

# Historiography of Art and Crafts Bantul City Yogyakarta a from Protohistoric to Contemporary Times in Building Sustainable Creative Cities

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is as a scientific responsibility as well as an effort to build literacy in the existence of art and crafts in the city of Bantul, which is known as a creative city in the field of crafts. The existence of creativity of the Bantul people can be read and explained from the results of artifact which is clear evidence of innovation and community creation to meet the needs of life and become part of cultural life, especially Javanese culture. Art and crafts products that have an identity are created by highlighting the traditional cultural side to meet the latest community needs. This study uses qualitative descriptive methods with historical, cultural, and aesthetic approaches. The data obtained are presented systematically and elaborated in the form of data analysis to strengthen the findings of art and crafts in Bantul, Yogyakarta from protohistoric to contemporary times, strengthening Bantul as a creative city that is sustainable to prosper the economy of its people.

**Keywords:** Art and Crafts, Sustainable Art, Creative, Bantul Yogyakarta Indonesia

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## 1. Introduction

The history of Indonesian Fine Arts has recorded that the existence of art and crafts has grown since prehistoric or pre-script times (Sukmono, 1990). The findings of prehistoric artifacts are corroborated by the results of research conducted by experts from abroad (Netherlands), such as Eugene Dubois, Von Koenigswald, Van Heekeren, and others. They conduct research to record pre-historic studies in Indonesia with the findings of fossils and art products (Wagner, 1962). It is aligned with human desires to meet the needs of life, namely physical and spiritual needs through the products created. Another finding is in the form of biofact or ecofact, which is an object that has never been changed by humans but has become an important part of human life as a marker of the era of the times (Brahmana, 2022).

The discovery and the usefulness of fire made the pattern of community (Arnikar, 1996). It is develop the creativity of the community, not only in meeting basic needs (food, clothing, and shelter) but penetrating the needs of household appliances and jewelry. Kuntowijoyo (1994) stated that each individual human being has memories related to work, skills, socio-cultural life with society, economic life, and interactions with others in the past. Social, cultural, and economic interactions in people's lives give rise to the artistic creativity of various craft art products for customary-traditional, magical-religious needs to meet practical functional needs, both active and passive.

The development of art and crafts in Indonesia, especially Java, occurred in the period of the kingdom. The royal period in Java that predominantly influenced the development of art and crafts was the Majapahit Kingdom period which was included as the end of ancient times and continued in the Demak Kingdom period. The Kingdom of Demak was known as a pioneer of coastal art, namely in the early middle period with the entry of Islamic culture from Chinese ethnicity. The development of art and crafts historiography was ended in the middle period (Mataram Kingdom), both the Mataram Surakarta Kingdom and the Yogyakarta Mataram (Pigeaud, 1997). The Kingdom of Mataram is known as a milestone of inland art that produces a special style in every work of art and crafts produced. Making clothes is one example of the results of craft products for certain classes of people (Raffles, 2015).

The role of the kingdom or palace culture, especially the interior area became the cultural center of the people in Java. Art and crafts products are created by the requirement of noble cultural values because they are related to philosophical meaning. Artifacts in the world of art and crafts, especially in crafts, become a fact of Javanese culture integrated with three important elements that can be the main characteristics, namely related to the world of mythology, part of the ritual-magical process, and charged with the meaning of symbols. Craft art then flourished as a means of cultural expression and cultural legitimacy by everyone (Fischer, 1994), communal, and society at large (Suharson, 2022).

The traces of Kriya art civilization also occur in the Bantul region of Yogyakarta which is important to be studied scientifically to become an understanding of historical literacy. The results of the historiographic trail study are expected to be one of the reinforcements of the existence of creative arts, especially in crafts fields, in

Bantul City, Yogyakarta, Indonesia as a UNESCO version of the World Creative City in the field of Craft and Folk Art in 2023. This study was conducted by the author through research to be able to show the development of the creative industry from proto-historical to contemporary times by strengthening evidence of artifacts or innovative works of the community. The art actors in the city of Bantul, Yogyakarta which gave birth to art and crafts containing cultural traditions, modern, recycle-upcycle, and innovative renewable (contemporary) Craft work. Creative craft products are not limited to materials and production techniques but begin to penetrate global issues of sustainability craft which are collaborated with environmental issues.

