expression of this multicultural diversity is found in the ornate decorations adorning its buildings.

During its development, Sultan Hamengkubuwono I added aesthetic elements to the palace buildings by incorporating ornaments. Buildings adorned with intricate and beautiful ornaments symbolize the close relationship between the sultan and his relatives as a diplomatic effort [2]. This illustrates that the ornaments created by the sultan serve not only as aesthetic elements but also as an effort to maintain kinship and relations with external parties. Therefore, ornaments also play a crucial role in communication.

One of the ornaments that emerged from the cultural acculturation of Hindu-Buddhist influences is the Padma ornament. The presence of the Padma ornament is the result of the acculturation of local culture with Hindu-Buddhist culture from India and China through the silk

route. The Padma ornament belongs to the category of plant ornaments. During that era, Javanese society divided the functions of ornaments into two categories: as a medium to express devotion, offerings, and reverence to the worshipped deities, and as an aesthetic function in the places where the ornaments were located.

2 Methodology

The literature study and literature study approach is used to process relevant data sources and comes from journals, interviews and books. Qualitative research method is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written words [2]. Research on multiculturalism explains the cultural diversity between Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic cultures in the form of padma flower ornaments.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Hindu-Buddhist Multiculturalism in the Yogyakarta Palace

The Yogyakarta Sultanate, established in 1757, is intricately intertwined with social and cultural aspects. Cultural influences have played a significant role in the life of the Yogyakarta Palace. Firstly, the emergence of aristocratic titles, with social class determined by one's proximity to the reigning monarch. Secondly, the language used in interactions, as it reflects the origin of the incoming communities. Thirdly, the physical portrayal of location, architectural forms, and building ornaments.

The cultural influence of Hindu-Buddhist elements in Indonesia began around the 5th century AD when Indian and Chinese ethnic groups arrived for trade and the spread of religion through the silk route. Indonesia's archipelago served as a transit point for Indian and Chinese traders, establishing contact between Indonesia, India, and China. N.J. Krom, a Dutch researcher of traditional Indonesian culture, proposed the *Waisya* theory, explaining the entry of Indian traders into Indonesia [3]. The traders adapted to the seasonal winds, leading them to settle in Indonesia for a period.

The influence of Hindu-Buddhist culture in Indonesia dates back to the Syailendra Dynasty, followers of Buddhism, and the Sanjaya Dynasty, adherents of Hinduism. These dynasties produced artistic works in the architecture of temples such as Borobudur (Gupta style) and Prambanan (Bengali style) [4]. Siplin (local people) represented the 'local spirit' of society at that time. Siplin played a crucial role in communicating messages through images on reliefs to facilitate interaction [5]. Reliefs, statues, and ornaments became the main icons of temples, representing the achievements of the kingdoms during the ancient Javanese era, which were inseparable from the spiritual understanding of the syncretism between Hindu and Buddhist religions.

Cultural diversity is expressed in the Sutasoma manuscript with the phrase translated into Indonesian as 'Because the truth of Jina (Buddha) and Shiva (Hindu) is singular. It is divided, yet it is one. There is no confusion in the truth.' The concept of diversity grew and merged, strengthening the roots of local genius. The creation of reliefs at that time followed the lead of the palace elite (rulers and religious figures). The development of relief carving continued to evolve into the Majapahit Kingdom period.

Prince Mangkabumi founded the Yogyakarta Palace as an individual with intellectual and spiritual principles. Intellectually, Prince Mangkubumi studied two books as life guides. Firstly, the Bimasuci book, a Javanese literary work influenced by Hinduism, shaped him as an individual with sincerity, loyalty, and valor. Spiritually, the Quran served as a guide to deepen his understanding that Allah is the only entity on which creatures depend, seeking help, and the source of peace and salvation. Prince Mangkubumi's intelligence is evident in every corner of the palace buildings, showcasing the ability to blend Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic Javanese cultural elements. The concept is often referred to as "vastusastra."

