**Pendhapa Natabratan: Symbolic Meaning of the Javanese House in Demak, Indonesia**

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**Abstract**: Pendhapa Natabratan At Kadilangu, Demak, Central Java, Indonesia was one of the Javanese noble houses which had very strong Javanese symbols. Javanese house contained symbolic meaning, socio-cultural values as well as architectural value, together with a unique structure that was adapted to the environmental and cultural conditions. Javanese houses, as a result of the traditional culture from the Javanese ethnic, had become Javanese cultural heritage that could not be changed. Javenese culture was heavily influenced by the noble power system. This study aimed to reveal the symbolic meaning of the Pendhapa Natabratan, especially those related to the Javanese traditional ceremonies held in this place, namely the Garebeg Besar and Ruwatan Sukerta. The study used an analytical framework that relied on the process of symbolic meaning in the relation of form-function-meaning within the framework of Javanese culture. The result of study showed that Pendhapa Natabratan had a domestic and cultural function. The cultural function was shown at the Garebeg Besar and Ruwatan Sukerta ceremony. From these functions had created important symbols. From the domestic function created a symbol of domesticity, while from the cultural function created symbols; it was a symbol of the permanence of power, and it was a symbol of deliverance from danger and disaster.

**Keywords**: Garebeg, Javanese Culture, Meaning, Ruwatan, Symbol

**1. Introduction**

Indonesia is a developing country struggle in a mainstream of globalization. Globalization tends to change and determine the direction of human culture in a modern ways. This form of modernization often minimizes the greatness of ethnic culture, and in a way is reducing the symbolic meaning of traditional culture from the ethnic group of the country [1].

In this modern era, Javanese houses or rather Javanese traditional houses, as a result of the traditional culture from the Javanese ethnic, have become Javanese cultural heritage that cannot be changed [2]. Even though Javanese houses are full of Javanese cultural values that are still not widely understood by the Javanese community itself. In the physical Javanese houses not only contained architectural aesthetic values, but also mystical and symbolic values [3].

Javenese culture is heavily influenced by the noble power system. The manifestation of power is reflected in symbols such as concretely manifested in the artistic heritage buildings [4]. Noble houses generally have *joglo* roof have made this group of people have a privileged position in the eyes of their people [5].

Javanese traditional houses are expressions of the nature of the inhabitants's appreciation of life, cosmological representations or beliefs about the universe, and a microcosm environment that is built with meaningful consideration.

Javanese house riches with symbolic meaning, socio-cultural values as well as architectural value, together with a unique structure that is adapted to the environmental conditions, culture and climate [6].

The traditional Javanese house, generally includes three types, namely the *kampung*, *limasan* and *joglo* [7]. The *kampung* is the simplest type. Above the middle of the living room covered with a saddle-shaped roof or often known as the form of the *kampung*. This house is mostly owned by farmers or grassroots groups. The *limasan* type, in principle, is the same as the type of *kampung*; in the middle of the room is closed with a roof shape shield or often known as the shape of the *limasan*. *Limasan* type is a house for families who are richer or have higher social strata compared to families in the
kampung type. The joglo type is considered the best and most perfect form, inhabited by rich families or the highest social strata, such as the nobility and the royal family. In the central part of the room is closed with a limasan roof which is rather high and steep (higher and steep compared to the limasan type), built on four main pillars (soko guru).

In general, the layout of the Javanese house is not much different from the palace (king house). But, the palace are more diverse and complex.

The core of the layout of Javanese house is the existence of three cubicles in the interior of the house (Dalem Ageng or Omah Jero), usually located near four sokoguru columns. All three are named Senthong Tengen (Right Senthong), Senthong Tengah (Central Senthong) and Senthong Kiwo (Left Senthong). Although sometimes there is the development and addition of space, but it is made as far as possible does not reduce the dominance of that three cubicles. Senthong Tengah (Central Senthong) or also called Krobongan has a high sacred value, as the central space of Javanese society, starting from the ordinary people and the noble family. [8].

At Kadilangu, Demak, Central Java, there is a Javanese house that can be classified as a noble house. It is one of the Javanese noble houses that until now is still functioning, especially for activities related to Javanese traditions. The house is known as Pendhapa Natabratan; it has very strong symbols.

