

## **VISUAL MEANING OF *GUNUNGAN ESTRI* IN *GAREBEG* CEREMONY OF *KARATON NGAYOGYAKARTA HADININGRAT***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Visual studies on *Gunungan* or traditional ritual ceremony is a complexity between cultural products in the form of visuals, meanings and symbols that contain deep philosophical elements. *Gunungan* is a series of *Garebeg* events in *Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat*. The visual of *Gunungan Estri* looks like bokor that consists of various sticky rice and cassava products which are arranged in a pile like bowl. *Gunungan* was chosen as the object of study because it was always awaited by the community and routinely held every year as a way for the king to give alms to his people. It is considered to be the closest symbol of the *Karaton* (Javanese palace) and easily recognizable to the general public. This study explores the implicit meaning of *Gunungan Estri* as a female symbol in *Karaton* traditional ritual. The method used is qualitative with the approach of cultural anthropology. The theories are art tourism, cultural, critical studies, postmodern. It is found out that *Gunungan Estri* in *garebeg* was born as a visual actualization of Javanese philosophy in viewing the position of women in the *Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* Palace.

**Keywords:** *garebeg, women, Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*Garebeg* is a traditional event routinely held by the *Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* Palace since the leadership of "*Sri Sultan Hamengkubuoono I*". This tradition held with the aim of giving alms from the king to his people. The visual appearance of this alms is in the form of *Gunungan*. *Garebeg* tradition is awaited by thousands of people both from the place near the Palace or outside the Palace.

They want to get a small part of this *Gunungan*.

There are five types of *Gunungan* presented, namely *Gunungan Putra*, *Estungan Gunungan*, *Gunungan Dharat*, *Gunungan Pawuhan* and *Gunungan Gephak*. In addition to the five *Gunungan* there is a *Gunungan* which is only presented once every eight years (based on Javanese calendar) in

*Garebeg Mulud* event. This *gunungan* is called Gunungan Brama.

*Gunungan Estri* is one of the five types of *gunungan* that's specifically provided for a woman. It shows that women have an important position in the palace. This study discussed about the symbols and meanings of 'gunungan' based on the visualization of the shapes and colors of *Gunungan Estri*.

The diversity of meanings and symbols in *Garebeg* ceremony of *Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* palace, could be an added value for Yogyakarta tourism industry if it is explored and developed. Therefore, the authors use "Art Tourism" as one of the theories to analyse the phenomenon. And "Postmodern" as a theory that supports the upright and ongoing ceremonies and traditions that exist in the Palace. The event that was held still keep the tradition and sanctity, but because it was held for public (in an open location), the audience came from various backgrounds. they are from residents around the Palace, residents outside the Palace, and even foreign tourists.

## Theories

The authors state the theory of art tourism as a means of dissecting the phenomenon, while post-modern is considered a theory that supports the upright and ongoing ceremonies and traditions in the Palace; still rich and full of meanings. Although today there are some shifts in terms of the shape and number of *Gunungan* that are presented, but do not change the essence of meaning from the traditional rituals of *Garebeg*. The event still kept the sacredness. However, because it was held in an open location, the audience who came mingled from residents around the palace, residents outside the palace, and even foreign tourists (Yudarta: 37-53, 2016).

The general character of postmodern as a school of thought or cultural philosophy can be represented by at least the following three points: 1) distrust of metanarrations or large explanatory schemes that summarize various phenomena for example that history is motion toward freedom or movement towards the

realization of human nature. 2) distrust of universality and sensitivity to everything particular. 3) belief in uniformity and sensitivity to all the differences of the three types mark various post-modern works of art and thought, even though the three cannot be interpreted as complete post-modern definitions because in many cases, the case of post-modernism is indeed specific to each scientific context (Suryajaya: 2016).

