

# BATIK AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN ART AND DESIGN

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## ABSTRACT

The art of batik in Indonesia has unique, aesthetic, and various decorative motifs. Its application can be found in the decorations of temples which become inspiration for the development of decorative motifs in clothing materials. Batik is later developed by not only being applied to fabric. The beauty of decorative motif inspires artists and designers to apply it in the field of art and design with a new alternative media, both by written batik technique and by other techniques. It shows that batik can remain sustainable until now to answer the needs of today's society.

**Keywords:** batik, art, design

## 1. Introduction

Batik is a national cultural asset of Indonesian that is rich with a variety of decorative motifs that are growing. On October 2, 2009, Indonesian batik gained recognition as UNESCO's world cultural heritage, which was then followed by the Indonesian government setting every October 2 as National Batik Day. Technique, technology, and decorative motifs of batik in Indonesia are set as masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

Batik is a piece of *wastra*, which is a piece of cloth that is made traditionally with certain decorative motifs of batik. The making uses a resist dyeing technique with batik wax as the color barrier material (Doellah, 2002:10). The wax to cover batik patterns on cloth is used so that color seepage from another color does not happen. Etymologically, batik has a meaning of the suffix

"*tik*", which in the Javanese language it is called "*mbatik*". It is derived from the word drip or trickle, also called "writing" or writing with wax. "*Mbatik*" is writing or drawing in a complex (small) way (Kuswadji, 1981:2).

The technique of making batik is from the preparation process to the making process of batik. The preparation process includes (1) washing (*nggira/ngetel*) mori fabric to be ready made as batik, (2) starching (*nganji*), and ironing, *kalendering* (*ngemplong*). Meanwhile, the making process of batik covers (1) adhering batik wax on fabric to create a motif, (2) dyeing batik (dipping, dabbing, painting, printing), and (3) removing the wax from the cloth (Susanto, 1980). The making techniques of batik motifs are various, among others by using *canting* called written batik, using the copper block called batik stamp, using a brush called batik painting, using a printing machine

called batik printing, and using an embroidery machine called batik embroidery.

Currently decorative motifs and their techniques are growing, making the term batik increasingly unlimited. The media is also growing not only on the fabrics. The decorative motif can also be applied in a variety of media, both with written batik technique, stamp, or painting. Initially, the beauty of batik was only enjoyed through a piece of cloth, then it was developed into other media such as wood, ceramics, glass, and so on, even with digital printing for specific purposes. Various attempts were made by the society by applying decorative motifs of batik on the product design to enhance the aesthetic beauty of its form. This application shows that the decorative motifs of batik can be applied widely in various fields in accordance with the needs of today's society, especially being applied to the functional and aesthetic products.

Development of applied batik techniques and media then becomes a new idea in the field of art and design. Through precise placement, composition of batik motifs can improve the aesthetic value and provide special features that promote local content in the present design. This means that batik can provide knowledge about the preservation of ancestral heritage so that it still exists to answer the needs of today's society.

## 2. Decorative Motif of Batik on Reliefs of Temple

Textile trade relationship has long existed between the Javanese, and India, China and later Europe. In the early 19th century, the Javanese were not familiar with the manufacture of fine fabrics like in India, China, and Western Europe, so as to obtain fine cloth, they imported from India and Europe (Raffles, 2008). At that time, the making of cloth made by the Javanese still used cotton material, so the result was still rough, and the loom (*ngantih*) used was still very simple, namely using *jantra*. For this reason, many mori materials for batik were imported from Europe, such as Mori Prima and Mori Primiissima called

"Cap Sen" which had a refined quality. The Javanese at that time could just produce rough quality materials, namely Mori Blue and Blaco (Susanto, 1980).

In the early of 19th century, the making of fine batik cloth generally used Mori Primiissima (main quality) and Mori Prima (second quality). In addition, the use of wax made of the tree sap material (paraffin) from Palembang and the beehive, as well as the natural color from the *nila werdi* and *soga jambal* materials were very dominant in the process of making batik cloth. Decorative motifs implemented in the beginning of the 19th century were already highly developed, refined, and beautiful. Several statues in Prambanan and Penataran temples use cloth decorated with *ceplok* motif that can be seen up to now. The habit of using *ceplok* motif has been used as an element of temple decoration since long time ago (Raffles, 2008).



Image 1. *Ceplok* motif at Borobudur temple in Central Java (Photo: Laksmi, 2009).