## 2. Proto-Historical Period (Late Prehistoric and Early History)

In the proto-historical period, the people of Bantul City have long had experience and expertise in the field of art and crafts heritage from prehistoric times. Culturally, the people of Bantul city in making crafts are supported by very deep spiritual and intellectual beliefs and relationships with cultures from outside (migrants). The craft art was created with the concept of a "triangle of harmony" that is a form of absolute balance of man, the universe, and God the creator. This "triangle of harmony" relates to Javanese norms of life, values, social ethics, customs, behavior, and outlook on life. This period is known in the craft world as *perundagian*, which is the time when the Bantul people in creating the art and crafts for creative industry. It has a strong relationship with beliefs in the Hindu-Islamic Mataram era (Gustami, 2007). Beliefs that glorify the shape of *meru* or mountain are believed to be the dwelling place of ancestors in places that have a height. This place is considered a sacred place where the gods dwell. The heritage of the building with the concept of *punden berundak* is a legacy of Javanese life during the animism and dynamism period that believes in the highest place as a sacred place, as well as an "imaginary" point of origin and purpose of creation (Wonggunung, 2017).



Figure 1. Suku Temple and Barong Temple, Central Java, Indonesia (manifestation of *punden berundak*) in the beliefs of the Javanese people who believe in the highest peak as a sacred place

Photo: Wahyu Setyo Widodo (2021) and Syahdi (2020)

The relics of artifacts in the Bantul City can be used as a strong foundation to introducing art, crafts, and folk art for people in Bantul. Based on the results conducted by the Yogyakarta Special Region Archaeological Center in 1972, the sand dunes of the city South Bantul, precisely on Mount Wingko, Sanden District, have been found in the form of human and animal bone fragments, pottery fragments, bronze fragments, foreign ceramic fragments, and beads. Handicraft products in the form of pottery (*gogok jugs*, *klenthing* and *pengaron*) are used as a means of religious rituals (Nitihaminoto, 2005). Based on the findings, it shows the importance of the Mount Wingko site which provides an understanding that the people of Bantul have known art and crafts creative activities since the time of proto-historic (late prehistoric and early history). At this time, there was a belief that ancestral spirits came from the north and mountain worship as a place to dwell ancestral spirits or gods that were considered sacred was still strong in the culture of the people (Alifah, 2013).

Scientific analysis corroborates the absolute date of the existence of the art and crafts creative industry in Bantul which is carried out on evidence of samples of artifacts and bones found in the lowest (oldest) cultural layers, indicating a date of  $1990 \pm 90$  BP or 2,000 years ago. Based on these dates, the Mount Wingko Site has existed since the time of Proto History (late Prehistoric and Early History), while dates from the youngest cultural layer produce a year figure of  $270 \pm 60$  BP or around the 17th century. This shows one of the important values of the existence of the Mount Wingko Site, which is a picture of settlement on the south coast of Java from the early metal period (early century AD) to the end of the XIX century with a period of approximately 1,500 years. (Alifah, 2013) (Anggraeni, 2018).

People's beliefs in the past by giving grave provisions to the deceased can also indicate differences in social strata of the society. While the metal findings show the interaction between the people of Mount Wingko and the outside community, through trade. The trading activity was allegedly carried out by barter. The main livelihood of the people of Mount Wingko is salt makers. In addition, they also became a breeder, hunted, fished, made pottery, and made wicker which is shown by the findings of terracotta ornamental art or pottery in the grave bed.