The power relation of the sultan as the ruler of the Yogyakarta Palace has existed since the reign of Prince Mangkubumi. The sultan, as a ruler, demonstrated nobility from the Yogyakarta Sultanate with integrity and authority. The power relation of the sultan can be observed in the legacy of literary works, artworks, and physical structures that remind us of the wisdom and actions of the sultan during his era [6]. Throughout the history of the Yogyakarta Sultanate, the ruling sultan maintain relations with various other nations, always prioritizing the welfare and security of the people of Yogyakarta.

Ornaments are a tangible manifestation of the power relation between the sultan and the people bringing their culture, undergoing a fusion. The Yogyakarta Palace, adorned with ornaments, entirely reflects the authority of a sultan during the construction of his palace

3.2 The Padma Ornament in the Yogyakarta Palace

The Padma, or red water lily (*Nymphaea rubra*) in Sanskrit, possesses physical characteristics that allow it to grow in three different mediums: soil (mud), water, and air [7]. In the philosophical context of Eastern cultures, the growth of the Padma in these three types of mediums is associated with three levels of nature representing the lower realm, the middle realm, and the upper realm.



Fig. 1. The Padma Flower [7]

The Padma flower, symbolizing purity in Hindu and Buddhist teachings, reveals its beauty when blossoming above the water surface, untainted by mud, with petals unfolding perfectly in all directions [7]. This concept of purity is also reflected in the use of Padma as a motif for ornaments in buildings, paintings, and sculptures [8].



Fig. 2. The Padma Flower Beneath the Buddha Statue [8]

The significance of purity represented by the Padma flower conveys a sense of firmness, strength, and resilience against various disasters. The embodiment of the Padma's strength is depicted through the form of the footrest or seat base of the Buddha and Hindu deities. The purity of the Padma flower is often portrayed as a handheld attribute by Hindu-Buddhist deities. The Padma flower is believed to possess spiritual power. The robust form of the Padma flower used as an ornament can be observed in the pedestal (stone support) or the bottom part of the pillars (*soko guru*) in the Bangsal Kencana building within the Yogyakarta Palace.

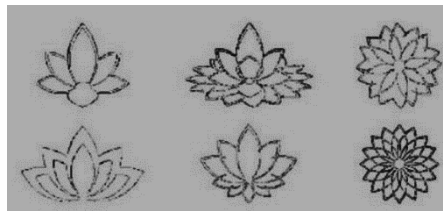


Fig. 3. The Stylization of Padma Flower [8]



Fig. 3. The Padma Motif on the *Saka Guru* Pillar [8]

The Padma ornament motif, aside from serving as decorative art, also functions as a symbol of purity. The symbolism of Padma as a sacred flower reflects the fundamental teachings of Prophet Muhammad and Hindu-Buddhist deities regarding life, governance, and religion.

The Padma flower, as a symbol of purity in Hindu and Buddhist teachings, showcases its beauty when blooming above the water surface, free from the stain of mud, with petals unfolding perfectly in all directions [7]. This concept of purity is also mirrored in the use of Padma as a motif for ornaments in buildings, paintings, and sculptures.

4 Conclusion

The Yogyakarta Palace's ornaments represent a blend of Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, and Chinese cultures, showcasing mutual appreciation and respect. This cultural diversity is evident in the palace's oldest multicultural communication through various ornaments. Specifically, the padma ornaments, influenced by Hindu-Buddhist culture from China, symbolize purity and hold religious and symbolic significance. They represent teachings from both Hindu-Buddhist gods and Prophet Muhammad, serving as a basis for life, state, and religion. Beyond their aesthetic role, padma ornaments on the Yogyakarta Palace serve as a medium for multicultural communication, reflecting the rich philosophical values and historical significance of Indonesian culture. Preserving these ornaments is crucial in maintaining their cultural heritage aligned with the palace's foundation.

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