



Demystifying *Wingit*: a Javanese Concept in the Architecture of the Sacred

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Abstract. This paper is based on an ongoing research concerning *wingit* in Javanese architecture and interior. *Wingit* is a Javanese concept associated with unseen spirits, and therefore regarded as a trace of animist-dynamist belief. However, in this research, *wingit* is regarded as a concept related to aesthetics and pertains to spatial experience. This paper intends to demonstrate that *wingit* is a concept that affects Javanese religious/sacred architecture as symbolic representation that involves multidimensional experience. The research integrates literature study and architectural analysis. This allows me to understand how *wingit* is perceived as reflected by spatial practice, to trace how *wingit* has been defined in Javanese context, and to understand *wingit* as aesthetic experience. Examinations on the term *wingit* in Old Javanese and Javanese dictionaries, as well as literary works, show that the concept denotes sadness, silence, stirring-awe and respect-inspiring. This indicates that *wingit* is not necessarily a concept that designates that something or somewhere is being haunted. Further examination of the concept of *wingit* suggests a potential to discuss it as an aesthetics category, as it shares some parallelism with Immanuel Kant's discussion on the sublime. In addition, I also noticed that *wingit* is associated with places considered sacred. These places are, to borrow a term by Mircea Eliade, hierophanies in architectural forms. I argue that *wingit* is not a form of hierophany. *Wingit* is more akin to nominous, religious experience described by Rudolf Otto. *Wingit* is another layer of representation complementing the architectural manifestation of the sacred.

Keywords: *Wingit*, Javanese, Architecture, Interior, Sacred.

1 Introduction

This paper delves into an ongoing research on the concept of *wingit* in Javanese culture and its connection to placemaking and architecture. *Wingit* is often misunderstood as being associated with superstitions and hauntings. However, we take a different stance, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of *wingit* to fully comprehend its role in shaping spaces and placemaking practices. This paper demonstrates that *wingit* is intricately linked to spatial experiences, making it a compelling area of focus for architectural studies.

The impetus for this research stemmed from our observation of the dark space in a Javanese house known as *senthong tengah* located within the *ndalem* (inner sanctum). Existing literature (e.g., Tjahjono, 1989 [1]; Waterson, 2010 [2]; Ju, et al., 2018 [3]) highlights the sacred nature of *senthong tengah*, often attributed to its dimly lit character. However, during the course of the research, we encountered the concept of *wingit*, which was frequently mentioned in discussions about these sacred and dark spaces in Javanese homes during our initial surveys. *Wingit* was also associated with various other places, such as secluded and dark caves, ancient trees, and mountain top temples. It became apparent that *wingit* is a quality ascribed to specific places, and we only encountered its mention in connection to locations deemed sacred within the Javanese cultural context.

The concept of *wingit* remains largely unexplored, particularly in the field of architecture, despite its pervasive presence in various aspects of Javanese sacred places. Upon closer examination, places deemed *wingit* often exhibit a sacred character. The *senthong tengah*, for instance, is associated with the deity Dewi Sri¹. While *wingit* is predominantly associated with sacred spaces, its presence in profane contexts is not entirely excluded. Preliminary literature reviews suggest a strong connection between *wingit* and sacredness.

Wingit is not only found in dimly lit rooms Javanese houses. In fact, the concept of *wingit* can also be linked with other aspects of Javanese culture. For instance, the performance of the sacred dance, Bedhaya Ketawang, is often described as possessing an otherworldly quality, embodying the essence of *wingit* (Brakel-Papenhuijzen, 2023 [4]). In this context, *wingit* means awe-inspiring quality that enfold the atmosphere of the performance.

In this paper we discuss the concept of *wingit* in relation to Javanese architecture and interior. The paper explores how the concept of *wingit* affects architectural and interior spaces, particularly those associated with sacredness. This paper examines the possibility to understand *wingit* as an aesthetics concept. The intention is to dispell the misunderstanding according to which *wingit* is about “haunted”, scary places. Therefore, by having a more comprehensive understanding of the concept would open up an opportunity to interrogate the link between *wingit* and Javanese architecture as well as interior.

