





### The Crime of Theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra: Perspective of the Purpose of Punishment

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wisdom.

**Abstract:** This research aims to examine the concept of punishment for the crime of theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra from the perspective of the purpose of punishment, as well as to examine its relevance to the modern criminal law system in Indonesia. This research uses descriptive-analytical method with normative juridical approach and supported by empirical juridical approach. Data is obtained through literature study of laws and regulations and legal literature which is analysed qualitatively. The results showed that in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra, theft is seen not only as a violation of the law, but also a moral and social violation that disturbs the balance of society. The sanctions applied include limb amputation, forced labour, death penalty, as well as restitution or compensation to the victim. Punishment was proportionate based on the value of the goods, the social status of the perpetrator and victim, and the context of the theft. This system of punishment reflects a combination of retributive, preventive and restorative goals, although it is laden with caste-based social hierarchies. The conclusion of this research shows that despite differences in paradigms and values, some of the principles in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra such as the importance of restoring victims' losses, the role of morality, and the community approach to punishment are still relevant in the modern legal context. These values can enrich the national criminal law system, especially in the development of restorative justice that is more humanistic and rooted in local

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### Introduction

Criminal law and the punishment system have been an integral part of the rule of law in Indonesia since the past (Parindo et al. 2024). Throughout its development, this concept has led to various different views, not only in Indonesia, but also in various other countries. This has triggered a debate between those who support (pro) and those who reject (con) the effectiveness and justice of punishment as a means of law enforcement. One example of a criminal offence that is often in the spotlight is theft(R, Triana, and Afrita 2024). In criminal law, theft is defined as the act of taking another person's property unlawfully, which results in the deprivation of a legal interest, namely the transfer of property rights without the legitimate consent of the owner (Utami, Tanjung, et al. 2025).

The offence of theft in Indonesia is regulated in Article 362 of the Criminal Code, which states that anyone who takes property belonging to another person with the intention of unlawfully possessing it is liable to imprisonment. In addition, the discussion on crime and punishment continues to develop along with the emergence of new approaches in legal theory, such as restorative justice, which offers an alternative to resolving criminal cases by

emphasising the restoration of relationships between perpetrators, victims, and society, rather than solely retaliation or deterrence(Hasaki, Sudjiarto, and Pandiangan 2024).

Theft, which is also defined as a conventional and frequent form of crime in the history of mankind(Bangga and Sinaga 2025), since humans began to live in groups and recognise the concept of ownership, which is characterised by the need to protect property from unlawful taking by others. In many civilisations, theft has been viewed not only as a violation of property rights, but also as a disruption of social order and collective morality. That is why almost all legal systems in the world, both modern and traditional, have rules and sanctions that regulate and take action against the perpetrators of theft(Wuwungan, Soepeno, and Rompas 2024).

Even in customary laws that have developed over generations in various local communities, theft is often sanctioned not only legally, but also socially and spiritually, such as ostracisation, customary fines, and rituals of moral (Manuk, Pello, and Medan 2024). In the context of modern criminal law, theft is often classified in various forms, ranging from ordinary theft to aggravated theft, depending on the modus operandi, the value of the stolen goods, and the impact on the victim (Putri, Hapsari, and Wardana 2023). As technology evolves, forms of theft are transformed, such as digital identity theft or personal data hacking, demonstrating that the essence of these crimes remains intact even as the medium and means change (Rizki Kurniarullah et al. 2024).

The offence of theft is formally regulated in the Criminal Code, which largely refers to the Continental European legal system as a Dutch colonial legacy. The current Criminal Code is an adoption of the Wetboek van Strafrecht voor Nederlandsch-Indie, which although it has undergone some adjustments, its substance still reflects the style of Dutch criminal law. This law is written and rationalistic, with an emphasis on the principle of legality and systematic legal procedures.

