

# Turnitin C1 Woman Carver Between Domestic Work and Fulfilling Economic Needs at Indonesian Carving Craft Center in the Early 21st Century

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## 4 Woman “Carver”: Between Domestic Work and Fulfilling Economic Needs at Indonesian Carving Craft Center in the Early 21st Century

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8  
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Woman “carver” is considered as one of the pillars of the existence of Jepara carving craft. A woman “carver” in Jepara plays two important roles both as a housewife and a person making a living to support the fulfillment of family’s daily needs. Here, a woman “carver” can set the rhythm of work in line with the household chores. Since the job requires high skills, a woman has to train herself and take internship program for several months in a professional carver. As a self-employed worker, a women carver does her work in “bulk” system. The work of a woman carver is delivered to the carving entrepreneurs every Thursday that it is called “Kemisan” (“Kemis” is a Javanese word meaning Thursday). A woman “carver” loves what she does to help her husband fulfilling the economy of the family without leaving the households chores aside.

**Keywords:** Carver, Woman, Domestic, Carving Centers, Economy.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The discussion on woodcarving in Indonesia is closely related to the role of Jepara as the centre of wood carving industry. The existence of Jepara wood carving can be associated with the carving of stones that adorn Mantingan Mosque in Jepara:<sup>6</sup> (p. 3). Woodcarving economic activities are affecting the dynamics of social and economic growth, including in Jepara<sup>1-4</sup> (p. 41). At the end of the 20th century to the early of 21st century, the economic situation is closely related to the presence of Jepara carving craft activities. Woodcarving is one of the livelihoods of Jepara residents whose existence is supported by businessmen, artisans, and workers.<sup>8</sup>

The existence of wood-carving cannot be separated from the presence of carvers, including woman carvers. In Jepara, woman “carver” is a profession supported by the environmental community. Woman “carvers” have contributed to the economic stability of households and helped reduce unemployment in Jepara. Through this carving activities, women play multiple roles both as a housewife taking care of domestic chores and as a provider helping her husband in meeting the daily needs of the family.

Based on the important role of women “carver,” this article discusses the existence of female sculptors as both housewives and providers to assist the economic life of the household. This paper covers the research methods used, the results of the discussion

about the existence of women carvers acting as domestic workers and breadwinners, and the conclusion.

### 2. METHOD

This research used primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are obtained by interviewing female sculptors; meanwhile, the secondary sources derive from the results of previous research, journals, and from a variety of relevant literature<sup>7</sup> (pp. 85–89). The research involves several steps in processing the results of the interview with informants from two sub-districts *Tahunan* and *Kedung Jepara* (Herlina, 2008: 20–21). The individual interviews are conducted by formulating questions that are relevant and are matched with the informants,<sup>5</sup> (p. 362). In order to gather information relating to the activity of women workers, direct observation toward the objects of research is taken<sup>2</sup> (p. 150). The direct observation particularly deals with the activities and products generated by woman “carver.”

All collected data, either those of the primary sources (interviews) and secondary sources (both relevant previous studies and literature) were further classified, linked or accumulated one to another. The data were, therefore, linked between the primary source and literature source, as a form of interpretation. Next, the data were synthesized in order to describe the existence of women “carver” in carving activities at home as well as fulfilling the economic needs of the household.

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### 3. RESULT

The women in Jepara became carvers for several reasons. First, they could not attend school because of the economic condition of the family. Second, they completed high school level. Third, they had been working as carvers since they attended school. Fourth, they became a woman “carver” because of the image of other woman “carvers” in their neighborhood. They argued that carving skills can help them in the future to earn money independently (Interview with Sri Astutik, July 24, 2016; Aminah, June 11, 2016; Faidah, June 12, 2016; Harni, June 7, 2016).

To realize the carving skill and ability, they studied how to carve from neighbors, siblings, father, and also mother. The schedule for carving courses was flexible. They could learn how to carve after school or at any time that suit the learners. Overall, the average period of carving training ranged from 3 months to almost 1 year. When a woman carver mastered all skills in the training process, she was given an opportunity to do the carving process on her own under direct guidance from the supervisor. When the result was considered good, this young woman carver might be given a job and she could bring and did the job at home. Further, the woman carver would be given some work (“order”) by the employer. This young woman carver earned appropriate wage prevailing at the workshop. The carving products made by the young woman carver among others were parts of chairs, tables, and other products that were not too difficult. The women also learned to make patterns on the scrap wood. They usually learned how to carve simple motifs like: floral, vine ropes, and others. They were also trained to make patterns and taught to make distinct motifs from Majapahit, Jepara, Cirebon, and other motifs that are not too difficult (Interview with Ngatminah, July 24, 2016; Musnaimah, June 16, 2016; Harni, June 7, 2016).