The peculiarities of modern aesthetics in contrast to the modern aesthetics of multiple interpretations of each work of art can be interpreted in a variety of meanings and there is no single interpretation that is automatic as desired by aesthetics and modern harmony. Even in the most realistic painting, even though the duality of each work of art is always linked to other works, including non-art objects. Therefore, the modern assumption about the integrity of works of art along with the strong distinction between art and non-art, between high and low art, is simply wrong.

Third heteronomy of each work of art contains a role that is not entirely intrinsic to the artistic domain, there are social, moral, and political roles in contrast to the claims of autonomous and autotelic art according to modern aesthetics. Like aesthetics. Socio-Historical conception of the beauty of the value of the beauty of each work of art is conditioned by the socio-historical context including the power relations that support it and is not determined based on mere formal-intrinsic elements imagined by modernist aesthetists, especially formalists.

For the theory of "critical cultural studies", it refers to the theory found by Saussure (1996), he argues that language is a sign system that expresses certain ideas or concepts. Saussure then divided sign into two categories: (1) Significant: the sound-image contained in a sign to express or express a conceptual reference; (2) Sign: the concept referred to by the sound image of the sign.

The example is a sign in the form of a tree. In that word, there is a row of letters "t r e e" which is a 'significant' to refer to the concept of a tree as a sign. In other words, a

significant is a sign itself; *the letters tree*, while a sign is a concept that represent that sign. According to Sausure, both significant and sign are primordial character of each sign, means that there cannot be a sign that does not contain both aspects. The understanding of the sign as an entity that has two sides has anticipated and proposed the entire definition of the correlational function of the sign (Eco: 2016).

## Methods

This study used descriptive qualitative method with the approach of cultural anthropology theory. Descriptive qualitative method was chosen so that the assessment can be done with literature study sources, online videos, observations and interviews as the main media. Supported by observation and interpretation of the video produced by *Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* Palace. It is hoped that the results of the study can be interpreted by the Javanese community in particular and the world community in general that *gunungan* in the ceremony has a sacred, profound and philosophical meaning.

## RISULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A Brief History *Gunungan*

The appearance of *Gunungan* itself according to the official Palace website has existed since pre-independence Indonesian republic, at that time the kingdom had its own system of government. When the *Garebeg* took place, the regents and officials from all areas of the *Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat*. Palace attended to Kutanegara (the capital of the kingdom) to see the King and give the offerings. And each representative from various regions was given *Gunungan kakung*.

In the Japanese colonialization, the political system of the palace was unstable, made the continuity of the ceremony and the number of *Gunungan* were reduced and almost eliminated. After integrating with Indonesian republic, *Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* Palace adapted to the new law and government system. Political and economic hardships at the time made *Garebeg* lose its echoes, even though the

Palace still issued *Gunungan* as alms giving for his people.



**Figure 1.** Past *Gunungan*. (<https://www.kratonjogja.id>)

In 2012 the law concerning the Privileges of the Special Region of Yogyakarta emerged, *Garebeg* then held three times in a year based on Javanese calendar, and had series of events just like the time of Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono I. The time fall on 1 Shawwal (Idul Fitri) called *Garebeg Shawwal*; the Big 10 (Eid al-Adha) called *the Great Garebeg*; at 12 Mulud (Commemoration of the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad SAW) called *Garebeg Mulud*.

### *Garebeg* Procession

The procession that was held during the *Garebeg* ritual, especially in the *Garebeg* Ceremony at *Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* Palace was as follows: (1) Prayer. (2) Procession of cooking and preparing traditional snacks. (3) Make *mustaka*. (4) pouring *wajik* cake (5) Arranging *gunungan* (6) rehearsal. (7) cavalcade. (8) Pray at *Gede* mosque. (9) *Garebeg*.