2 Introduction

This research employs literature study method. This method is selected because this paper focuses on a concept, namely *wingit*. Nevertheless, this paper is in the field on the architectural studies. As such, it has to start with architectural sources. The literature study begins with an examination of key texts that discuss the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Javanese sacred spaces, such as the “*senthong tengah*” in traditional Javanese houses. Works by Tjahjono (1989) [1], Waterson (2010) [2], and Ju et al. (2018) [3] explains that there is a correlation between sacredness and darkness at least in the

¹ As Wiryomartono (2016) notes, places imbued with sacredness and reverence are often referred to as *wingit*.

case of Javanese houses. However, when we conducted initial survey in Yogyakarta region the word *wingit* was expressed by inhabitants of the houses when asked to characterize the *senhong tengah*. What is intriguing is that they did not consider the *senhong tengah* as eerie or haunted. One inhabitant of the houses actually described that *wingit* is more related to awe and respect. Although the aforementioned architectural studies sources do not use the term *wingit*, they provide foundational perspectives on the sacredness associated with these spaces, offering insights into how "*wingit*" may be perceived in relation to darkness, spatial arrangement, and the presence of sacred deities like Dewi Sri.

As sources in architectural studies do not use the term *wingit*, it is necessary to look at sources from other disciplines. This research employs a literature study method to explore the concept of *wingit* within Javanese architecture and interior spaces. The literature study is conducted to gather existing knowledge and insights that are crucial for understanding *wingit* and its implications in the architectural and cultural context of Java. The literature study is followed by cross-disciplinary analysis. It should be noted that the literature study at this stage is still limited to dictionaries of old and modern Javanese. These dictionaries provide definitions of the term *wingit*. The presence of the term in old Javanese dictionaries suggests that the word *wingit* has existed for centuries. In addition, the research examines the use of the term *wingit* in Javanese literature pieces such as Panji Jayalengkara Angreni in order to obtain insights not only on the meaning of the term but also the related nuances.

Furthermore, the literature review extends to explore broader interpretations of *wingit*, including its presence in other cultural manifestations such as traditional dance. Brakel-Papenhuijzen (2023) [4] in her study describes the sacred dance Bedhaya Ketawang as embodying an otherworldly quality, closely tied to the essence of *wingit*. Brakel-Papenhuijzen's understanding of *wingit* is elaborated below in the discussion section. Nonetheless, it is sufficient to say here that her definition of *wingit* in relation to the sacred dance helps to expand the understanding of "*wingit*" as an aesthetic and experiential quality that permeates various aspects of Javanese culture.

Through this literature study, the research aims to build a comprehensive framework that challenges the common misconception of *wingit* as merely haunted or eerie. Instead, it seeks to recontextualize "*wingit*" as a significant cultural and architectural concept, deeply intertwined with sacredness and spatial experience in Javanese traditions. In this research, a core themes is to be identified. In this present study, *wingit* is identified as present in architectural space such as *senhong tengah*. As mentioned above, *senhong tengah* is describe as sacred in existing studies due to its association with Dewi Sri. By carefully looking at the definition and sense of *wingit* in literature and sacred dance such as Bedhaya Ketawang, the themes of sacred, awe, respect can be identified.

After identifying the themes, we focus on architectural aspects, namely spatial arrangement and the role of darkness in creating a sacred quality. This will be compared with the result of studying literature and performing arts in terms of *wingit*. This is to examine how these spaces evoke awe and respect due to their historical and cultural significance. Literature and performing arts might highlight the aesthetic dimensions of *wingit*. By doing so, *wingit* in architectural cases is not to be regarded as just a result of

the physical elements of design such as spatial arrangement and darkness. Such physical element of design have their values or qualities being deeply influenced by cultural narratives that imbue spaces with a sense of sacredness and awe. Therefore, *wingit* is understood as a multifaceted concept that transcends mere physical design, encompassing cultural, emotional, and experiential dimensions. As a concept *wingit* is central in understanding Javanese spatial and cultural practices.

3 Introduction

3.1 The Multifaceted Concept Of Wingit

While the term *wingit* is often associated with haunted or eerie places, its significance extends beyond mere fear-inducing locales. In Javanese literary works, *wingit* encompasses a broader spectrum of meanings, encompassing tranquility, sacredness, and a connection to the spiritual realm. A prime example is found in the *Serat Centhini*, a Javanese epic poem². Similarly, in the *Panji Jayalengkara Angreni* manuscript³, *wingit* is associated with a sense of melancholy and introspection. It is also associated with silence. The phrase "*tepining kang aksi sawang wingit*" (the edges of the eyes like they are grieving) suggests a profound emotional state, hinting at the depth of feeling that *wingit* can evoke. These literary examples challenge the stereotypical perception of *wingit* as solely a source of fear. Instead, they reveal a more nuanced understanding, recognizing *wingit's* connection to tranquility, spirituality, and the exploration of inner emotions.