In every step of their lives, Javanese people often use symbolic expressions. The forms of symbolism in Javanese culture are very dominant in all fields of life. This is seen in the daily actions of Javanese people, as a realization of their outlook and attitude [9].

The complicated philosophy of life of the Javanese people, is also implied in their houses. The Javanese houses (or omah or griya) is not just a physical building structure, but it is a symbolic, social and practical unit. As a traditional house, it is meaningful, because not only talking about the use of space for daily use, but able to create spiritual values in order to achieve peace of mind. [10, 11].

This study aims to explore the symbolic meaning contained in the Javanese house-Pendhapa Natabratan by interpreting the existing expressions and important events that take place in it.

During this time, there has never been a study of the symbolic meaning of the Pendhapa Natabratan. So, this study is important.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Theoretical Review

2.1.1. Symbols

Symbols can be seen as: (a) A word or object or action or event or pattern or personal or real thing; (b) Those representing or describing or signifying or conveying or evoking or revealing or reminding or referring to or standing in place of or displaying or relating to or in accordance with or referring to or taking part in or restating or associated with; (c) Something bigger or transcendent or highest or last: a meaning, reality, an ideal, a value, an achievement, a belief, a community, a concept, an institution, and a situation. [12].

From the division of the three aspects above, the first aspect refers to something that is more visible, more audible, more palpable, closer, more real, than the third aspect. What about symbol functions? Symbols function to connect or bridge the first aspect and the third aspect. The first aspect is a symbol and the third aspect as a referent in which one is interdependent. When a symbol is present as a word, image, object that is general in nature and can be digested by the senses, that's when the referent seems to be waiting to give meaning.

The symbol is defined by Victor Turner as quoted by Amri Marziali, as what is seen according to mutual agreement as ‘naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought’ (something that gives nature or describe or recall something by having the same quality or by imagining it in reality or mind) [13].

Turner distinguishes symbols from signs. Symbols have multiple meanings and broad implications. Signs tend to be univocality (referring to a single sense); linking the signifier with the signified based on arbitrary, and conventional relations; organized in closed systems; and used or involved in the sign and information system process. Meanwhile, symbols have the quality of multivocality or polysemy (referring to multiple meanings, a symbol has a spectrum of meanings), complex reference relationships, ambiguity (open-ended), open-endness (open to various interpretations), prioritizing feelings and wishes rather than thought in its interpretation, and tends to split further into semantic subsystems.

In the discipline of social anthropology, there are two major approaches to seeing symbols: originating from Clifford Geertz on one side and from Victor Turner on the other. For Geertz, symbols are cultural vehicles, therefore the symbol’s meanings are not examined from the symbols themselves but rather for what society expresses symbols. Turner’s approach to symbols is very different from Geertz’s. Turner is more interested in examining symbols as operators in social processes and believes that symbolic expressions of shared meaning are in human relations. Turner believes that the symbol’s function as an operator is in terms of context and rules that result in social transformation. This social transformation binds people in society to the norms of society, resolves conflicts, and helps change the status of an actor.

Next, Turner divides symbols into two classes, namely symbolic articles and symbolic actions. The first type of symbol can be briefly defined as material goods used in a ritual. Some articles in this case can be for example powder, medicines, trees, temples, and so on. The second type of symbol means not only action in a positive sense, like a real action, but also includes some prohibitions or taboos that should not be carried out during ritual implementation, for example, is a prohibition on eating and having sex. [14]. In
The Javanese people personally regard their personal affairs as their inner secret. This mind is truly a microcosm of all-encompassing life. The inner affairs of the Javanese are expressed in the practice of concern and other forms of asceticism and spiritual training. For Javanese, ancestors must be respected as they live. Especially in *Rawah* (Javanese month) or *Syab’an* (Islamic month) Javanese people do *yadran*, visit their graves. [21].

Javanese people life is inseparable from magical powers, forces outside of their physical; they are very afraid of that power, and try to respect things that are magical. This fear and respect cause Javanese people often use symbolic language in various ways.