The act of pray in phase one is a pray intended to request smoothness in the preparation of *Garebeg* ritual ceremony, then it was continued by divided people to cook traditional snacks, made from sticky rice and cassava. these snacks are varied (will be explained in the sub-section of *Gunungan Estri*). The third stage was making *mustaka* or crown; from the five *gunungan*, four have crowns and one does not, namely *Gunungan*

*Gephak*. The fourth stage was pouring *wajik* cake. It was the starting point for laying the base of *gunungan* before all the snacks are arranged to create *gunungan* (looks like a mountain). The next procession was rehearsal performed by soldiers who will escort *gunungan* (the mountains). The seventh procession was cavalcade, *gunungan* that have been made are moved to the big mosque, guarded by soldiers and watched by the people. In the eighth procession, the prayer was offered to thank Allah SWT by means of *gunungan* for almsgiving of the people. After being prayed then moved to the nine procession, which is *Garebeg*. *Gunungan* was positioned in the courtyard of the mosque and the people begin to raid it, and take the dish that is inside the *gunungan*.



Figure 2. *Numplak Wajih* atmosphere ([https:// www.kratonjogja.id](https://www.kratonjogja.id))



Figure 3. "Mustaka" installation. ([https:// www.kratonjogja.id](https://www.kratonjogja.id))

## Kinds of *Gunungan*

After the law concerning the Privileges of the Special Region of Yogyakarta legitimate in 2012, *gunungan* that provided by Keraton or Palace are permanently stabil. There are five types of *gunungan* i.e. *Gunungan Kakung*, *Gunungan Estri*, *Gunungan Dharat*, *Gunungan Pawuhan* and *Gunungan Gepak*. Whereas in the Dal year of the Javanese calendar, there is one additional *gunungan* that is presented, namely *Gunungan Brama / Khutug*



Figure 4. The *Garebeg* atmosphere at the parade. (Documentation: Amalia, 2019)

*Gunungan* in any kinds of forms is basically alms from a king to his people. This alms implies that the sultan (the King) pays attention on the welfare of its people. The people also believes that the food in *gunungan* is a blessing so they try to get it.

The shape of *Gunungan Putra*, is tall towering like a cone, composed of several types of vegetables. The body part consists of long beans, red chili, green chili and kucu. While the head part or *mustaka* consists of *Baderan* and *Bendul*. Between the head and the body, series of salted egg are arranged and put on like a necklace. As the name suggests, *Gunungan Kakung* symbolizes the nature of Javanese noble men.

The shape of *Gunungan Estri* looks like *bokor*, consists of various types of traditional snacks made from sticky rice and cassava. It is the first *gunungan* compared to others, that make traditional snacks from sticky rice and cassava are always appear in other types of

*gunungan*. It will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The shape of *Gunungan Dharat*, looks like *Gunungan estri*, the difference lies in the part of the head of *Gunungan*; its *ilat-ilatta* are colourful and not just black. In the body part of *gunungan* there are *tlapukan*. That has a form of a star which are also colourful. In addition, this *gunungan* is not placed in *jhodang* such as *Gunungan Kakung* and *Gunungan Estri* but placed in a round wooden *dumpal*. *Gunungan Darat* symbolizes the world and all of its contents.

The shape of *Gunungan Pawuhan*, looks like *Gunungan Dharat* and *Gunungan Estri* but with a smaller scale. the head is replaced by a white flag, decorated with a tin made and then shaped like a coin. Around the body of the *gunungan* a bundle made of *udan mas* leaves, *cowekan*, and red flowers arranged alternately. The *buntal* looks dangling on the *gunungan* body. This *gunungan* is carried using a *dumpal*. *Pawuhan* comes from the word *uwuh* which means garbage. This *gunungan* is named so because it contains of all kinds of other *gunungan* remaining ingredients. Therefore, *Gunungan Pawuhan* means any materials should not be wasted.

The shape of *Gunungan Gepak*, composed of baskets containing five different types of small cakes such as *wajik*, *jadah*, *lemper*, *roti bolu*, and *bolu emprit*. On top of the pile is placed fruit, each type of fruit consists of two seeds, paired as a mate. Cakes and fruits are not arranged higher but only placed at *jodhang*, covered with *bangun tulak* cloth so they appear as blunt protrusions (*gepak*). That is the reason why this *gunungan* called “*Gunungan Gepak*”.