Variety of decorative motifs applied to the temple in the past possibly inspired the creation of a variety of decorative motifs on fabrics in various regions in Indonesia. Many temple decorations in *ceplok*, meander, swastika, *tumpal*, guirlande, tendrils, and double gyre become a source of inspiration for the creation of traditional batik motifs arranged in a unique, aesthetic, and varied way. The application of decoration on the traditional batik fabric generally has a meaning

associated with the indigenous way of life and traditions of the Javanese community.



Image 2. Tendrils motif and *tumpal* motif at Penataran Temple, East Java (Photo: Laksmi, 2011).



Image 3. Fauna (birds) decoration at Penataran temple. Creeper leaves and birds decorations symbolize the people's belief regarding the harmonization of the relationship between the upper world and the underworld, the harmony between the immanent and the transcendent (Photo: Laksmi, 2011).



Image 4. Fauna (dragon) decoration at Penataran temple (Photo: Laksmi, 2011).



Image 5. Fauna (eagle) decoration at Penataran temple (Photo: Laksmi, 2011).

In the 5th century until the 6th century, both India and China were very strong areas as the manufacturer and marketer of textile products. In those centuries, the Chinese people came and lived on the north coast of Java to trade (Roojen, 1993). The relation and trade contacts with India and China were a meeting between cultures that could not be avoided. In the 9th century, the Javanese were familiar with *kèn*, meaning fabric (Haryono, 2008).

In East Java, the arrival of foreign traders took advantage of the strategic functions of several ports namely Kambang Putih (Tuban), Pajajaran, Gresik, Hujung Galuh (Surabaya), and Canggü (Mojokerto). Traders from Gujarat carried textiles such as cotton and silk to Java. Besides trading, they also brought the teachings of Hinduism. To make people buy their goods, Indian traders taught how to decorate a fabric by using batik technique (Anshori and Adi Kusrianto, 2011:4). The influence of Hindu culture from India lasted for centuries and reached its peak in the 15th century, namely during the reign of Majapahit in East Java. Nevertheless, the aesthetic expression of the decorative motif clearly shows the excellence of local genius. It can be seen from the emergence of puppet forms portrayed realistically in the wall of temples in East Java (Roojen, 1993).

Some of decorative motifs in the batik fabric are also found as a wall decoration or fashion decoration of god statues in temples. The temples in Central Java, East Java, and Bali feature a variety of decorative motif, as also found in batik cloth, for example, slash (*parang*), the pattern of the rug (*ceplok*), and stylized plants (*semen*) motifs. Behind the decorative forms, it is implied religious magic that is associated with fertility.



Image 6. Relief at Penataran Temple depicting human figures using long cloth with batik motif (Photo: Laksmi, 2011).

In the later developments, the influence of Islam was enriching arts and culture more, with the shape, composition, and style of art that were unique and distinctive. Stylized forms of herbs, flowers and geometric elements become an important part of the decorative motifs of batik cloth. The depiction of such motifs is precisely the right media at the beginning of the Islamic era in Java, which at that time gained the widest opportunity to develop decorating means of daily needs. During the early development of Islam in Java, decorative plants tended to be more developed because it was considered inline the most with the rules of Islamic art that forbids the depiction of living beings.

### 3. Ornamental Variety Batik

The development of the art in Java since prehistoric times to the present has always been colored by the presence of decorative arts, both as a decorative element as well as an aesthetic expression through certain symbols. Decorative batik has a very distinctive feature, it is very valuable as a cultural heritage, and it has an important role for the formation of the image of Indonesian culture. The existence of various forms of decoration is influenced by the geographical location, the nature and structure of local life, beliefs, customs, the surrounding environment, and contact or relations with other regions (Djoemena, 1990:8)

Based on the development of batik in Java, batik pattern can be divided into three main elements, namely (1) the main decorative motif

(*klowongan*), (2) *isen-isen*, and (3) decorative motif as filler. The main decorative motif (*klowongan*) is a form of decoration that becomes the main element of batik patterns; *isen-isen* pattern is a decoration to fill in parts of the main decoration while decorative motif as filler is a decoration placed on the background pattern as a balance to the field so that the overall pattern looks harmonious. In various ways and various decorative motif arrangements, *isen* has the possibility to function as a decorative motif filler. *Wastra* batik motif consists of decorations arranged in a united patterned design. Traditionally, decorative motifs of batik are varied in kinds. To recognize easily, batik patterns can be grouped based on the shape and style (Doellah, 2002:19-20).