Figure 2. The findings are based on research by the Yogyakarta Archaeological Center  
(Source: Yogyakarta Cultural Office and Archaeology Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta)

### 3. Historical Period (Ancient Mataram-Islam)

The existence of historical times starts from the historical journey of Ancient Mataram to Islamic Mataram. This history also experienced three important travel periods, namely the era of Kota Gede, Kerta, and Plered (1578-1677), the Kartasura era (1730-1746), and the Surakarta era (since January 1746 or February 1746-1755). The founder of the Islamic Mataram kingdom was Sutawijaya or Panembahan Senopati Ing Ngalaga in 1586, son of Ki Ageng Pemanahan as the pioneer of the Mataram Kingdom. The form of the kingdom is based on culture (Islamic-Javanese) with the territory of the kingdom divided into central and regional regions and the economic sector is agrarian-maritime-based (Yusuf, 2006). The Kingdom of Mataram became one of the names engraved in the long history of Indonesia. History records that there were two kingdoms that used the name Mataram, which was later known as Ancient Mataram and Islamic Mataram.

Based on information from various sources states that Ancient Mataram is a Hindu-Buddhist style kingdom that stood in the southern region of Central Java in the VIII century AD. The location is estimated to be in the former Kedu Residency which covers the Magelang, Temanggung, Wonosobo, to Purworejo areas and stretches to Sleman to Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta. This kingdom was founded by the Sanjaya Dynasty known as Rakai Bhumi Mataram in 644 Saka or 732 AD. In its development, this kingdom was known as Mdhang Kamulan or Ancient Mataram Kingdom. His territory covered the central part of Java Island which then shifted to the region (East Java). Based on historical records, Medang Kingdom has descendants divided into two dynasties, namely Sanjaya and Syailendra. That is the main reason Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms emerged after Medang was destroyed. The Kalasan inscription provides reinforcement from the translation results that in the 8th-10th centuries there were 2 dynasties, namely the Sanjayavamsa dynasty and the Syailendravamsa dynasty (Santiko, 2013).

The Sanjaya Dynasty is a dynasty that has a Hindu style and is known as the founder of the Ancient Mataram Kingdom. The Sanjaya dynasty was founded in 132 by Sanjaya. The Syailendra Dynasty is a major dynasty in the archipelago with Mahayana Buddhist style and ruled in the Ancient Mataram Kingdom since 752. This dynasty coexisted with the Sanjaya Dynasty which came to power in 732 in the southern Central Java region. In subsequent developments, this kingdom developed into a maritime, agrarian, and commercial country (MAN) which became one of the largest cultural centers in the archipelago. One of the most striking facts of this kingdom is the land of temple builders which is the origin of Javanese cultural roots. The reliefs carved in the temple ornaments also report a picture of people's lives in that era with various community activities, one of which is the manufacture of handicraft products. Making art and crafts products as a fulfillment of daily needs, both sacred to fulfilling profane needs in Javanese culture.

The relics of this temple artifact are evidence of important relics related to Javanese culture, more specifically in the Bantul community which shows that their ancestors were great *undagi*. The culture of the past is admired in the present era with the advancement of creative industry technology in the manufacture of art and crafts products. Ornamentation on temple reliefs is an inspiration to create art products that breathe tradition to forms of contemporary craft development. The greatness of Javanese house architecture with noble philosophical values in it also inspired the Bantul people in creating various products related to practical functions, socio-cultural functions, and philosophical functions in Javanese cultural teachings.