**Figure 5.** *Gunungan* illustration. (<https://www.kratonjogja.id>)

Meanwhile, in the Dal year of the Javanese calendar, there is one additional *gunungan* that is presented, namely “*Gunungan Brama / Khutug*”.

This *gunungan* is made every eight years. The shape like an hourglass with parts of the body covered with banana fronds that are decorated with *ole-ole* which are arranged like a net. The top of *Gunungan Brama* has a hole to place *anglo*, a small clay stove. *Anglo*-filled charcoal is used to burn incense, so that. *Gunungan* constantly blow thick smoke. Unlike the other *gunungan* which were distributed to the community, *Gunungan Brama* was only distributed to the *sultan's* family.

### **Gunungan Estri**

*Gunungan Estri* is one of *gunungan* that must be presented in the *Garebeg* ceremony. This *Gunungan* is the beginning of making other *gunungan*, because the sticky rice raw material in this *gunungan* will be distributed to other *gunungan* so that the process of *numplak wajik* on *Gunungan Estri* is the initial procession of the series of making other *gunungan* types. *Gunungan Estri* is a symbol of Javanese women.



**Figure 6.** *Mustaka Gunungan Putri.* (Documentation: Amalia, 2019)

Based on its visual appearance, *Gunungan Estri* has a shape like *bokor* (large bowl), the foundation of *Gunungan Estri* is sleek then in the middle it widens like a bowl, and getting up more conical but not pointed. Its beautiful curves symbolize the curvature of a woman's body. In addition, the skeleton made of bamboo made this *gunungan* image looks elegant.

The placement of *Gunungan Estri* in a *Jhodang*, just as *Gunungan Putra* signifies the equality of men and women trying to be applied in the palace. Through the symbol *gunungan* it is in accordance with feminist theory, which assumes that women need to be accepted and respected as fellow human beings who have the potential (ability) to develop (Adriati: 2018).



**Figure 7.** *Gunungan Putri* illustration. (<https://www.kratonjogja.id>)

The base of *Gunungan Estri* is not empty like other *gunungan* types, inside it contains *Wajik* and *Tiwul*. The contents symbolize that women are created for bearing children.

Children is a trust from God that must be kept with a great care. While *Wajik* and *Tiwul* arranged in layers can be interpreted as an offering from the king to his people. *Wajik* is made from sticky rice, sugar, and coconut milk. It is usually enjoyed by the nobility. While *Tiwul* made from cassava, food for people who tend to be poor. The collaboration of these two foods in *Gunungan Estri* used as a symbol of the union of the king and his people in a kingdom.

This can invalidate the assumption of feminist theory point two that women are incompetent, inversely proportional to that assumption, when women are considered incompetent then it is impossible for women to be entrusted with something big, such as the right to give birth to offspring (Adriati: 2018). *Jodhang* covered by *bangun tulak* cloth; the four corners roped using *Samir*.

The body part of *gunungan*, is filled with white round shaped *rengginang*. At the top of the *rengginang* arranged *upil-upilan* and *kucu*. *Rengginang* is arranged very tightly and neatly. The raw material used from *rengginang* is glutinous rice flavored with garlic then steamed, then dried in the sun then fried.

*Rengginang* in *Gunungan estri* only consists of one color, white. In Javanese philosophy, white symbolizes purity. Above *rengginang* there is a black round shape, on top there is *kucu* and five *upil-upilan*. *Kucu* dan *upil-upilan* are snacks made from sticky rice. *Kucu* was made in the form of white dots, while *upil-upilan* was form in rectangular with five different colors: white, black, red, yellow and green. The structure looks like a flower, *rengginang* as flower petals and *kucu* and *upil-upilan* as flower pistil.