The diverse and complex meanings of the Javanese term *wingit* are evident in its definitions found in both dictionaries and Javanese literature. The concept of *wingit* appears to have existed among Javanese society since the Hindu-Buddhist era, as indicated by the presence of the term "*awingit/wingit*" in Kawi or Old Javanese vocabulary (the language used during that period). According to Wojowasito's Kawi-Indonesian Dictionary (1977), *wingit* means "sadness." However, the *Indonesian-Old Javanese Dictionary* compiled by Mardiwarsito, et.al. (1992) defines *wingit* and *awingit* as "to arouse respect." *Wingit* persists in the vocabulary of modern Javanese, which refers to the Javanese language during the Islamic era (the Javanese language as still used today).

² *duknya ratri dènya ngingkis sabda wingit | adrêng kaularsa. asring kula kang jinujug | trêkadhang sring angsal kardi | luar tyase kang sungkawa | sêkadar ngulih-ulih | dene kang gua Sirupan | punika kêlangkung wingit.* Here, *wingit* is not simply a place to be avoided but rather a sanctuary for contemplation and spiritual growth. The passage describes a serene night, where the "*wingit words*" resonate, filling the heart with a sense of peace. The protagonist, drawn to a cave named Sirupan, finds solace in its profound silence, acknowledging it as a true embodiment of *wingit*. (Cênthini, composed by Soeradipoera, 1912–5, #998, Volumes 3–4: Pupuh 066–084) downloaded from <https://www.sastra.org>

³ The manuscript of *Panji Jayalengkara Angreni* was composed in the early 19th century in Surakarta as a version of the *Panji* story that emerged in the late Majapahit era in the 14th century (Yudhistira, et al., 2023).

In Elinor Clark Horne's *Javanese-English Dictionary* (1974, p. 556), *wingit* and its synonym, *singit*, have the same meaning: "(1) inhabited by spirits; (2) influential, having a forceful personality." A dictionary published in 1847, *Javaansch-Nederduitsch Woordenboek* by Gericke en Roorda (<https://www.sastra.org>) describes *wingit* as having both a secretive and haunted aspect.

The Javanese term *wingit* encompasses a diverse range of meanings, as evident from various dictionaries. It is a concept that goes beyond mere fear, evoking a sense of reverence, awe, and authority, often associated with the hidden or mysterious. *Wingit* encompasses a multifaceted dimension, extending beyond the realm of the ominous to encompass a sense of grandeur. In the context of Bedhaya Ketawang dance, Brakel-Papenhuijzen (2023) describes *wingit* as "awe-inspiring." The intricate meanings of *wingit* found in Javanese dictionaries and literature highlight its complexity. Reducing this concept solely to its eerie aspect would overly restrict our understanding of its profound significance.

3.2 *Wingit* as a Conceptual Framework: Unveiling the Intersection of Culture, Spirituality, and Architecture

While *wingit* is often perceived as a property, phenomenon, or quality, this research examines it as a conceptual framework. By adopting this approach, the study gains a deeper understanding of the processes, interactions, and relationships that shape spatial perception and experience in Javanese architecture⁴. Furthermore, it allows for the exploration and identification of the intricate interplay between the various elements that construct the meaning and experience of *wingit* spaces (see Table 1).

According to Koentjaraningrat (1985) [5], the genesis of any cultural object begins with an underlying idea or concept that drives its materialization. This idea or concept fosters social interactions among individuals and gives rise to the tangible, visual form of the cultural object (Koentjaraningrat, 1985) [5]. This implies that the symbolic representations and the atmosphere of *wingit* should be examined from their root, which lies at the level of conceptual thinking.

Concepts are shaped by historical and cultural contexts and are not always static (Blunden, 2011) [6]. The challenge lies in the fact that *wingit* has not been widely recognized as a conceptual framework. Instead, it has been primarily discussed as a quality, often associated with the supernatural or superstitious. This has led to misconceptions and misinterpretations of *wingit*. Furthermore, the lack of a robust theoretical framework has hindered the exploration of *wingit* as an aesthetic aspect. The definitions of *wingit* found in both ancient and modern Javanese dictionaries, as well as its usage in Javanese literature, indicate the potential to examine and conceptualize *wingit* as an aesthetic dimension.

⁴ Examining *wingit* as a conceptual framework facilitates a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, potentially revealing the core cultural insights of Javanese society and their impact on sacred architecture. This approach offers a paradigm shift in our understanding of *wingit*.

