

Classic Jepara Wood Carving Techniques and Tools from the Three Video Documentations of the Ruma Japara Classic Jepara Carving Master Class

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Jepara, located in Central Java, Indonesia, is "well known as the centre of wood furniture both locally and internationally. The craftsmanship that [has been] inherited from generation to generation has become part of the Jepara people's lives. But recently this craftsmanship has slowly begun to fade" (Rombe et al. 2016: 189). Jepara's traditional carving techniques have been used since the identification of Jepara chairs that were first created with Islamic and Hinduism influences in the 16th to the 17th centuries.

Although the pattern of carving has been growing outside its *pakem* (traditional rules of design), the use of the traditional carving tools and techniques by Jepara's craftsmen still remain the same. Nevertheless, the knowledge of the tools and the techniques of the classic Jepara carving have become limited due to the lack of interest among young crafters. The vision of the video documentation of the tools and techniques by Ruma Japara is to introduce the knowledge of Jepara traditional carving to the young generation.

Ruma Japara is a community based in Jepara, Central Java, Indonesia that has a vision to introduce Jepara art and culture to the next generation and the international market through Community Development and Research with the mission to support the local community in Jepara. Ruma Japara also conducts qualitative research in the form of documentation (photo, video and sketches), journals and books about Jepara's art and culture, information through

social media and digital content, field trips and focus group discussions (FGD) (Ruma Japara 2015).

There are three documentation videos that Ruma Japara produced with the title *Ruma Japara Classic Japara Carving Master Class: The One Minute Video, the Three Minute Video and the Thirty Minute Video*. The videos were produced during the year of 2016 to 2017. It took two years for Ruma Japara's team to complete the videos that included research, producing sample carvings and the video. Currently the three videos can be seen in the Ruma Japara YouTube channel. The one-minute video documentation was uploaded on 28th September 2017, the three-minute and 30-minute videos on 31st May 2019. The latter two videos have been used before as education materials at Ruma Japara only. These videos are important to be reviewed as they are the first videos that were made by the community in Jepara. The community that has been famous internationally for its master skills in carving has shared the types of tools and steps of Jepara classical carving in the videos.

Compared to the 30 minute video, the one-minute and three-minute videos are more compact with contemporary soundtrack songs with fast beats while the 30 minute video uses a traditional Indonesian instrument with moderate beat and exotic sound. The three videos basically illustrate the same structure and phases of carving, but the 30 minute video has more detailed information of each phase.

THE ONE-MINUTE AND THREE-MINUTE VIDEOS

The opening of the one-minute video shows the simple design of the logo of the Ruma Japara community with matching colours. The beginning of the one-minute video shows the tools that have been used for classic Jepara carving. It takes four seconds (00:04 to 00:07) to introduce the tools. Enough information is given to introduce the tools with a touch of detail.



Figure 1 One-minute and three-minute videos illustrating the nine classical steps of Jepara carving techniques.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTWu1WFKczQ>.

Figure 1 shows the main body of the one minute and the three minute videos illustrating the nine classical steps of Jepara carving techniques: sketch is the process of drawing the motif desired on the wood; *mbukai* is the process of roughly digging the wood with general tools to open the three dimensional space and contour; *dasari* is the process of digging more deeply into the thickness of the wood and the desired motif and depth to create more three dimensional space, contour and texture; *ngalusi* is the process of making the digging smooth and shaping the form according to the depth desired; *ngaweni* is the process of shaping deep lines of the meeting points of some motifs so that they look more fine; *nyoreti* is the suppression on the surface of the motif to emphasise the details of some of the motifs; *caca gori* is digging in more detail of the motifs; *bulok* is to shape the digging so that it looks three dimensional; *balesi* is digging the motif on the reverse side of the panel so as to get the three dimensional depth. It takes 32 seconds (00:08 to 00:40) to introduce the nine techniques thoroughly. In the short videos, enough information is given to introduce the technical steps in Jepara classic carving techniques (Ruma Japara 2017a).




At the end of the main body, the one minute video shows the final products from the first step to the final product. It takes seven seconds (00:41 to 00:48) to introduce the final products and to capture the differences. The closing of the video consists of the credits to the master carver and the list of the team members involved in the making of the video. It takes 11 seconds (00:49 to 01:00) to introduce the master carver and all the members of the team. The three-minute video basically shows the same content as the one minute video with a slightly longer time allocated to each phase.