This flower-like shape symbolizing the court lady as a very beautiful woman. The white petals can be interpreted that women are symbolic of purity, while the black circle at the center symbolizes wisdom. *Kucu* and *upil-upilan* with the colorful tributes symbolize women's complexity, representing the meaning of white (purity), black

(wisdom), red (courage), yellow (dignity) and green (hope). This part is also decorated with *ole-ole*, that is a series of *kucu* and *upil-upilan* that arranged dangling like mushrooms. The outer circle of *Gunungan Estri* is decorated by *eblek* and *tedheng*, both of which are made of rectangular flat white *eblek* sticky rice, while the red *tedheng* shape is triangular, both are hung around the *Gunungan Estri*.

The next part is the *gunungan* neck, in this section there is a soap made from banana leaf rolls and on top there is a *kucu* and boil arranged into a cone, at the top of the cone is given a *mustaka* (the head). This arrangement is the same as *ole-ole* extending upright but not dangling.

The last part in *Gunungan Estri* is the part of *mustaka* (head), this part is composed of *ilang-ilatan* with a conical peak. The part of *mustaka* is dominated by black color, if seen from the whole *mustaka* it looks like mountains on *wayang kulit* that represent the Three Realms, namely *Swaraloka*, *Bhurwaloka* and *Bhurloka*. *Ilal-ilatan* itself is made of black sticky rice, flat-shaped like an elongated tongue surrounding *mustaka*.

### Visual And Meaning of “*Gunungan Estri*”

An understanding of the beauty or artistic aspects since the kingdom era are influenced by Hindu-Budha beliefs. this influence are quite strong and kept in the mind of the people. This view might have had an influence from India along with the entry of Hinduism. This view is considered to be the classical view which at that time became massive in Southeast Asia known as *Sadangga*. There are six points that form the basis of beauty, namely *Ruphabeda* (distinction of shapes based on characteristics), *Sadrnya* (forms that correspond to meaning), *Pramuna* (in accordance with the right size), *Wanikabangga* (sloping and color), *Bhawa* (mood or mood), Law (authority or charm).

In this discussion the focus will be on the visual of *gunungan* where it has their own characteristics compared to other areas. In general, *gunungan* did not escape from the

concept of trilogy. Meaning of the form of the actual form (*sadrnya*) is what must be dissected so that the society understand about *Gunungan Estri* and appreciate it. When the community understands the meaning of *Gunungan Estri*, the community will be able to appreciate and become an educational implication in everyday life.

### The Shape’s Visual Meaning, Colours, and Ingridients.

Based on its visual appearance, "Gunungan Estri" has a form like "*Bokor*" or in Indonesian terms means "Big Bowl". The bottom part of the *gunungan* is smaller and slender, the middle part is slightly widened, a bit like a bowl, and getting up more conical but not pointed. Its beautiful curves symbolize the curvature of a woman's body. The framework of *Gunungan Estri* made of bamboo adds to the aesthetic and flexible impression, while at the very top of the visuals the *Gunungan Estri* has a unique form called "*Mustak*" (crown). Because of this shape, at the very bottom of *Gunungan Estri* there is a "*Jhodang*" as a placemat of the *Gunungan Estri*. From feminism point of view, it is assumed that women need to be accepted and respected as fellow human beings who have the ability to develop.

*Gunungan Estri* is one type of *gunungan* that must be presented at the "*Garebeg*" ceremony in addition to "*Gunungan Kakung*". This *gunungan* is the beginning of making other *gunungan*, because the sticky rice raw material in this *gunungan* will be distributed to other *gunungan* so that the process of *numplak wajik* on *Gunungan Estri* is the initial procession of the series of making other *gunungan* types. In the process of creating *gunungan* "*Numplak Wajik*" is a well-known procession. From its visual appearance, the basic part of *gunungan* is not empty, inside it contains "*Wajik*" and "*Tiwul*" which are arranged in layers. *Wajik* is a kinds of snack made of sticky rice, sugar, and coconut milk, while "*Tiwul*" made from cassava, coconut milk, and Brown sugar.