Table 1. Evolving interpretations of *wingit*: A lexical and cultural journey through Javanese dictionaries (1847-1992). Source: Authors, 2024

Publication year	Name Dictionary	Meaning of <i>wingit</i>
1847	<i>Javaansch-Nederduitsch Woordenboek, Gericke en Roorda</i>	1. <i>K.N. ontzag inboezemend, eerbiedwekkend; eerwaardig</i> [= angkêr en wahyane wong luhur, vrg. singit] (amazing, venerable; old) 2. <i>Kw. ongewoon, buitengewoon; geheim</i> (unusual, extraordinary; secret)
1901	<i>Javaansch-Nederduitsch Woordenboek, Gericke en Roorda</i>	KW. zva. angkêr, antêng, walat, kêkêr . Wk. zva. susah, AD. bl. 56, BG. o. a. 397 <i>kusuma kang nandhang</i> <i>Angker</i> in this context is related to something scary or frightening. It refers to the atmosphere or aura of a place that induces fear. <i>Anteng</i> : calm/quiet. <i>Walat</i> : unlucky/unfortunate <i>Keker</i> : observing something carefully
1903	<i>Padmasusastra</i>	êti, nayardika, wêrit, wilêt, paribawa, thithi <i>êti</i> : character/manners <i>nayardika</i> : happy/joyful <i>wêrit</i> : clever/intelligent <i>wilêt</i> : diligent/persistent <i>paribawa</i> : authoritative/influential <i>thithi</i> : scared/worried
1974	<i>Javanese-English Dictionary</i> (Elinor Clark Horne).	<i>Wingit/singit</i> : "(1) inhabited by spirit ; (2) influential, having a forceful personality ."
1977	<i>Kamus Kawi-Indonesia</i> oleh Wojowasito	<i>wingit</i> : sadness; worried; <i>awingit-wingit</i> : cruel; scary.
1980	<i>Kamus Kawi-Indonesia</i> oleh Wojowasito	<i>Wingit</i> : sadness, distress; uneasy, worried; <i>awingit-wingit</i> : biting, snappish; cruel, hard; frightening.
1992	<i>Kamus Indonesia-Jawa</i> Kuno Mardiwarsito, et.al.	<i>wingit</i> dan <i>awingit</i> : arouse respect.

Within the Javanese cultural context, particularly when discussing sacred places, *wingit* emerges as a significant aspect. As alluded to by Wiryomartono (2016) [7], Javanese society perceives sacred places as imbued with *wingit* qualities. Koentjaraningrat (1994) [8] and Geertz (1960) [9] have emphasized the profound influence of spirituality on Javanese perspectives. This aligns with the notion that cultural contexts shape *wingit* as a concept. This realization opens up another avenue for examining *wingit* from an architectural perspective.

3.3 **The Spatial Dynamics Of Sacredness: Examining Wingit In Javanese Architecture**

Given the architectural focus of this research, the exploration of *wingit* and its connection to sacredness will be conducted through architectural case studies. Waterson's (2010) [2] and Fox's (2006) [10] studies on Austronesian houses demonstrate that the creation of sacred spaces, including within the domestic realm, has been a long-standing practice among Javanese societies, dating back to pre-Hindu and Buddhist periods. During this era, Javanese communities also constructed terraced pyramids known as punden berundak (Tjahjono, et al., 1998) [11]. With the advent of Hinduism and Bud-

dhism, sacred temples or candi emerged (Tjahjono, et al., 1998) [11]. Candi, an architectural adaptation of Indian influences, were designed to provide a transformative spatial experience for visitors as they traversed from the profane to the sacred realm of the temple (Geva & Mukherji, 2007) [12]. Interestingly, mirroring the sacred spaces in Austronesian houses, the inner sanctum of candi tends to be dimly lit (Geva & Mukherji, 2007) [12]. This darkness is believed to "close off" the senses of the pilgrim, allowing them to connect with their inner being (Geva & Mukherji, 2007) [12]. As mentioned earlier, the terms *awingit* and *wingit* appear to have originated during this Hindu-Buddhist period. Whether a connection exists between the perception of *wingit* held by ancient Javanese and the darkness of candi inner sanctums remains unclear, as no studies have specifically addressed this question.