However, long before the advent of these modern legal systems, the existing legal systems in the Archipelago had recognised various forms of traditional and religious laws that regulated the social life of the community, including in terms of crimes and sanctions. Customary law, for example, has long been a regulatory instrument in local communities throughout Indonesia. It lives and develops dynamically in accordance with local values and social norms, and is unwritten but widely adhered to due to its moral and cultural legitimacy(Sugiarto and Purwanto 2024). In customary law, offences are often resolved through deliberation, customary fines or social sanctions aimed at maintaining community harmony, rather than simply punishing individual offenders(Abbas et al. 2025).

One of the traditional sources of law that has had a great influence on the practice of legal thinking in the past is the Kutaramanawadharmasastra. This book is part of the Dharmasastra, which is a collection of religious legal texts in the Hindu tradition that developed in South Asia and influenced Southeast Asia, including the archipelago. Kutaramanawadharmasastra, not only contains moral and spiritual teachings, but also contains binding legal rules in social life, such as the division of castes, social duties, criminal law, civil law, and dispute resolution procedures. The context of crimes such as theft is also regulated in this book by regulating the types of punishment that are not only physical but also symbolic, by adjusting the social structure and morality prevailing at that time.

Although Indonesia's current legal system is a blend of customary law, religious law and Dutch-derived legal systems, along with independence in 1945, Indonesia endeavoured to develop its own legal system by adapting local values and universal principles. As such, the current legal system is influenced by various historical factors, including the legacy of the laws that prevailed during the Majahapahit Kingdom in the 14th century, which contained 271 articles covering criminal and civil law, but with the main emphasis remaining on criminal law. This law regulates various aspects of people's lives, from buying and selling to environmental regulation, and affirms the principle of equality before the law without distinction of social status, and although the roots of Indonesian law and legal system can be traced back to the Majapahit era, later developments have brought the Indonesian legal system to a more modern form and integrated with universal values. But still, the legal system certainly has an important component that can have a major influence on life in society, namely law enforcement, because basically effective law enforcement must be able to involve the substance of law, legal structure and community culture(Rauf, Rahman, and Razak 2024).

Such as research conducted by Utami, Putri, Fajriani, Eliska, Muldiyanti and Saharaji, which states that Majapahit's hierarchical and centralised legal structure confirms the dominance of the king's power as the highest source of law. This is in stark contrast to the pluralistic and decentralised legal system of modern Indonesia, where various sources of law such as national law, customary law, and Islamic law are recognised. Therefore, this pluralistic legal system is able to create complex dynamics in law enforcement, because the Indonesian legal system must be able to accommodate the diversity of norms and values that live in society. This difference shows the need for reform in the Indonesian legal sanction system to better reflect the values of social justice(Utami et al. 2024).

As such, Indonesia's criminal law system has very complex roots, consisting of colonial legal legacies, customary legal practices, as well as religious laws such as Hinduism and Islam. All three, in various contexts, are still influential in the way people understand justice and law enforcement, both formally and informally.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an understanding and contribution to the development of the Indonesian legal system, especially in the Crime of Theft by analysing the punishment process in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra. And help readers to better understand how the criminalisation process in the Crime of Theft in the 14th century, namely the Glorious Period of the Majapahit Kingdom.

### Methodology

This research is a descriptive-analytical research, which aims to describe and analyse in depth the crime of theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra, in terms of the perspective of the purpose of punishment. The approach used in this research is also a normative juridical approach as the main approach, which relies on relevant laws and regulations related to the research discussed. This approach is also supported by an empirical juridical approach which aims to obtain a factual picture of the punishment process in the criminal offence of theft committed in accordance with the Kutaramanawadharmasastra Book. The type of data used includes secondary data as the main source, which is obtained through a literature study of laws and regulations, and legal literature which is analysed qualitatively with a descriptive approach, namely by describing and interpreting data based on the legal

context and empirical facts found, to then be presented systematically in the form of indepth and structured descriptions.