These woman carvers performed housework rhythms from the first time they woke up until bedtime. They started doing housework at 04.30 am, such as, cleaning the house, sweeping, washing dishes, cooking, bathing children, taking children to school and other household chores. The routine household chores were normally finished around 08.00 am until 09.00 am. Then, they started the carving activity at 8 am or 9 am every day. The carving activities stop at 11 am to 13.30 pm to give an opportunity for the woman carvers to prepare lunch for the family, took afternoon prayer, took a little nap, or accompanied their children to a religious school. At 13:30 pm until 16:00 pm they resumed the carving work. After finishing the work, the woman carvers generally picked the kids up from religious schools where the children learned how to read the Holly Quran, and then they bathe the children, and do other household chores. In the evening, the woman carvers worshiped God and watched TV as well as a night’s rest.

Regarding pregnancy, a mother having the first pregnancy quit the job and focused on housework. However, some woman carvers stop working when they enter the first month of pregnancy, while the others stop working after entering the seventh month of pregnancy. Normally, they started working again 6 months postpartum. Yet, the woman carvers stop working on the seventh or ninth months of pregnancy when they were having the third or the fourth baby. The woman carvers began working again 2 months postpartum (Interview with Suriah, July 24, 2016).

Basically, a woman carver felt that the profession was “normal” that she felt neither proud of nor ashamed of her profession.

Woman carver was respected since it was a decent job, it gave side job for woman, and it made money to help the family income (Interview with Faida, June 12, 2016). Further, a woman carver required competence or skills. They took order from the surrounding craftsmen. The type of work was classified as medium level of woodcarving work. Most women assumed woodcarving was a side job while its main job was as a housewife. Yet, at a certain age, woodcarving was considered the main job (Suriah, July 24, 2016). The system of “borongan” (large-scale) enabled woman to carve at home. Woman “carvers” could set the rhythm of working. She balanced the load of work and the main duty of mother taking care of households.

The carvers received orders from “juragan” (the employer). Wood as the material that would be carved was sent by “juragan” to the houses of woman “carvers.” Sometimes, the carvers had to take the material themselves at the employer’s house. Next, woman carvers did the job in their respective houses. The carving activities were conducted after all households’ chores were settled. Therefore, it was relevant if the job was considered as a side job. Mostly, the carvers began to work at 8. There were also several carvers that begin to work at 09.30. They stop for lunch at 11:00 am and resumed at 13:30 am until 16:00 pm. The workers also worked early around 07.00 am and did overtime work until 21.00 pm when there were a lot of works to be done (Interview with Ngatminah, July 24, 2016).

The woman carvers generally worked with simple motifs and practicable design depending on the orders. The carved motifs included floral, leaf tendrils, “daun kabur angin,” roses, fallen leaves, lotus, capsicum, “daun gelomngang cinta,” blarak, bananas, ornaments, and others. Most of woman carvers worked with the motifs given by the employer. They could carve any motifs as long as the patterns were available.

Woman carvers usually made thin engraving (2-dimensional) and put some decorations on the furniture components such as the backrest section, table, cupboard doors, leg and arm chairs, buffet, and others. They only engraved certain parts of furniture products; for example, the seat products are carved only on the “backrest” and its legs. Before carving, wood was processed and formed by a carpenter, and then it was carved based on the order. Once it was carved, the result was proposed to the “employer” to be assembled by other craftsmen (Interview with Sri Astutik, July 24, 2016).

In term of wages, the income received by women comparing to men was basically the same. Wage differences were mainly caused by the ability to carve, type of motifs, and speed in carving out the wood. The ability to carve a product in top quality distinguished the amount of earned wages comparing to those of coarse or medium quality. The finer the quality, then the greater amount of wage was received. Complicated pattern or motif also determined the amount of wage given to the carvers.

The income of a woman carver ranged between 80 thousand and 400 thousand Rupiah per week. The wages received depended on the type of work and the extent of the work. When a carver was lazy, the wages remained small for they only produced small number of products. Yet, when a carver was willing to work hard and to work overtime, she/he earned more money (Interview with Harni, June 7, 2016).

Currently (2016), the wages at the beginning of work reached 50 thousand to 100 thousand Rupiah per week (Interview with Sri Astutik, July 24, 2016). The wages for the carvers in 2016 who were willing to work hard might reach around 300 thousand



to 400 thousand Rupiah per week. The average wage earned for woman carvers working between 08.00 am and 04.00 pm, with a 2-hour break, was about 100 thousand to 200 thousand Rupiah per week.