In contrast to Hindu temples, Borobudur, a Buddhist monument, embodies sacredness not through enclosed darkness but rather through tranquility. It is crucial to recall that, as discussed earlier, *wingit* also carries connotations of silence. Borobudur's reliefs are prominently displayed, covering the lower (*kamadhatu*) and middle (*rupadhatu*) sections of the temple. As one ascends towards the summit, representing the *arupadhatu* realm (the upper world), only enclosed stupas containing Buddhas remain, symbolizing the transition from the physical to the non-physical (Siddhartha Gautama's transformation into a Bodhisattva). The journey through the temple signifies that as one approaches a higher level of sacredness, physical form becomes less significant. Silence is reflected through the gradual reduction of visual elements from the base to the top, with the uppermost structure showcasing only a single, large, enclosed stupa. At the summit, the bustling sounds from below become faint, creating a contemplative and serene atmosphere.

Exploring the concept of *wingit*, this research delves into the sacred spaces of Javanese architecture. Studies on candi, such as those by Herwindo (2010) [13] and Herwindo (in Sudrajat, et al., 2018) [14], highlight the spatial sequences that lead from profane to sacred areas. These findings align with Tjahjono's (1989) [1] observations on Javanese houses, suggesting a broader cultural pattern of spatial progression related to sacredness.

The subsequent era witnessed the rise of the Demak Sultanate in the late 15th century, marking the spread of Islam as the dominant faith in Java. It is during this period that the joglo houses we recognize today are believed to have emerged, as there is no representation of joglo houses in Hindu-Buddhist temple carvings. The joglo house features a private realm known as the *ndalem*, which holds not only private but also sacred significance (Tjahjono, 1989 [1]; Mangunwijaya, 2009 [15]; Waterson, 2010 [2]). Within the *ndalem* lies a room called *senthong tengah*, designated for Dewi Sri, the goddess of fertility (Tjahjono, 1988 [1]; Mangunwijaya, 2009 [15], Santosa, 2000 [15]) Mangunwijaya (2009) [15].



Fig. 1. *Senthong tengah*, or the central *senthong*, at the residence of Prince Pakuningratan, Yogyakarta [photograph by the author]

Further asserts that *senthong tengah* represents the most sacred part of the house, highlighting the power of Dewi Sri in Javanese homes. Ju, Kim, and Santosa (2018) posit that the presence of sacred realms in Javanese houses reflects Rassers' (1959) concept of Javanese dualism, where both the profane and the sacred coexist within the Javanese home.

The symbolism of darkness plays a significant role in defining sacred spaces in Javanese culture. From the *candi* to the *senthong tengah*, darkness is consistently associated with the concept of *wingit* (see Fig. 1). It should be noted that, as far as we have been able to discover, Javanese dictionaries and literature pieces do not seem to associate *wingit/awingit* with darkness. Nevertheless, the dark/dim quality of *candi*'s inner sanctum and Javanese house's *senthong tengah* can be linked to the concept of *wingit*, as informants during our initial surveys characterized *senthong tengah* as *wingit*.

Furthermore, the reduction of sound and other sensory elements creates a quiet and contemplative atmosphere, deepening the spiritual connection felt by individuals within the space. This is related to an association of *wingit* with silence as appears in *Panji Jayalengkara Angreni manuscript*. This indicates that *wingit* is not solely about the physical condition of the space but also about the transcendental experience that occurs when one enters the space. In other words, *wingit* is a way in which Javanese architecture elicits profound spiritual experiences through the use of carefully designed spatial elements to manipulate the senses.

Moreover, Javanese culture has a particular way of engaging with life through traditional practices such as *laku* (spiritual journey), *puasa* (fasting), and *semadi* (meditation). These practices are often intertwined with specific sensory experiences, such as the distinctive fragrances of incense, the symbolic attire worn, and deliberate gestures during rituals. All of these elements combine to create an atmosphere that goes beyond just spatial transitions from dark to light or vice versa. The sense of *wingit* emerges

from this holistic configuration—a rich tapestry of sensory, cultural, and spiritual elements that work together to evoke a deep and mystical connection to the space and the divine.

Thus, *wingit* in Javanese architecture is the result of a complex interplay of spatial design, traditional rituals, sensory stimuli, and cultural practices that collectively shape the sacred experience. It is not merely a product of the physical environment but a reflection of the Javanese worldview that blends spirituality with the tangible aspects of life, creating spaces that are imbued with both reverence and awe.