Based on the form or the visual character, the batik pattern can be divided into two namely the geometry patterns and non-geometry patterns. Decorative motifs which belong to the general geometry patterns are decorative motifs that contain elements such as lines and structures like slash, square, rectangular, trapezoid, rhombus, parallelogram, circle, and star, and they are arranged repetitively so that they consists of *ceplok* pattern or *ceplokan* or slash pattern (slope). Non-geometry patterns are divided into four groups, namely *semen*, *lung-lungan*, *buketan*, and *pinggiran* patterns. The *semen* pattern is included as ancient pattern, especially pattern containing decorations like eagle, *sawat*, *mirong*, or *lar*, which are the result of stylized decorative motifs of eagle, an animal which is a myth in Hinduism, which in the past was a special decoration for the king and his family. *Lung-lungan* pattern is also included as ancient pattern (Doellah, 2002:21-22)

Based on the style, there are two types of batik patterns namely inland batik and coastal batik. Inland batik is batik from the palace, which is then growing rapidly outside the palace walls. Coastal batik is different from inland batik because it is made in the coastal area where it gets a lot of influences from outsiders. Coastal batik has decoration and color that get the influence from

external cultural elements. In its beginning as clothing, *wastra* batik covers long cloth (*jarit*), gloves, and torso wrap (*kemben*). The *wastra* is as an additional form of fashion including scarves, headbands (*iket* or *udheng*), and carrying shawl (*selendang gendhongan*) (long cloth to carry a child or goods). Besides *wastra* batik, in the palace there is *wastra* batik used as the ceremonial dress namely *dodot* (Doellah, 2002:21).

In coastal areas, especially in East Java, it is known batik farmer or batik countryside. This batik is used by the farmers after batik as a fashion develops outside the palace. Decorative batik farmer is the development of decorative batik palace composed by the farmers with a combination of decorative motifs from the nature around like plants and animals. Batik farmer in coastal areas is a manifestation of decorative compositions derived from marine life environment, among others algae, fish, and other marine animals. The color of batik farmers refers to the colors that exist in the environment. Batik farmers from coastal areas show decorative motifs that originate on marine life in varied composition of pattern structure, as well as bright colors, typical coastal colors.

Batik in East Java has differences with batik in Central Java. Batik inland such as in Solo and Yogyakarta in Central Java use *sogan*, indigo, black, and white colors. Also, the basic motif is relatively tied to a particular rule. Meanwhile, batik in East Java has free motifs without being tied to a particular rule. Until recently, East Java has business units of batik, woven cloth, and embroidery spread across the districts/cities ([http://portal-nasional.com/?page\\_id=2756](http://portal-nasional.com/?page_id=2756)).

Areas of batik craftsmen in East Java which have been recorded to have the history of producing batik are Sumenep (Pekandangan), Sampang, Bangkalan (Tanjung Bumi), Pamekasan, Gresik, Sidoarjo (Jetis and Sekardangan), Porong (Kedung Cangkring), Mojokerto (Mojosari), Jombang, Kediri, Trenggalek, Pacitan, Banyuwangi, Bondowosa (Maesan), Lumajang, Tulungagung, Magetan, and Ponorogo.

Coastal batik has characteristics, among others, the motif is clear, bold, expressive and naturalist; the theme is usually about environment; the painting is without using *mal* and pattern; also the color is strong so that it is not easy to fade. In fact, the color can be long lasting because the dyeing process is quite long by putting the cloth in a barrel. This kind of batik is called Batik *Gentongan*. Barrel technique is only used for one type of color, namely indigo. It is called batik *gentongan* because the dyeing process is done in the barrel that is embedded in the ground. The barrel used for dyeing batik is only found in two places and both are located in the district of Tanjung Bumi, Bangkalan Regency. The result of indigo color by using barrel is different; the color is more intact, durable, and equally thick. It takes four months for the making process. The cloth is soaked, rinsed, allowed to drip dry, then soaked again. This technique is performed repeatedly (Ani Bambang Yudhoyono, 2010:85,87). Batik Madura is rich with decorative motifs; some are traditional and some are contemporary. Some typical patterns of Madura are, among others: *Sesse'*, *Ramo'*, *Rawan*, *Carcena*, *Membha*, *Banji*, *Napasir*, *Katupat*, *Kembhang Pot*, *Pereng Bhasa*, *Truki Melati dan Okel*. Motif tradisional antara lain: *Tanahan Sekar Jagad*, *Tanahan Oleng*, *Tanahan Mo'ramo'*, *Tanahan Padi Kepa'*, *Se'sesse"*, *Sabet Manik*, *Pisang Bali/ Kipas Bali*, *Simbar*, *Malaya*, *Kupu Kecil*, and so on (Sastrodiwirjo, 2012).



Image 7. Sarong Cloth from Tanjungbumi, Bangkalan-Madura, collection of Zulfah. Pattern: *Gejje Sekereng*, Cotton, Natural, Written Batik (Photo: Ronald, 2013).