The lower income of woman carvers was caused by several reasons. First, the carver was reluctant to work overtime. Second, global economic condition has affected furniture industry in which orders from buyers are decreasing so that carvers do not have job to be done (Syria, July 24, 2016). Wages received by carvers was used to buy meal by the carvers, or it was given to their children for pocket money. The wage earned by the carvers was also used for additional spending like a social gathering. They used the money to give "buwo" (money given as a kind of donation) to neighbors and relatives who have certain party celebrations. They believed that the wages received were considered big enough so that it should be enough for their daily needs. (Interview with Suriah, July 24, 2016; Sri Astutik, July 24, 2016). The payment system applied "kemisan" (kemis in Javanese is Thursday, kemisan means the payment dues every Thursday), in which a woman carver started working on Saturday morning until Thursday, then on Thursday afternoon the results of his work were paid by the employer. Hence, the payment was given once a week every Thursday. The system of "borongan" (wholesale system) made the woman carvers freely set the rhythm of work. The woman carver was, therefore, free to work with any employers and she even took direct order from buyers.

Nevertheless, every woman carver was given a freedom to work for the chosen employers. There was even a carver working for two (2) employers or more depending on the ability to divide the time to finish the job at home. It also depended on the presence or absence of the orders received from the employers. When an employer did not have any orders for the carver, the carver might look for a job at another employer.

In terms of welfare, the position of the carver could be considered as weak. The wage increase was often disproportionate to the increase in price of staple goods. Even if the price of wood as the material for carving was expensive, the employer often lowered the wage in order to meet the cost of the raw material. The employer did not raise the price of the product since it affected the purchasing power of the consumers. Thus, one reasonable strategy was to lower the wages of the carvers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

A woman carver is a profession based on competence and skill with a long training process. This profession is still in great demand among the women in Jepara since it is considered prospective from the perspectives of culture, economy, and social. From the aspect of culture, a woman carver is a regular profession conducted by woman in Jepara. The skill and the ability to carve are cultural heritages pass down from generation to generation. Meanwhile, based on the economic side, a woman carver is a profession that can produce a wage sufficient to support to the family's needs and it also helps the household economy.

#### List of Informants

1. Name: Aminah, Address RT 13 RW 03, Desa Petekean, Kecamatan Tahunan Jepara, 35 years old, Occupation Woman "Carver"/Housewife, Education Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (SD/Elementary School), Date of Interview 11 June 2016.
2. Name: Faida, Address RT 15 RW 03, Desa Petekean, Kecamatan Tahunan Jepara, 50 years old, Occupation Woman "Carver"/Housewife, Education SD/Elementary, Date of Interview 12 Juni 2016.
3. Name: Harni, Address RT 09 RW 02, Desa Petekean, Kecamatan Tahunan Jepara, 30 years old, Occupation Woman "Carver"/Housewife, Education: SMP/Junior High School, Date of Interview 7 June 2016.
4. Name: Musnaimah, Address RT 16 RW 04, Desa Petekean, Kecamatan Tahunan Jepara, 39 years old, Occupation: Woman "Carver"/Housewife, Education: MTS/Junior High School, Date of Interview 16 June 2016.
5. Name: Nurkhamidah, Address RT 18 RW 04, Desa Petekean, Kecamatan Tahunan Jepara, 40 years old, Occupation: Woman "Carver"/Housewife, Education: SLTA/Senior High School, Date of Interview 16 June 2016.
6. Name: Sri Astutik, Address RT 2 RW 01, Desa Petekean, Kecamatan Tahunan Jepara, 29 years old, Occupation: Woman "Carver"/Housewife, Education: SLTA/Senior High School, Date of Interview 24 July 2016.
7. Name: Suriah, Address RT 06 RW 02, Desa Petekean, Kecamatan Tahunan Jepara, 51 years old, Occupation: Woman "Carver"/Housewife, Education: SD/elementary, Date of Interview 24 July 2016.
8. Name: Nur Faizah, Address RT 10 RW 03, Desa Menganti Kecamatan Kedung Jepara, 33 years old, Occupation: Woman "Carver", Education: MTs/Junior High School, Date of Interview 24 July 2016.
9. Name: Ngatminah, Address RT 10 RW 07, Desa Menganti, Kecamatan Kedung Jepara, 37 years old, Occupation: Woman "Carver", Education SD/elementary, Date of Interview 24 July 2016.

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6

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