

The Influence of Mentifact and Sociofact on The Design and Meaning of Rifa'iyah Batik Motifs for Wedding Ceremonies

Christine Claudia Lukman and Monica Hartanti*

Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Universitas Kristen Maranatha, Jl. Prof. drg. Soeria Soemantri No. 65, Sukawarna, Sukajadi, Bandung, West Java 40164, INDONESIA

*Corresponding author: monica.hartanti@art.maranatha.edu

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ABSTRACT

The Rifa'iyah community in Kalipucang Wetan Village, Batang Regency, follows the teachings of Kyai Haji (KH) Ahmad Rifa'iyah (1789–1871 CE). Before 1999, they lived in isolation due to accusations of heresy, requiring them to be entirely self-sufficient. This community adheres strictly to Rifa'i teachings in all aspects of life, including batik production. Their batik motifs reflect the Rifa'i prohibition against depicting living beings, such as animals. Women exclusively produce Rifa'iyah Batik, which holds significant cultural value in key life stages, including birth, marriage, and death. Traditionally, young women engaged in batik-making while awaiting marriage proposals and prepared multiple batik pieces for wedding ceremonies, including "seserahan" (dowry exchange) and "akad nikah" (marriage contract). This study examines the intersection of mentifact (Rifa'i teachings), sociofact (community customs), and artefact (Rifa'iyah Batik used in wedding rituals). Mentifacts represent a culture's ideology, values, and beliefs, while sociofacts refer to the social structures and customs shaping behaviour. In this context, artefacts are human-made objects that address practical and symbolic needs. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to gather data through observations, interviews with batik artisans and experts, and a literature review. It uses social semiotics to interpret Rifa'iyah wedding batik as a text composed of signs whose meanings are shaped by the community's social codes. The findings reveal that artefacts and sociofacts within the Rifa'iyah community influence the visual elements and meanings of batik, emphasising values of loyalty, unity, sincerity, and resilience in marriage.

Keywords: artefacts, batik for wedding ceremonies, mentifact, Rifa'i, sociofact

INTRODUCTION

The Rifa'iyah community consists of followers of Kyai Haji (KH) Ahmad Rifa'i (1789–1871 CE). It is spread across various villages in Central Java, including Batang, Pekalongan, Pemalang, Tegal, Brebes, Pati, Boyolali, and Wonosobo (Rosyid 2020). This community faced significant challenges for over a century, from the Dutch East Indies colonial period (mid-19th century CE) to the end of the Orde Baru era (1998 CE). The Dutch colonial government labelled KH Ahmad Rifa'i a rebel, while the Orde Lama (Old Order) and Orde Baru (New Order) regimes regarded his teachings as heretical. Consequently, the Rifa'iyah community was marginalised and ostracised by outsiders.

In response to their challenges, the Rifa'iyah community chose self-isolation, limiting interactions with the broader society to safeguard their beliefs from ideological and social influences contradicting KH Ahmad Rifa'i's teachings. Their social interactions remained within the Rifa'iyah network; even marriages were restricted to fellow community members. Despite these challenges, the community remained steadfast, demonstrating a profound commitment to upholding their faith. Despite significant challenges and societal pressures, this unwavering commitment to their faith is truly admirable and commands respect. The community's dedication to their faith is a powerful example of religious commitment. KH Ahmad Rifa'i's primary goal was to purify Islamic teachings in Javanese society, which he believed had been corrupted by the Dutch colonial administration, in collaboration with Javanese bureaucrats and religious leaders (Ulya 2017). He advocated a return to the Qur'an and Hadith while seeking to free Javanese Muslims from non-Islamic ideologies, superstitions, and mystical beliefs (Rosyid 2022). However, he did not outright reject Javanese customs and culture as long as they aligned with Islamic law (Jaeni 2017).

Due to their isolation, the Rifa'iyah community became self-sufficient, producing their goods, including batik cloth. This self-sufficiency was not just a practical necessity but a reflection of their unwavering commitment to their beliefs and resistance to external influences. The motifs of Rifa'iyah Batik were shaped by the teachings in the Book of Tarjumah, a significant religious text that interprets and explains the Qur'an and Hadith, which forbade depictions of living beings and the entire bodies of animals. Initially, Rifa'iyah Batik was produced in villages such as Mroto, Bojong, Paesan, and Madukaran in Kedungwuni (South Pekalongan) and later in Kalipucang Wetan (Batang Regency). Over time, Kalipucang Wetan became the primary centre for batik production. The batik-making process adhered strictly to religious principles: it was a medium for Islamic da'wah, preceded by Dhuha prayer, and undertaken exclusively by women, as Rifa'i teachings emphasised that women should work at home. While making batik, women recited shalawat or dzikir, drawing from Qur'anic verses or the Book of Tarajumah.

The motifs of Rifa'iyah Batik had to conform to Islamic law as interpreted by KH Ahmad Rifa'i, who followed the Shafi'i madhhab. Representations of living beings were strictly prohibited to avoid the sin of shirk, a term that refers to the act of associating partners with Allah, except for plants (Kamil et al. 2021). Consequently, the artistic principles of Rifa'iyah Batik aligned with their religious doctrines, ensuring that their artefacts (batik) adhered to their mentifacts (beliefs). From a sociofact perspective, Rifa'iyah Batik served as a marker of community identity, used in significant life events such as weddings, religious gatherings, puputan (umbilical cord detachment ceremonies), and Islamic holidays (Kamil et al. 2021).