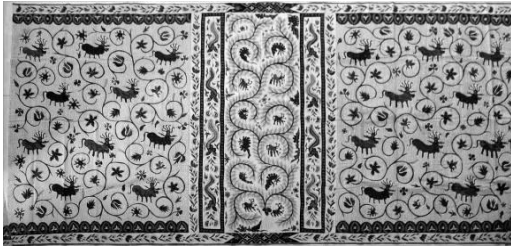


Image 8. Sarong Cloth from Tanjungbumi, Bangkalan-Madura, collection of Zulfah. Pattern: *Gejje Sekereng*, Cotton, Natural, Written Batik (Photo: Ronald, 2013).

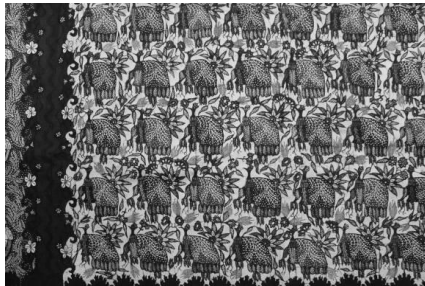


Image 9. Sarong Cloth from Tanjungbumi, Bangkalan-Madura. Pattern: *Ajem Kateh*, Cotton, Natural, Written Batik (Photo: Ronald, 2013).



Image 10. Sarong Cloth from Tanjungbumi, Bangkalan-Madura collection of Zulfah (Photo: Ronald, 2013).



Image 11. Written Batik Tanjungbumi, collection of Zulfah. The colors of written batik from Madura is very sharp and striking, in contrast to batik from Central Java (Photo: Ronald, 2013).

#### 4. Implementation of Decorative Motifs of Batik In Design

Batik has become part of the strategic plan of developing local culture values; its application is not only in the form of clothing, but also as an aesthetic element in space. Batik for *jarit* (long cloth) is a classic Javanese dress, while batik clothes (fashion) is a modern Javanese fashion. Meanwhile, batik for interior and its elements is a new alternative. Batik is later developed to be applied not only to fabric, but also to wood, ceramic, glass, and others. Nowadays, batik can be found in a variety of media that are more unique, because batik can be elements of aesthetic decoration. Its motif can give a different atmosphere in the room if it is placed in the proper arrangement.

The beauty of its motif and the complexity of its making make batik as inspiration to be applied in the design. Batik is often used to complement a room's atmosphere and the concept expected by the users. The composition and the decoration options need to be considered carefully. In the modern design, batik can be used for accent or a point of interest, with the composition that does not seem full and complicated.

There are many techniques that can be used to make batik in design, among others, painting, stamp, paste, and writing techniques. For example, the process of making batik in furniture is exactly the same with the process of making batik on cloth, which is making the pattern, sticking wax to create patterns, coloring, and removing wax. The difference lies in the composition of the wax liquid solvent and its finishing. The stages of making art furniture with batik technique are more than the making of batik on cloth. The making process is even longer. The basic materials used include mahogany, teak, mango wood, *senggon* wood or *pulai* wood. The forms can be tables, chairs, cupboards, dressers, mirrors, beds, newspapers cabinets, doors, and so forth. The development of batik with wood as the medium is an indication that the decorative motif of batik and its technique has the potential to be developed according to the present needs.

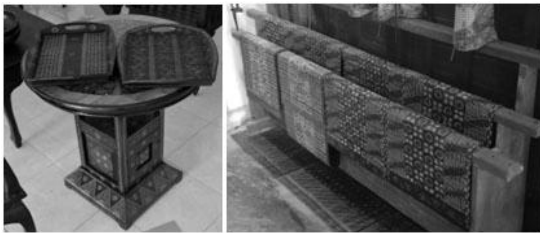


Image 12. Application of batik motif in product design (Photo: Laksmi, 2013).



Image 13. Table and chairs applying batik with floral motifs. Products were made with written batik technique (the process is similar to making batik on fabric) in Peni Studio, Kreet Village, Bantul-Yogyakarta (Photo: Laksmi, 2013).



Image 14. Some works of furniture that apply written batik technique (Photo: Laksmi, 2013).

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that batik nowadays has been developing rapidly. The application of decorative batik is not only on a piece of cloth, but also on other media, both with written batik technique and other techniques. It shows the same purpose, namely to preserve the nation's cultural values. Traditional decorative

motif of coastal and inland batik can be resources that can be developed for the needs of today's design. This proves that the decorative batik is still sustainable until now with the development of decorative motifs, composition, technique, and new media. There are sustainability and continuity of cultural traditions of the past into the present.

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