Figure 3. The reliefs of Borobudur Temple are the example of creative process of Javanese people in making pottery products  
(Source: Borobudur Conservation Center, 2019)



Figure 4. The reliefs of Sukuh Temple and Borobudur Temple tell the creative process of Javanese people in the production of making *keris* or other metal products  
(Source: Borobudur Conservation Center, 2019)



Figure 5. The reliefs of Borobudur Temple tell the process of making gamelan, gamelan drummers, and dancers  
(Source: Herlambang, 2021)

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The journey of creativity that has been carried out by masters and *undagi* experts forming groups in order to meet the needs of daily products can be seen in several temple reliefs. Initially, the initiation of making creative products was carried out by the kingdom or palace by order of the king to help the people's problems in meeting needs. As time goes by and the needs of life are different, technology and science also develop to align with the needs of the era of his time. Craft art and crafts products appeared with the basic culture of the palace with the term a *lusan* / high quality / high art products and folk-art products with the term rough products / low quality / low art. It is said to be a high art because these products are created in a palace environment that still upholds the values associated with magical rituals. The artwork products still feel to have certain meanings and prayers according to their use. This contrasts with the inferior art products of society which are deliberately not the same as *kraton* and are more likely to make ideas for the creation of products functionally practical and have no philosophical meaning.

Javanese architectural buildings which are Kriya artifacts of a blend of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are silent witnesses to the establishment of the Islamic Mataram kingdom (Suharson, 2021). The link between physical strength and the direction of public trust is an important thing that cannot be ignored in upholding the running of the royal government. Demak has an advantage, because the scholars provide full support as a form of fellowship to carry out Islamic shiar in Java. The alliance grew stronger when the influence of Chinese-Islamic culture also supported the existence of the kingdom of Demak and its surroundings. The influence of Chinese-Islam gave a new cultural color in the life of the Javanese people (Roojen, 1998).

Javanese society adheres to patrimonial understanding, so that if the highest leader of a government has embraced a certain religion, it is certain that the community will follow the leader. Although people's lives are not simply separated from the bonds of previous cultural traditions. Acculturation and even syncretism of the old culture with the new culture is the chosen alternative that develops in society (Gustami, 2007). This is what then happened the process of Islamization which was carried out well without collision because it still adopted the old beliefs and culture (animism-dynamism and Hindu-Buddhism) as well as local culture. This process is also included in the realm of artistic creativity, especially art and crafts that produce cultural products that have Javanese cultural characteristics. It even has the character and characteristics of local genius that gave birth to new forms of breathing Islam but has a philosophical meaning from the noble teachings of Javanese culture. Creative products created are born with symbolic nuances and terms of meaning. Such as leather puppet products, batik, pottery, wood carving, architecture, and other creative products.

The civilization of the Islamic Mataram kingdom then split into two different kingdom territories starting with the Giyanti Agreement on February 13, 1755 which was a peace agreement between the VOC and the Mataram party represented by Pakubuwono III and Prince Mangkubumi. Until finally the parties of Pakubuwono III, Hamengkubuwono I, and Prince Samberjiwa made an agreement mediated by the VOC in Salatiga, Central Java, March 17, 1755 A.D. The Kingdom of Mataram was divided into 2 parts, namely the kingdom of Surakarta led by Susuhanan Pakubuwana III and the kingdom of Ngayogyakarta under Prince Mangkubumi recognized as Sultan Hamengku Buwono I entitled Senopati Ing Ngalaga Sayidin Panatagama Khalifatullah with his palace in Yogyakarta. By the will of Sultan Hamengku Buwono I, the city of Ngayogyakarta was made the capital of the kingdom. (Purwadi, 2008). This agreement also provides significant changes to the creation of art and crafts products, especially changes in meaning, philosophical meaning, and application of use in community life, especially the culture of the people of Surakarta and Yogyakarta.

The understanding that can be underlined is that the Bantul city area which is included in the Yogyakarta palace area certainly follows the regulations and customary rules developed by the Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat palace. The people of Bantul obeyed the decree of the king of the Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat palace which had an impact on the creation of creative art and crafts products. At this time handicraft products are also made with predetermined standards and if developed by people outside the palace, of course, do not violate predetermined standards, both in terms of manufacture, use, and meaning in everyday life.