### 2.2. Object of Study: Pendhapa Natabratan

Object of study is *Pendhapa Natabratan* located at Kadiilangu village, Demak District, Demak Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Building complex occupies an area around of 4 hectares. [Figure 1].

The presence of the *Pendhapa Natabratan* cannot be separated from the figures of Sunan Kaliyiga and Kadilangu Village.

Kadiilangu was the *perdikan* area given by the Sultan of Demak to Sunan Kaliyiga. As was known that Sunan Kaliyiga was the *wali* respected in the kingdom of Demak. In the past, the *perdikan* village was exempt from taxes and the obligation to work for the king, but the inhabitants were given the task of caring for the holy sites in the area and the maintenance costs were taken from the village income. After Sunan Kaliyiga died, the head of *perdikan* was held by his heirs. *Pendhapa Natabratan* was built in 1885 by Natabrata while serving as head of *perdikan*.

*Pendhapa Natabratan* is still used by his heirs as a residence and a place to hold the cleansing ceremony of the relics of Sunan Kaliyiga, namely *antakusuma* clothes and *kyai crubuk* kris on every *garebeg*, every 10th of *Dhulhijjah* in the Islamic calendar.

### 2.3. Methods

In this study, it uses an analytical framework that relies on the process of symbolic meaning in the relation of form-function-meaning [22]. The relation of form-function-meaning in architecture is used as a theoretical approach to understanding the symbolic meaning of the *Pendhapa Natabratan*.

The meaning process is carried out by interpretation and through several steps. First, explore and correlate forms (spaces) with functions (activities) in them. Second, identify and correlate the symbols contained in the form (elements of space). Third, identify and correlate the symbols used or involved in activities. Fourth, relate the existing symbols on the elements of space with the symbols involved in the activity. Interpretation activities are carried out at each stage and within the framework of Javanese culture. [Figure 2].
Figure 1. Map of Demak Town and Route of Garebeg.

Figure 2. Diagram of Analytical Framework.
3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Pendhapa Natabratan Building

Pendhapa Natabratan building facing north and consist of kuncungan, pendhapa, pringgitan, dalem ageng, gadri, pungkuran, and pawon. [Figures 3-5]. In the Pendhapa Natabratan complex there are also lumbung, langgar and mager sari.

The frontmost building, is the kuncungan; vehicle stop. Kuncungan is a new building added later in 1998. This building has a limasan roof with a $4 \times 4.7 \, \text{m}^2$ floor plan. The building has 4 columns made of wood.

The next building is the pendhapa, which serves as a public meeting place. This building has a joglo roof with a $21 \times 14.5 \, \text{m}^2$ floor plan. The building has columns: 4 soko guru, 16 soko rowo, and 16 soko emper, all made of wood.

The building to the south of the pendhapa is pringgitan, as a place for puppet shows. This building has a joglo roof with a smaller floor plan than a pendhapa. The building has columns: 4 soko guru and 12 soko emper, all made of wood.

The building to the south of pringgitan is dalem ageng, which is the main building and the most sacred part [Figure 6]. Inside there is senthong which is a sacred space in the spatial of the Javanese house. The building has a joglo roof with a $17.75 \times 13.5 \, \text{m}^2$ floor plan. The building has columns: 4 soko guru, 12 soko rowo, and 20 soko emper, all made of wood. The walls of the rooms inside the dalem ageng are made of wooden boards.

As is usually the Javanese house, the core of dalem ageng is three parts, namely senthong tengah, senthong kiwo, and senthong tengen. Senthong kiwo and senthong tengen are now bedrooms. Whereas senthong tengah is being functioned as a storage place for heirlooms.

In the south of the dalem ageng is gadri, as a dining room; it was at the same time as a link between the dalem ageng and pungkuran.

The very back is pungkuran, which has a kampung roof with a $4.65 \times 7.5 \, \text{m}^2$ floor plan. Pungkuran now serves as a place to store household goods.