### **Result and Discussion**

## 1. The concept of punishment in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra against the perpetrator of theft

The Kitab Kutaramanawadharmasastra, which is one of the texts that became a reference for the legal system of the past, and has an influence in the legal tradition that contains the rules of criminal and civil law, but tends to favour criminal law. This book is not just a collection of regulations, but a reflection of the moral values, social norms, and ethical guidelines that prevailed in the life of the people during the Majapahit Kingdom. The Kutaramanawadharmasastra regulates various aspects of life, including individual obligations towards others, rules on ownership, and types of offences that can disrupt social balance.

The crime of theft, in the view of Kutaramanawadharmasastra law, is considered a serious offence against property rights and social justice. The act of theft is not just the taking of goods without permission, but furthermore, it is considered a form of moral offence that destroys harmony in society. In ancient societies where the principles of order and the sanctity of law were highly valued, theft was seen as an act that threatened collective stability and fuelled distrust among members of the community.

Moreover, the Kutaramanawadharmasastra's theft not only includes the physical taking of another person's property, but also includes various forms of offences against the property rights of others, such as fraud, embezzlement, and unauthorised use of another person's goods or resources. For this reason, the Kutaramanawadharmasastra's definition of theft is far more comprehensive than the modern definition, which is often limited to the unauthorised taking of another's property.

In the context of ancient law as described in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra, justice was enforced not only to protect the individual, but also to maintain the harmony of society as a whole. Theft, in whatever form, was seen as a denial of the basic principles of dharma (duty and righteousness) that underpinned the social and religious life of the community at that time. Therefore, strict regulation of theft was integral to maintaining morality, social integrity and public order in society.

Sanctions for theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra legal system varied depending on the severity of the offence and the intent of the perpetrator. One of the most recognised forms of punishment is the cutting off of hands. If an individual was caught stealing, the offender's hand could be cut off as punishment(Elza Dwi Putri 2025). This punishment is designed to have a deterrent effect, where the offender will lose the ability to commit theft in the future. In addition to hand cutting, there are also other forms of corporal punishment that include cutting off other limbs. These punishments serve the same purpose, which is to punish the offender as well as provide a strong deterrent effect so as not to repeat the act. For cases of particularly grave theft, such as violent theft or theft that causes great damage to society or individuals, the death penalty may be imposed. The death penalty was an extreme

form of punishment, reflecting how seriously the legal system of Kutaramana Wadharmasastra took theft cases (Nugroho and Amsori 2024). In addition to corporal punishment, there were also penalties in the form of payment of compensation or fines. As an alternative or in addition to corporal punishment, offenders were often required to return the stolen goods or pay a sum of money as compensation for the loss caused to the victim. The payment of compensation or fine aims to restore balance and justice for the victim of the theft by restoring the situation to its original condition before the theft occurred. The value of this compensation is usually determined based on the value of the stolen goods. In some cases, the offender may be required to pay more than the value of the stolen goods as an additional form of punishment aimed at providing a deterrent effect and upholding the principles of justice(Abdillah and Huda 2024). The fine is also intended as an economic sanction that serves as a deterrent to prevent the offender from repeating similar acts in the future. The purpose of applying this sanction is not only to provide a deterrent effect, but also to restore the social order that has been disrupted due to the offence(Bahri 2024).

Punishment in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra is also not uniform, but rather tailored to the various factors surrounding the offence of theft, which are identified in factors including the value of the stolen goods, the time of the theft (e.g. whether it occurred at night), the place of the theft (whether in a private home or a sacred place), and the social status of both the perpetrator and the victim. Punishments for theft varied from fines payable in gold or silver, to harsh physical punishments such as limb amputation, forced labour, or even the death penalty in certain severe cases - for example, violent or repeated thefts. Behind the strictness, it appears that this law contains retributive as well as preventive elements, where the punishment system in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra, reflects a hierarchical social structure, characterised by caste status which determines the severity of the punishment given.