Kraton for the people of Java (Bantul) is interpreted as the cosmos or the center of the universe. Kraton is also interpreted as the center of the ruler who has the authority to rule the kingdom based on God's revelation. The discussion of kings and power cannot be separated from spiritual concepts, so the palace is called the center of culture. There is a folk culture that later becomes a palace culture and there is a palace culture that later becomes part of the community culture. So that in various cultural products there are only allowed for the palace and not for ordinary people, but there is also a palace culture that is adopted by ordinary people because there is no ban on the palace. The local characteristics of the palace culture that continue to live in Javanese society (Bantul) should continue to be pursued and developed in accordance with the goals of life of people who have special cultural characteristics (Mulder, 1970) local wisdom different from the culture of other people or regions.

#### **4. A Time of Tradition in Modern Expression**

This period is supported by scientific advances and supported by technological equipment supporting the production process of creative products. The progress of culture and human civilization influences very rapid technological progress (Adib, 2011). One example is the way humans cut down trees that used to be manual for the modern era has been supported by a fast-paced sawing machine. The modernization era has provided comfort, convenience, enjoyment, and happiness instantly. This era began in the 18th-19th centuries with the strengthening of colonial (European) style influences and works of art for purposes that breathed struggle, liberation, and independence. At this time, the control holders of the modern economy made the *kriyawan* faced with cataclysmic changes triggered by the influence of art coming from the west (Europe). This situation makes craftsmen in making craft products required to be creative and meet consumer demands that are right in size, right shape (precision), mass products, functional, and done within a predetermined period (Harkatiningsih, 2014).

The shift in socio-cultural values in society that occurs because of the power of economic capitalism is the loss of virtuous spirit, the thinness of social ethics, and the decline of manners. Major changes occurred in the

Java Island region with the presence of colonial nations which eventually limited the social community giving rise to the *wong agung* and *wong cilik* community groups as measured by the economic monopoly system (Garnham, 1999, pp. 20-23). In creative products, art and crafts have a significant impact on these social strata marker products. For the *wong agung*, the products worn or used denote the upper economic class with various attributes that signify wealth. As for the *wong cilik*, what is used are products that are used practically in everyday life. The *feodalan* attribute originating from the west has also become a clear barrier in the life of Javanese cultural communities.

Art and crafts products have also become a marker of attributes at this time that can be said to be upgraded despite cultural degradation. Various works of art products are measured by the level of complexity, refinement, greatness, and at a high price as one of the benchmarks for someone who is well established in his economic class to be called *wong agung* or *priyayi*. Trade in creative goods, art and crafts comes with new nuances of colonial style or a combination of other cultural styles. One example is the presence of silk batik fabrics, silver and gold jewelry, household furniture with *ngremit*, *jlimet*, and beautiful carvings and the presence of large Indi-style houses, *lodges*, *joglos*. High or good quality related to the quality of materials, process quality, product quality, management quality, and service quality is the goal of professionalism of craftsmen. Individual entrepreneurs who can provide the above demands will become agents of change and are able to create creative products in the realm of creative industries that demand good management.



Figure 6. Examples of traditional Javanese "*loro blonyo*" pottery products are recreated into a more creative form with a burning temperature of 1,150° C

The development of art and crafts products created by craftsmen is not only born from the descendants of masters, but can be formed and born by studying with the right science. Meeting the demands of consumers by the government and the community, art schools began to be established as one element that can develop local cultural products into creative and innovative products. This effort is also accompanied by the preparation of creative individuals who are willing to work hard and do artistic creations. Not only at the product level in the Javanese cultural ecosystem, but also able to conduct creative research to collaborate with other cultures. The emergence of new values in the world of art and crafts is also accompanied by a critical, analytical, and creative attitude among Christians so that the creation activities carried out reflect high dedication and professionalism. Art and crafts were born that have the soul of a new age with a new look (modern-novelty) and have a concept of creation based on the critical analysis of the creator.