In the west of pungkuran there is a pawon, as a dirty kitchen. From pungkuran to pawon is connected with a hallway. Pawon has a kampung roof with a $4.65 \times 13.15 \, \text{m}^2$ floor plan. Pawon walls are made of woven bamboo called gedhek.
3.2. Pendhapa Natabratan as a Symbol of the Power Permanence

In the Garebeg Besar ceremony held on the 10th of Dhulhijjah in the Islamic year, one of the agenda of the event is the washing of the heritage of Sunan Kalijaga. The ceremony started from the pendhapa of regency near Alun-alun to the tomb of Sunan Kalijaga, and was attended by around 40 thousand participants, traveling a distance of about 2 kilometers.

The ceremony began with the procession of the Jamas oil from the regency guarded by tens of soldiers and followed by government and community leaders. The regent and his family along with Demak District Government officials also took delivery of jamas oil by riding the golden chariot. This jamas oil would be handed over to the Kadilangu Elders (Sesepuh Kadilangu). [see Figure 1].

At about the same time, the Kadilangu elders along with their companions departed from the pendhapa natabratan by bringing along the heirlooms considered as relics of Sunan Kalijaga to the tomb of Sunan Kalijaga, about 200 meters away. Arriving at the cungkup of the tomb of Sunan Kalijaga, the Kadilangu elder guarded the heirloom of kutang antakusumo and the kiai Crubuk kris with jamas oil brought from the pendhapa of regency. [Figure 7 dan Figure 8].

![Figure 7. The Jamas oil accompaniment procession (Photo: Ashadi).](image)

![Figure 8. The Jamas oil accompaniment procession (Photo: Ashadi).](image)

The ceremony of Garebeg Besar involves three main elements: the pendhapa of regency, the tomb of Sunan Kalijaga, and the pendhapa natabratan. The pendhapa of regency is related to the authorities, the tomb of Sunan Kalijaga is related to wali (the saint), and the pendhapa natabratan relates to the heirlooms. In the Javanese Culture, heirlooms (can be tombak, keris, bende and panji) are an essential part of the king's power.

There was a belief that without all that heirlooms a Javanese king would not be able to gain the trust and loyalty of the people and thus he would not be able to rule the kingdom. Some Javanese people believed that certain heirlooms owned by the Javanese king had magical powers that helped the permanence of every king who ruled.

Garebeg ceremony allegedly appeared at the beginning of the Sultanate of Demak, then underwent significant changes and developments during the kingdom of Mataram under Sultan Agung in the 17th century AD, and found its form in the 19th to the forties of the 20th. [23].

Garebeg ceremony in the kingdom of Mataram, then in the kingdom of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, in essence is a form of ceremony of the old belief that has a Kejawen character. Parading palace heirlooms in the garebeg ceremony is a reflection of old traditions and beliefs. The conception of dewaraja according to old beliefs, which assumes that the king has the attributes of a god, is more or less reflected in the garebeg ceremony.

To maintain the stability of power, kings or rulers are required to continue communicating with the world of adikodrati or supranatural that is not visible. The communication is done in a way give offerings to places that are considered sacred like the tombs of the ancestors. In addition to these sacred places, objects heirloom also plays a role important for the king's power. The sacred sites and royal heirlooms are believed to be the sources of spiritual power that the king needs. [24].

Likewise, the Demak ruler, the Regent, of course also wants to endure his power and the success of his government, so that he needs to connect his power with the heirlooms and the tomb of Sunan Kalijaga. Sunan Kalijaga is one of Walisanga, nine saints who are considered sacred and highly respected by most traditional Javanese people. A regent of Demak must ask for approval from Sunan Kalijaga with the intermediary of his heirlooms and tomb.

Sunan kalijaga heirlooms, which are considered sacred and which are the source of spiritual powers, are stored and washed in the Pendhapa Natabratan. Therefore, the building can also be considered a sacred building and a source of spiritual power, which then become symbols of the permanence of power needed by the authorities of Demak.

3.3. Pendhapa Natabratan as Symbol of the Deliverance from Danger and Disaster

Pendhapa Natabratan also held a Kejawen tradition called Ruwat sukerta. This tradition is held twice a year, in the Rejeb and Suro months of the Javanese calendar or the month of Rajab and Muharram in the Islamic calendar.