THE 30-MINUTE VIDEO

The 30-minute video contains more detailed information about the classic Jepara wood carving tools and their functions, the details of classic Jepara wood carving techniques and the three steps that are classified as *dasar* (basic), *terampil* (intermediate) and *mahir* (advance).

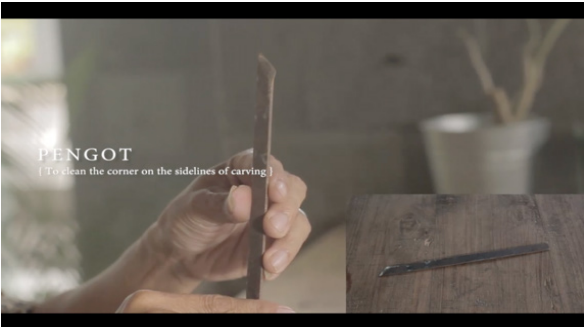


Table 1 shows the classic Jepara wood carving tools that consist of: *penguku* (*kuku* means nail, the form of this tool is like human nail), *penyilat*, *penyilat bengkok*, *pengot*, *kol*, *kol bengkok*, *pembuluk*, *coret*, *rembulan/buluk*, *kaoto*, *palu sawo*, with additional tools such as the pencil, brush and *penjepit kayu* (wooden clamp).

Table 1 The tools of Jepara classic carving.

No.	Name	Picture
1	<i>Penguku</i>	 <p>PENGUKU [It shaped like human arch fingernails and to create curved lines]</p>
2	<i>Penyilat</i>	 <p>PENYILAT [A carving tool that useful for making straight lines]</p>
3	<i>Penyilat bengkok</i>	 <p>PENYILAT BENGKOK [It's useful to carve the shape that can't be executed with ordinary penyilat]</p>

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

No.	Name	Picture
4	<i>Pengot</i>	
5	<i>Kol</i>	
6	<i>Kol bengkok</i>	

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

No.	Name	Picture
7	<i>Pembuluk</i>	
8	<i>Coret</i>	
9	<i>Rembulan/ pembuluk</i>	


(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

No.	Name	Picture
10	<i>Kaoto</i>	
11	<i>Palu sawo</i>	
12	<i>Penjepit kayu</i> (wooden clamp)	

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

No.	Name	Picture
13	<i>Kuas</i> (brush)	

Source: Ruma Japara (2017b)

The *Penguku* comes in several sizes and is shaped like human arch fingernails with the function of creating curved lines and the concave motif. There are 15 to 30 pieces with different sizes (from 2 mm to 3.5 cm) depending on the difficulties of the carving. *Penyilat* is also called *penyilet* or *penilap*. It comes in 10 different sizes (from 2 mm to 3.5 cm) and is used to carve straight lines. *Penyilat bengkok* has several sizes that are useful for carving straight lines that cannot be reached by the *penyilat*. *Pengot* also has several sizes and is employed to clean and smooth the corner on the sidelines of the carving that cannot be reached by the *penyilat*.

Five to seven pieces of various-sized *kol* are used to sharpen the arch line and make it deeper and sharper. For instance, *kol bengkok* can reach the corners that the ordinary *kol* cannot. *Pembuluk* usually comes in one size (6 mm) and is an additional tool that is used to smoothen the deep carved lines. *Coret* is a supporting tool of *penyilat* that comes in several sizes and is used to tidy up and sharpen corners that cannot not be reached by the *penyilat* and to make carving lines come alive. The word *coret* means sketch; it functions as a pencil to draw a motif casually. *Rembulan/buluk* has several sizes that can create the straight curves. *Kaoto* is a tool in the shape of a pole with a sharpened blade in the middle and comes in several sizes; the longest one used by the carpenter is 36.5 cm in length while three others used by the woodcrafter are 19.5, 23 and 27.5 cm in length. The function of this tool is to smooth and flatten the surface and thin the wood. *Palu sawo* is a hammer that acts as a carving tool for digging into the wood. It comes in various lengths (from 17 to 18 cm) weighing

between 400 to 500 g depending on the wood material employed. Usually in Jepara, sawo wood is used because it is soft, light and strong (Ruma Japara 2017b).

An additional tool for the carving process is the pencil that is used for sketching the pattern on the wood, wooden clamp for clamping the wood so the wood is not moving along the process and brush for cleaning the waste wood from the area of carving (Ruma Japara 2017b).

The 30 minute video also shows the differences of the three types of classic Jepara wood carving: *dasar* (basic), *terampil* (intermediate) and *mahir* (advance). The classification is based on the difficulties of the techniques and details applied. Table 2 compares the technical steps of the three types of wood carving.