## 5. Today's (Global-Digital)

The cultural strength of the city of Bantul has also given birth to innovative product creators in the world of creative industries, especially in the field of Crafts. The potential of the creative industry in Bantul Regency in the field of Crafts cannot be underestimated, at least this is related to the value of exports, the absorption of employment, the added value produced and aspects of creative industry consumption that is large enough to penetrate every corner of the village and craft centers. The creation of works of art in conjunction with art and crafts is directed to make a real contribution to improving the level of economic life of the community at large and is useful for the environment.

The development of the changing times requires humans to continue to be able to adjust to the changes that occur. The art life of the global era has no limit to art ownership that all art-loving societies can learn and can even own. It can be exemplified by western classical music that can now be studied by foreign countries, even we can have these musical instruments. Vice versa, in Java Indonesia, Gamelan can be learned by westerners, even the art tools of a gamelan set can be owned by other people. Developments in science and technology in the world of creative industries are also growing rapidly, crossing the boundaries of space, time, and faith.

Many large industrial movements exploit nature so wildly, that we forget to maintain and regrow what we have taken. At the level of artistic creation, art and crafts thinkers began to realize the scarcity of certain materials as materials for making creative products. This concern raises creative actors who care about the environment by prioritizing *recycle*, *reuse*, *reduce* products (Helmi, 2018). Products from garbage waste and large industrial waste are made into useful products that have high economic value. Even an easy marketing and

sales system in the digital era with social networks (social media) is mandatory to be understood by all traditional creative arts actors. Thus, contemporary art emerged which became the creative response of artists to answer sustainable art that has an impact on the environment. Contemporary art as a symptom of the modern past has opened new platforms for exploration in the world (Sutrisna, 2017). Art and crafts products were born with various innovations and creations from materials, production techniques, and finishing touches.

Artworks are born from creative artists, meaning that artists always try to improve sensibility and perception of the dynamics of people's lives. Instead, the community will be able to feel the benefits. Creative artists will bring society to a deeper aesthetic taste, not a taste that leads to the superficiality of art. This requires the creativity of the artist in the process of creating art, and theoretically requires careful thinking. There are three components in the art creation process as a foundation for work. The three components are theme, form, and content. Although theoretically separable, but the components are a unity that cannot be separated. (Dharsono, 2016).



Figure 7. The use of wood waste raw materials combined with metal materials into exclusive craft products with high economic value  
(Source: Arif Suharson, 2020)

## 6. Conclusion

The traces of artistic creations of crafts in Bantul Regency Yogyakarta began from the proto-historical period, namely the late prehistoric period and entered the beginning of history. Craft products develop along with the progress of the human mindset entering the historical period, namely the Ancient Mataram to Islamic Mataram. The power of royal influence and acculturation of other cultures began to have an impact along with social, cultural, and economic interactions in public life. The presence of masters and technological advances in undagi increase the value of Kriya products which give birth to new innovative creative works. Craft products are able to be a means of cultural expression and legitimacy, both personally, communally, and regionally. Creative villages emerged that were incorporated in centers that strengthened traditional arts. This period is known as the period of tradition but also experienced the movement of the existence of artistic creations towards the fulfillment of creative Craft products to answer the challenges of modernity. Global issues regarding concerns about the earth's energy and material sources related to creative products that are running low become a new chapter of the contemporary era that must be responded by presenting sustainability craft products.

Global cultural civilization has eliminated the territorial boundaries of a country, socio-cultural, cross-scientific, and interfaith. Creative Kriya art and crafts products are no longer used as a marker of the status of the *wong agung/ priyayi* which distinguishes it from the status of the *wong cilik*. Its presence prioritizes artistic creations that are able to create new products (renewable energy) from life problems that occur due to human activities, one of which is industrial waste. New creators are emerging presenting creative solutions in the form of innovative works with a science and technology approach. The cultural strength of local wisdom is not left behind but characterizes artistic creations as a marker of Indonesian Craft products, especially the city of Bantul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

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