Observed again from the top of the peak called "*Mustak*" (crown), the form looks like

tongue "*Ilat-ilatan*" it has black colour and put around *mustaka*. *Ilat-ilatan* is a snack from sticky rice cake that is formed flat and extends looks like a tongue. Below "*Ilat-ilatan*", there is "*Sabunan*" which is a roll in the form of "*Klaras*" (Banana Leaves), at the top there is "*Kucu*" in the form of a small white circle, while around it there are "*Upil-Upil*", snack made from glutinous rice. they are arranged in a circle, "*Upil-Upil*" has a square shape and made in different colors such as white, red, yellow, green, and black. At the lower part, outside "*Sabunan*" there is medium sized circles arranged in a circle, called "*Rengginang*". "*Rengginang*" is a sticky white rice that has a circular shape. on each *Rengginang* which is neatly arranged in a circle, one "*Kucu*" and five "*Upil-Upil*" pieces are installed which combine with several color variants. However, if you look it further, there are "*Bethetan*" dan "*Ole-Ole*". "*Bethetan*" made of sticky rice, which is red and has a shape like the head of a bird "*Betet*". While "*Ole-Ole*" shaped like a small mushroom hanging neatly around *gunungan*. And through all these series, there are again "*Kucu*" and "*Upil-Upil*".

Speaking of visual form of course an object



**Figure 8.** *Rengginang* and *Ucu-Ucu*. (Documentation: Amalia, 2019)

Certainly has a meaning, as a reason why an object was made, as for the visual form of *gunungan estri* if observed and reviewed will find various things, such as:

## The Shape's Meaning

There are various forms/ shapes of *Gunungan Estri* such as rectangular and round. The rectangular shape appeared in "*Mustak*", "*Ilat-ilatan*", "*Kucu*", "*Upil-Upil*", "*Bethetan*", "*Eblek*" and "*Tedheng*". Based on Javanese philosophy, rectangular shape can be interpreted as a stiff and firm line, impressing things like rationality, where it has the meaning as well as honesty and stability. Meanwhile, if viewed in psychological values, the rectangular shape has a meaning of security, peace, and equality. The round shape in *Gunungan Estri* occurred in "*Rengginang*", that according to Javanese philosophy it is considered as representing God, before the universe was created there was no other but god, even in time and space. The circumference of a circle is the limit of everything. Circle has a symmetrical shape seen from any direction. Dot/ full stop can be called as an object that is round, but it has a very small size. In psychology, this shape tends to project a positive emotional message.

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### Color Meaning

There are various colors in *Gunungan Estri* such as red, green, yellow, white and black. "upil-upil" is a part of *Gunungan Estri* which is rich in color. These colors implies a prayer request. white color has a meaning of purity, white represents peace, apology, self-achievement, spirituality, deity simplicity, perfection, cleanliness, light, innocence, security, unity. Red (Brave / Courage), Green (Life), Yellow (Happiness), Black (lasting). The meaning of a color has various perceptions, which can be stated that the meaning is based on agreement, therefore its meaning is quite relative.

### CONCLUSION

*Gunungan* is a series activity in *Garebeg* ceremony at *Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* Palace. These two series are connected and could not be separated. Each *gunungan* has a symbolic meaning that represents its content and shape. This study aimed at analyzing the aesthetic meaning implied in *Gunungan Estri*. Based on its visual appearance, the shape of *Gunungan Estri* looks like *bokor* (large bowl), consists of various types of traditional snacks

made from sticky rice and cassava. Each level has a philosophical meaning that are interrelated so that it can become a liaison between the people, the king and God. *Garabeg* is a ritual tradition that rich in colour in meaning.

The position of the woman depicted in *gunungan* is interpreted to be a starting point of another source of existence, so that the absence of *Gunungan Estri* will have an impact on the existence of other *gunungan*. What is happening nowadays about the echo of gender equality in society, especially in Java, is a misconception of Javanese philosophy; because the evidence of cultural products in *gunungan* image must be applied not only in ritual activities but also in everyday life in the community.

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