The *dasar* (basic) type of classic Jepara wood carving contains seven basic steps that need to be carried out: sketch, *mbukai*, *dasari*, *ngalusi*, *ngaweni*, *nyoreti* and cleaning. The *terampil* (intermediate) type has an additional technique of *cacagori* that has to be done between *nyoreti* and cleaning. The *mahir* (advance) type has another two additional techniques called *bulok* that has to be completed before *ngaweni* and the technique called *balesi* that has to be done before cleaning (Ruma Japara 2017b).

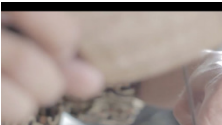
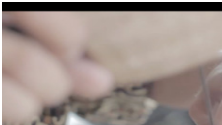




Sketching is the first step that the carver undertakes; it is the process of drawing the pattern with pencil on the wood that is ready to be carved. *Mbukai* is the step to open the wood roughly according to the pattern to create a concave or convex shape by using *penyilat*, *penguku* and *kol*. *Mbukai* is also the process to open the three dimensional spaces and contours. *Dasari* is making the deep base of the engraving pattern so the pattern will come out as a three dimensional pattern. *Dasari* is also the process of digging deeper into the thickness of the wood as the desired motif and depth to create a more three dimensional space, contour and texture. *Ngalusi* is the process to sharpen the concave and convex shape of the pattern so as to strengthen the depth. *Ngaweni* is the process shaping the deep line of the meeting point of some motifs so that they look fine. *Nyoreti* is the process using the tool *corets* to create lines to suppress the surface of the motif to emphasise the details of some of the motifs. Cleaning with a brush is the final step at the end of the technique process. This step is also important to check that all the steps have been carried out so that the details of the motifs and textures are can be clearly seen (Ruma Japara 2017b).

Table 2 The technical steps of Jepara classic wood carving techniques.

	Technique	<i>Dasar</i> (basic)	<i>Terampil</i> (intermediate)	<i>Mahir</i> (advance)
1	Sketch			
2	<i>Mbukai</i>			
3	<i>Dasari</i>			
4	<i>Ngalusi</i>			
5	<i>Bulok</i>	—	—	
6	<i>Ngaweni</i>			
7	<i>Nyoreti</i>			

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Table 2 (continued)

	Technique	<i>Dasar</i> (basic)	<i>Terampil</i> (intermediate)	<i>Mahir</i> (advance)
8	<i>Caca gori</i>	–		
9	<i>Balesi</i>	–	–	
10	Cleaning			

The first technical step in *terampil* (the intermediate type of Jepara woodcarving) is similar to the *dasar* (basic) type: the sketch is followed by *mbukai*, *dasari*, *ngalusi*, *ngaweni*, *nyoreti*, *caca gori* and cleaning. *Caca gori* is an additional technique that is part of the *terampil* (intermediate) technique. The process has to be done after *nyoreti*. It is the process to deepen the motif so it looks more three dimensional. Cleaning in *terampil* (intermediate) is the same process with cleaning in *dasar* (basic) (Ruma Japara 2017b).

The technical steps in *mahir* (the advance type of Jepara woodcarving) are similar with *terampil* (intermediate) type: sketch, *mbukai*, *dasari*, *ngalusi* followed by *bulok*, *ngaweni*, *nyoreti*, *caca gori* and cleaning. *Mbukai*, *dasari*, *ngalusi* are the same processes in *terampil* (intermediate). Two additional techniques are (1) *bulok* that has to be done before *ngaweni* to sharpen the convex contour using the tool *penguk* and (2) *balesi*, a process to carve the edge of the reversed side of the front pattern that includes the process called *ngrawangi* to make hole in some areas which need to be stressed to get the three dimensional feel (Ruma Japara 2017b).

Figure 2 shows examples of the *dasar* (basic) (top), *terampil* (intermediate) (middle) and the *mahir* (advance) types of classic Jepara wood carving (bottom). The middle picture shows the three dimensional contour in the elements of the motif. The leaves have a deeper contour compared to those of the *dasar* (basic) type.

Figure 3 (top) shows comparison of two products of classic Jepara wood carving technique by the *terampil* (intermediate) type (left) and the *mahir* (advance) type (right) while the bottom figure shows comparison of products by the *dasar* (basic) type (left) and by the *terampil* (intermediate) type (right).



Figure 2 Some examples of classic Jepara wood carving.
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JYgy8fNgk>.



Figure 3 The comparison products of three classified of classic Jepara wood carving.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JYgcy8fNgk>.

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