In addition to punishing the perpetrator, the law in this kutaramanawadharmasastra also emphasises the importance of compensation given to the victim. The perpetrator of theft is required not only to return the stolen goods, but also to pay compensation that exceeds the value of the goods. Thus, reparation for the victim's loss becomes an integral part of the punishment system. Overall, the Kutaramanawadharmasastra also presents a complex and structured concept of punishment in dealing with theft, combining elements of retribution, deterrence, and restoration within the framework of the prevailing social and religious norms of the time.

Therefore, perpetrators of theft are subject to severe punishment, which not only aims to provide a deterrent effect, but also to restore the social balance disturbed by the act. The type of punishment imposed depends on various factors, such as the form and value of the stolen goods, the social status of the perpetrator, and the amount of loss caused to the victim(Tarigan, Sahari, and Sigalingging 2024). Punishment for theft can also take the form of physical sanctions such as cutting off limbs - for example, hands - as a symbolic form of disenfranchisement for actions that harm others. However, in addition to physical sanctions, this legal system also

recognises the concept of restitution or Manusmriti, which is the reimbursement of losses to victims, either in the form of returning stolen goods or paying fines. This principle of restitution reflects an attempt to restore the victim to their former condition, a concept that is also recognised in many modern legal systems.

Nonetheless, the legal system in Manusmriti contains an element of discrimination as the application of punishment is not completely equal across all walks of life. Punishments were often dependent on the caste or varna of the offender and victim, meaning that a person from a lower caste would receive a much harsher punishment than someone from an upper caste for the same offence. This shows the inequality in the implementation of legal justice at that time, which favoured the preservation of social hierarchy rather than universal principles of justice.

The regulation of the offence of theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra also reflects the views of society and the legal system in the past, which focused on social order, morality and justice based on caste structures and dharmic (moral) obligations. Laws of the time were not only repressive, but also normative and religious, where breaking the law was often considered an offence against sacred values. Theft, for example, was not only seen as a violation of property rights, but also as a violation of cosmic and social harmony.

However, despite its deep historical and philosophical value, the relevance of this regulation to the crime of theft today needs to be analysed by considering the different social, legal and ethical contexts prevailing in modern society. Modern legal systems emphasise the principles of formal justice, protection of human rights, equality before the law, and the separation between legal norms and religious or moral norms(Junaedi 2025). Therefore, although the Kutaramanawadharmasastra has value as a legal and cultural heritage, its application in the context of current positive law must be adjusted so as not to conflict with the principles of democracy, pluralism, and the constitutional rights of citizens.

# 2. The Relevance of the Regulation of the Crime of Theft from the Perspective of the Kutaramanawadharmasastra in Relation to the Modern Legal System

In the context of the modern legal system, especially in Indonesia, the regulation of the crime of theft contained in the Criminal Code, which provides criminal sanctions of imprisonment or fines to the perpetrators of theft. Although the Criminal Code emphasises legalistic aspects and formal justice(Sahrir, Rasyid, and Putra 2024), there are common points with the Kutaramanawadharmasastra in terms of protecting property rights and upholding social order. However, modern legal systems tend to ignore the moral and spiritual aspects that are at the core of these traditional legal codes(Manurung and Lubis 2025).

The relevance of the Kutaramanawadharmasastra to today's modern legal system lies in its ability to provide a more holistic approach to law enforcement(Utami, Zahra, et al. 2025). It offers normative and ethical perspectives that can strengthen the value of substantive justice, i.e. justice that considers the background, motives, and social conditions of both perpetrators and victims. In modern judicial practice, these principles can be actualised through the application of restorative justice, which focuses on restoring relationships between perpetrators,

victims and the community. Although derived from ancient legal traditions, the regulation of the crime of theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra still has relevant value in supporting the reform of criminal law that is more just, personalised, and reflects local wisdom. The integration of such traditional legal values into the national legal system can be a strategic step in building a criminal justice system that not only punishes, but also educates and restores.