3.4 *Wingit*, Mystery, and The Numinous in Javanese Sacred Spaces

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines mystery as "something not understood or beyond understanding." Mystery appears to be a quality that is "(p)rofound, inexplicable, or secretive quality or character." The word *mystery* originates from the Latin word *mysterium*, meaning "secret religious rites, things not to be divulged." Etymologically, the term mystery carries connotations of secrecy, something obscure or difficult to comprehend, instruments, places, and rituals. Mystery can be associated with both places and rituals.

This section explores the concept of *wingit* and its connection to the creation of a sense of mystery in spaces, particularly those considered sacred. Across various cultures worldwide, sacred spaces are designed to evoke mystery (for instance, the dimly lit and enclosed sanctuaries of pre-modern temples). Carl Gustav Jung (1968) [17] defines mystery as something that "veils itself in images that hint at its true nature." Therefore, mystery can be conveyed through symbolic representations, including architectural elements.

Awingit/wingit shares similarities with the concept of *mysterium tremendum*, which will be discussed further below. However, it can be noted that both *wingit* and *mysterium tremendum* involve an initial sense of fear followed by awe. Some suggest that *wingit* is a characteristic of something shrouded in mystery (Santosa, 2013) [18]. This aligns with one of the definitions of *wingit* found in the 1847 edition of the *Javaansch-Nederduitsch Woordenboek*, which describes it as something extraordinary and possessing a secret.

Rudolf Otto, in his work *Das Heilige* (The Holy), delves into the nature of mystery that evokes fear, reverence, and respect (Otto in Eliade, 1959) [19]. According to Mircea Eliade's interpretation (1959, p. 9) [19], Otto posits that the sacred possesses a power that radiates a form of terror. Yet, this terror simultaneously gives rise to a mystery that elicits awe and reverence, a fear that precedes the emergence of reverence (Eliade, 1959, p. 9) [19]. This is what Otto terms as *mysterium tremendum*. This experience also known as the numinous. When we connect this concept to the definition of *awingit/wingit* as something that evokes reverence, we can discern a profound connection between the concepts of *wingit* and mystery.

The preceding discussion delves into Otto's understanding of religious experience. While Otto's perspective is grounded in theology, he explores the noumenous as a complex non-rational experience arising from the interplay of fear and beauty in encounter-

ing the sacred. In the context of sacred architecture, this non-rational experience manifests as atmosphere, a distinct separation between everyday spaces and sacred spaces. When an individual enters a particular space, their senses perceive the surroundings and capture the atmosphere or ambiance of the place (Mangunwijaya, 2009, p. 20) [15]. Secrecy and mystery, inherent aspects of *wingit*, are embodied in Javanese architecture through the atmosphere of a space, which may be dark or even empty. Examples include the chambers of temples, the *senthong tengah* (central space), or the emptiness at the summit of Borobudur.

Javanese sacred architecture, such as the dimly lit *senthong tengah* and the inner sanctums of *candi*, uses darkness and silence to create a threshold between the mundane and the divine. This atmosphere fosters introspection and an awareness of the unseen, aligning with Otto's *numinous*—an overwhelming encounter with the divine that is both awe-inspiring and fearsome. In this way, architectural spaces do not just function as physical enclosures but as catalysts for profound spiritual experiences that resonate deeply with the concept of *wingit*.

3.5 *Wingit* and Its Relation to Place

Further example of sacredness in Javanese culture manifests in the form of sacred dance, the *Bedhaya Ketawang*. The performance of the dance is exclusively conducted at the royal court of Kasunanan in Surakarta. In her examination of the *Bedhaya Ketawang* dance, which is considered to possess *wingit* character, Brakel-Papenhuijzen (2023) [4] describes *wingit* in relation to the dance as an awe-inspiring and sublime quality of power. This sacred dance is performed at specific times and during special moments, namely during the king's coronation and the annual celebration of the occasion. She also mentions that the accompanying song (*Gadhung Mlati*) possesses vocal and lyrical qualities that can serve as a protective mantra in *wingit* places (Brakel-Papenhuijzen, 2023) [4]. The melody of the music which accompanies the dance, and therefore a part of the whole performance, induces the character of *wingit*. The lyrics of *Gadhung Mlati* includes incantation. This incantation was also conceived to be recited when a person found himself/herself at places considered as *wingit* (Brakel-Papenhuijzen, 2023) [4]. Examples of *wingit* places are the ocean and the forest⁵. Although the ocean and forest are considered as inhabitat by powerful spiritual entities, it does not mean that this places are a frightening. Rather, it is respect and awe that are expected from someone who visits such places. Therefore, *wingit* in the context of place refers to locations that possess a spiritual quality, transcending mere physical spaces like haunted graveyards or empty houses.