Ruwatan Sukerta is an ancient ritual of self-cleansing that was well known to Javanese people long before the celestial religions in Indonesia. Ruwatan sukerta tradition aims to rid
oneself of sukerta - the impurities of the soul, negative aura, and evil spirits. Sukerta can be caused by past sins and mistakes that are a barrier to success.

According to Javanese belief, some children who need ruwatan include: ontang-anting (only child), pancuran kapit sendang (three children, boy in the middle), sendang kapit pancuran (three children, girl in the middle), uger-uger lawang (two sons), kembang sepasang (two daughters), kendhana kendhini (two children, a boy and a girl), pendhawa (children of five, all men), mancalaputri (five children, all women), and twins. There are also children who need ruwatan related to the condition at birth, for example: julung wangi (born at sunrise), julung pujud (born at sunset), julung sungsang (born midday), tiba sampir (born bearing the placenta), and lawang menga (born during candikala, when the sky is yellowish red). People who are born with sukerta, in Javanese belief, must undergo ruwatan to free themselves from the bad forces that surround them. If not, they will experience hardship, bad luck, and disaster. [25].

In the year 2019, around 465 people from sukerta joined the mass ruwatan procession in the Pendhapa Natabratan, Kabidangu, Demak. They came from various regions in Indonesia. Among others, Demak, Grobogan, Kudus, Blora, Pati, Rembang, Jepara, Ngawi, Kediri, Jakarta and other areas.

The sounds of Javanese music and Javanese songs began the ruwatan procession. Dressed in white, hundreds of participants ruwatan (sukerta) led to the Pendhapa Natabratan. The ruwatan procession was led by Dalang Kandabuwana, who performed a shadow puppet performance with the Murwakala play in the pringgitan. All participants who wore white cloth with slings like ihram clothes sat cross-legged watching the puppet show to the end in the pendhapa. After the performance of the puppets, Ki Dalang Kandabuwana led the participants to perform sungkem to their parents, followed by the elders of Kanjeng Sunan Kalijaga's heirs in the pringgitan [Figure 9]. The highlight of the event was a shower of seven spring flowers and cutting of hair, nails and tali lawe in the courtyard and pendhapa.

The essence of the ruwatan ceremony at the Pendhapa Natabratan is a puppet show with ruwatan murwakala play. [Figure 10]. Puppets in Javanese culture, not only functions as a spectacle and aesthetics, but it also stores the values of Javanese people's way of life in facing and overcoming all challenges and difficulties of life. In the ruwatan ceremony, the puppet shown usually takes the murwakala play, which tells how the Bathara Kala, the giants, were chasing the sukerta. But apparently they can be saved by the gods.

Puppet show is considered as a magical act related to events in the universe. Magic in the act of ruwatan murwakala has a special meaning; it means rejecting the danger and catastrophe that is predicted to befall if it is not carried out. It is a symbol of rejecting the danger and catastrophe.

Symbolism is not only in the puppet play or stories, but also in the means of puppet shows. Therefore, the Pendhapa Natabratan as the place of the puppet show, then it is a symbol of deliverance from danger and disaster.

Figure 9. Sungkem in the Pringgitan (Photo: https://travel.kompas.com, accessed Dec. 7, 2019).

Figure 10. Puppet Show in the Pringgitan (Photo: https://www.kabaredemak.com, accessed June 18, 2019).

4. Conclusion

Pendhapa Natabratan, as a noble house, has domestic and cultural functions. Daily domestic functions are carried out by Sunan Kalijaga's family heirs, and cultural functions are carried out by heirs and Javanese people in Demak and surrounding areas. There are two important cultural functions, namely the Garebeg Besar and the Ruwatan Sukerta, both of which become important symbols for Javanese people. The Garebeg Besar ceremony makes the Pendhapa Natabratan is a symbol of the lasting power of a ruler. All spaces and parts in the Pendhapa Natabratan contain these symbols. The ritual of Ruwatan Sukerta makes the Pendhapa Natabratan is a symbol of deliverance from danger and disaster. Parts of the Pendhapa Natabratan: pringgitan and pendhapa contain these symbols.

References