In addition to the fundamental differences in the form and implementation of sanctions, the relevance of the regulation of the crime of theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra also needs to be examined from the point of view of legal philosophy, the development of civilisation, and the transformation of social values. Analysis of this can be done through three main components, among others:

First, in the context of legal philosophy, the Kutaramanawadharmasastra reflects a theocentric and hierarchical legal paradigm. In this paradigm, law is seen as a manifestation of divine will and is enforced by a strict social structure. This is certainly different from the modern legal system which emphasises the principles of rationality, contractualism and equality before the law.

Secondly, there has been a significant shift in social values between the past and the present, which has led to a change in the way society views crime and criminals. Whereas in the past theft was better understood as a violation of the social order or hierarchy of power, in the modern system, theft is seen as a violation of individual rights, particularly the rights to property and security. Therefore, the legal approach in the modern system is more orientated towards the protection of victims, justice for perpetrators, and the restoration of social balance through restorative justice mechanisms.

Third, the modern legal system operates within the framework of the rule of law (rechtsstaat) which emphasises the protection of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination. In this context, the provisions in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra that differentiate punishments based on caste or social status are contrary to the principles of substantive and procedural justice, which are the cornerstones of modern law.

However, the historical relevance and educational value of the Kutaramanawadharmasastra still plays an important role in the Indonesian legal system, especially as a reflection of the development of legal awareness and public morals in the past. Concepts such as the obligation to compensate, the importance of individual morality, and the role of family and community in preventing crime, can be adapted in the context of legal guidance and legal education in today's society. In addition, the Kutaramanawadharmasastra also reflects the early efforts of traditional societies to create a balance between retributive and restorative justice, which is now coming back into the spotlight in modern legal discourse. Values such as deliberation, contextualised justice and respect for social harmony show that traditional legal systems are not entirely rigid or repressive, but have a humanistic dimension that should be considered. Thus, the analysis of the relevance of the regulation of the crime of theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra not only shows

normative differences, but also opens space for critical reflection on how traditional values can be selectively integrated into a more inclusive and equitable modern legal system.

### Conclusion

The Kutaramanawadharmasastra is a profound reflection of a past legal system that not only regulates social behaviour, but also reflects the moral and spiritual values of past societies, particularly in the context of the Majapahit Kingdom. In this book, the crime of theft is seen as a serious offence that not only harms individuals, but also disrupts social and cosmic harmony. Therefore, the sanctions imposed on perpetrators of theft are strict, ranging from limb dismemberment to the death penalty, adjusted to the severity of the offence and the social condition of the perpetrator. On the other hand, the Kutaramanawadharmasastra also contains the concept of restitution, which is the reimbursement of losses to victims, as a form of recovery for the social disruption caused. Although the legal system contains religious values and a discriminatory social hierarchy, especially in the different treatment of offenders based on caste, the substance of the law that emphasises remedies, deterrent effects, and protection of property rights still has relevance in the modern legal framework. In contemporary legal systems such as in Indonesia, although the legal approach emphasises formal justice, legalism and respect for human rights, there are common points with the Kutaramanawadharmasastra in terms of the importance of maintaining social order and restoring the condition of victims. The values contained in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra, such as the obligation to compensate, the importance of individual moral ethics, and the role of society in preventing crime, can still be selectively adopted in the modern legal system, especially within the framework of restorative justice. This approach places the restoration of relations between the offender, victim and society as the top priority, rather than merely imposing punishment. Thus, although philosophically and structurally different, the regulation of the crime of theft in the Kutaramanawadharmasastra still has historical, educative and normative values that can be used as material for critical reflection in the reform of national criminal law that is more contextual, personalised and socially just. The integration of elements of local legal traditions such as this not only enriches the Indonesian legal system, but also shows that the legal wisdom of the past can still make a meaningful contribution in answering today's legal challenges.

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