In Southeast Asian cultures, the concept of a vital force or spirit pervading and animating the universe is prevalent. This concept is often referred to by various terms like

⁵ The ocean itself appears as a significant setting in Javanese texts, serving as the backdrop for Dewa Ruci (Bima) on his quest for the water of life (Adiyanto, 2009). This story of Dewa Ruci is an allegory for the pinnacle of Javanese mysticism (*manunggaling kawula gusti*). The second *wingit* place is the forest, which frequently serves as the setting for stories in Javanese shadow puppetry. Forests are depicted as places inhabited by *dedemit*, spirits (Geertz, 1960), imbuing them with an inherent spiritual power.

'spirit,' 'soul essence,' 'essence,' 'vital force,' or 'cosmic energy.' (Waterson, 2010) [2]. This concept of vital force is found across many Nusantara cultures. Waterson cites Benedict Anderson's work, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture" (1972), in discussing this concept. Western scholars often employ the term 'animism' to describe this perspective. This force is not confined to living beings but also encompasses inanimate objects: plants, animals, humans, mountains, rocks, heirlooms, textiles, and even houses (Waterson, 2010, p. 115). Thus, from a Javanese perspective, houses (or buildings in general) are not detached from nature. Similar to the ocean and forests, *wingit* is associated with sacred spaces in Javanese homes (and other sacred places). Therefore, a form of mimicry is at play here. When humans (in the Javanese context) create sacred spaces architecturally, they attempt to embody the *wingit* they have encountered in nature.

In Javanese culture, *wingit* represents a sublime and awe-inspiring quality associated with sacred performances like the Bedhaya Ketawang dance and specific natural locations such as oceans and forests. This concept reflects a broader Southeast Asian belief in a vital force or cosmic energy animating both living beings and inanimate objects. Sacred spaces in Javanese architecture, including homes and other buildings, aim to embody this *wingit* quality, mimicking the transcendent essence found in nature.

3.6 *Wingit* As an Integral Aspect of Javanese Aesthetics

As previously discussed, a connection exists between *wingit* and sacred spaces. Parallels can be drawn between the concept of *wingit* and its associated phenomena and the concepts of the sacred proposed by Eliade (1959) [19]. However, if we connect *wingit* to Eliade's concept of the sacred (1959) [19], particularly hierophany (manifestation of the divine), it becomes apparent that *wingit* itself is not a hierophany. Rather, *wingit* is a quality that coexists with hierophany. Both *wingit* and hierophany are interrelated concepts. Eliade's hierophany can manifest in various forms, such as the darkened atmosphere of the inner sanctum of a temple or shrine, the voice of Gabriel heard by Prophet Muhammad in the Cave of Hira, the burning bush encountered by Prophet Moses, and so on. Hierophany can take the form of places, objects, or events. In contrast, when a Javanese individual refers to a place or object as *wingit*, they are alluding to the quality they perceive in that place or object. Therefore, *wingit* should be viewed as a quality evoked by hierophany. *Wingit* more closely aligns with Rudolf Otto's concept of the numinous experience, an experience that is both awe-inspiring and terrifying, full of reverence and mystery (Eliade, pp. 8-10) [19]. The numinous experience encompasses a complexity and contradiction that is perceived as sublime.

While *wingit* is perceived to a certain extent as a quality or characteristic, a comprehensive examination of the elements that shape this *wingit* quality has yet to be undertaken. The proposition of our research is that the phenomenon of *wingit* is not merely an ominous or eerie quality or characteristic. We propose that *wingit* can be conceptualized and analyzed as an aesthetic category⁶.

⁶ Aesthetics is a discipline that delves into the nature of beauty and our experiences of it. According to Merriam-Webster (merriam-webster.com), the term "aesthetics" stems from the Greek word "aisthetikos" (related to sensory perception), which itself derives from the Greek word "aisthetos" (perceivable by the

In his exploration of *mysterium tremendum* and the noumenous experience, Rudolf Otto appears to draw inspiration from Immanuel Kant's concept of the sublime (*das Erhabene*). Kant's notion of the sublime is deeply rooted in aesthetics. In the Western context, aesthetics is examined and discussed from a theoretical perspective. Theory holds a crucial, even central, position in aesthetic discourse (Weitz, 1960, p. 145) [20]. Since Plato's conception of art as appearance (appearance) and Aristotle's view of art as imitation (Weitz, 1960, pp. 5-24) [20], aesthetics has been a subject of philosophical discourse in the West. It is within this context that philosopher Immanuel Kant delves into the nature of art judgment.

While we do not claim that *wingit* is an exact replica of the sublime as defined by Kant, there are notable parallels between the two concepts: both involve a sense of fear that simultaneously evokes awe, reverence, and admiration. Therefore, we will briefly discuss Kant's notion of the sublime and then explore the congruences between *wingit* and the sublime.

3.7 Kant's Sublime (*Das Erhabene*)

According to Kant (1914, p. 102) [21], the sublime can be found in formless objects. Sublime objects evoke a sense of beauty, but this feeling is not derived directly from the art object itself. The experience of sublimity arises from the atmosphere or aura associated with an object (Kant, 1914, p. 102) [21]. We experience sublimity when we encounter something that surpasses our imagination, transcends our sensory faculties, and simultaneously prompts our reason to go beyond the imaginative and sensory realms (Kant, 1914, pp. 119-123) [21].

Kant (1914, p. 124) [21] asserts that the sublime also encompasses an element of fear. Consider the sight of massive waves crashing towards us; we perceive beauty, grandeur, and terror simultaneously. To illustrate our experience of the sublime, Kant (1914, p. 124) [21] provides the example of human submission (out of fear) to God without perceiving God as terrifying. In that moment, the human experiences God's sublimity. Kant (1914, p. 129) [21] argues that the sublime is not inherent in nature but resides within our minds. While an object we perceive as sublime leaves a powerful and awe-inspiring impression, it is our thoughts and reason that judge the object and enable us to appreciate its sublime qualities (Kant, 1914, p. 129) [21].

While *wingit* and the experience of *wingit* do not directly mirror the sublime phenomenon as described by Kant, there appears to be a resonance between the two concepts. The multifaceted nature of *wingit*, encompassing awe, reverence, silence, bears

senses). As we know it today, aesthetics traces its roots to the philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. In his work, *Aesthetica* (1758), Baumgarten defined aesthetics as "the systematic knowledge of sensory cognition." In other words, Baumgarten framed aesthetics as the science of perception (Binkley, 1978, p. 28). Baumgarten's definition not only highlights aesthetics as a systematic field but also emphasizes an individual's experience of something (e.g., a work of art). The field of aesthetics as we know it today is predominantly rooted in Western thought. However, the proposed research topic ventures beyond the Western context. Therefore, it is crucial to distinguish between Western and Eastern aesthetic concepts to gain clarity and establish a framework for the research.

resemblance to the sublime experience. However, there are also distinctions, as silence and sadness are not inherent to the sublime.

Drawing upon the parallels (or similarities) between *wingit* and the sublime, it can be concluded that *wingit* can be discussed and examined as an aesthetic concept. Considering that *wingit* seems to be exclusively applicable to sacred places, the concept of *wingit* can be employed to elucidate specific aesthetic aspects that emerge in sacred spaces. Ultimately, the character or quality evoked by an architectural work is an aesthetic one (Mangunwijaya, 2009) [15].

4 Conclusions and Sugestions

Based on the aforementioned definition of *wingit*, there is potential to explore *wingit* as an aesthetic category that shapes spatial experiences. This aligns with Kant's notion of the sublime. Drawing from dictionary definitions and literary works, we observe that the word *wingit* carries various meanings: sadness, reverence, awe, and silence. These attributes are almost exclusively associated with sacred contexts. At first glance, sadness, silence, and reverence may seem unrelated. However, the multifaceted nature of *wingit*, encompassing horror, sadness, silence, awe, and admiration, demonstrates a resonance with Kant's concept of the sublime (albeit with a distinction: sadness is not an element of Kant's sublime).

Wingit is, therefore a concept. It is a concept that carries multiple yet related meanings. It describes a quality associated with certain places. As such, there is a spatial aspect to the concept of *wingit*. *Wingit* can only be sensed spatially. However, for *wingit* to be sensed it requires a complete sensorial experience which includes the aspects of light/darkness as well as other visual qualities, audio, and olfactory.

If *wingit* is viewed as an aesthetic category, it can be linked to the nouminous experience, which Otto associates with the sacred. Furthermore, *wingit* holds potential for discussion as a concept that shapes the perception of sacred spaces among Javanese society. Thus, examining *wingit* as a thought concept related to aesthetics can enrich the study of sacred architecture within the Javanese context.

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