Located in Batang Regency near Pekalongan, the Rifa'iyah community could adopt visual styles from local batik traditions, namely Soganan Batik from Batang and Pesisir (Coastal) Batik from Pekalongan. Soganan Batik, featuring abstract geometric and organic motifs, often included Garuda-wing patterns and a predominantly brown colour scheme. However, this style was rejected because it was historically associated with the Surakarta and Yogyakarta palaces, which the community viewed as Dutch colonial collaborators. The rejection of Soganan Batik was a clear statement of the community's resistance to colonial influence and their commitment to their religious values, underscoring their strong sense of identity. This rejection of colonial influence is a significant aspect of the Rifa'iyah community and demonstrates their commitment to cultural and religious values.

The rejection of Soganan Batik and the changes made to Pekalongan Pesisir Batik were artistic choices and reflections of the community's religious values. Specific motifs were altered to align with Rifa'iyah teachings; poultry figures were depicted with their heads detached or transformed into floral elements. These modifications reinforced the community's religious values, serving as a form of da'wah by discouraging pride in artistic representations that could be seen as



Figure 1 Materos Satrio motif

Source: <https://sanggarbatikkalipucangwetan.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/ragam-hias-batik-tiga-negeri-rifaiyah-part-1/>



Figure 2 Gendhakan motif

Source: <https://sanggarbatikkalipucangwetan.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/ragam-hias-batik-tiga-negeri-rifaiyah-part-2/>



Figure 3 Lancur motif

Source: <https://sanggarbatikkalipucangwetan.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/ragam-hias-batik-tiga-negeri-rifaiyah-part-3/>

competing with God's creation. Additionally, the community developed motifs inspired by plants, food, geometric patterns, and abstracted animal forms (such as rooster tails, birds disguised as plants, decapitated birds, fish scales, and conch shells camouflaged like a Paisley motif), further emphasising their commitment to religious beliefs and artistic practices.

According to Miftakhutin (2022), a Rifa'iyah Batik artisan, the community initially had 24 distinct batik motifs, but only 16 remain in use today (Fadlia 2021). Some notable motifs include *Pelo Ati*, inspired by poultry gizzards and liver; *Kotak Kitir*, resembling a rotating pinwheel; *Banji*, derived from the Hokkien word for "ten thousand"; and *Sigar Kupat*, reminiscent of a split *ketupat* (rice cake). Others, such as *Lancur* (long rooster tail), *Tambal* (patchwork), and various *Kawung* motifs, draw inspiration from Javanese culture. Some motifs reflect Chinese Peranakan influences, such as *Nyah Pratin* (a tribute to Chinese Peranakan women), *Romo Gendong* (depicting a father carrying a child), and *Jeruk No'i* (symbolising an orange and a young Chinese girl). Other motifs, like *Keongan* (snail), *Krokotan* (Portulaca plant), and *Klasem* (Lasem Batik-inspired), demonstrate a fusion of cultural elements (Miftakhutin 2022). However, not all motifs retain their original symbolic meanings today.

In the past, young Rifa'iyah girls learned batik-making as part of their marriage preparation, which required approximately seven years of practice. Marriage played a crucial role in preserving the Rifa'iyah faith, as the bride and groom had to be community members. If one partner comes from outside, they must recite the shahada according to Rifa'iyah procedures before being accepted (Ruzqi 2023; Rosyid 2022). This strict adherence to community membership in marriage ensured the continuity of their faith and reinforced their social bonds. Within the socio-religious structure of the community, specific batik motifs held symbolic significance in wedding ceremonies. *Materos Satrio* (Figure 1), *Gendhakan* (Figure 2), *Lancur* (Figure 3), and

Nyah Pratin (Figure 4) were used as part of the *seserahan* (dowry exchange) ritual, while the bride and groom wore *Gemblong Sairis* (Figure 5), symbolising a sweet and enduring union (Mustika 2018; Miftakhutin 2022).

These five batik motifs were selected based on an interview with Miftakhutin, a Rifa'iyah Batik artisan with deep knowledge of the traditional batik patterns commonly used in her community's wedding ceremonies, both within her village and other regions. His understanding is derived from his late mother's teachings and records of motifs traditionally commissioned for Rifa'iyah wedding ceremonies.

Following the Indonesian government's official recognition of KH Ahmad Rifa'i's teachings as orthodox in 1999, the Rifa'iyah community gradually reintegrated into a broader society. This shift allowed them to engage more openly with the outside world while preserving their religious and cultural identity through batik-making and other traditions, such as wedding ceremonies (Miftakhutin 2022). Their batik remains a testament to their enduring faith, social resilience, and commitment to Islamic principles.



Figure 4 *Nyah Pratin* motif

Source: <https://sanggarbatikkalipucangwetan.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/ragam-hias-batik-tiga-negeri-rifaiyah-part-2/>



Figure 5 *Gemblong Sairis* motif

Source: <https://sanggarbatikkalipucangwetan.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/ragam-hias-batik-tiga-negeri-rifaiyah-part-2/>

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research, conducted in close collaboration with the Rifa'iyah community, employs an interpretive qualitative method, utilising various data collection techniques. These include observation at the batik workshop in Kalipucang Wetan Village, interviews with batik artisans (Miftakhutin and Fatimah), and batik experts (William Kwan Hwie Liong and Daranindra Josi), literature study, and photography documentation. The analysis framework integrates social semiotics and sociological theories on cultural forms—mentifact, sociofact, and artefact. Social semiotics is applied to examine the connotative (symbolic) meanings embedded in batik motifs. At the same time, sociological theory is used to explore the influence of mentifacts (KH Ahmad Rifa'i's teachings) and sociofacts (the customs of the Rifa'iyah community) on artefacts (Rifa'iyah Batik). Within this framework, batik motifs are analysed as visual texts of various signs arranged in specific compositions.

The data analysis process, crucial to understanding the cultural significance of batik motifs in Rifa'iyah wedding ceremonies, consists of four stages. First, the study identifies and describes the denotative meanings of the five batik motifs traditionally used as dowries: *Materos Satrio*,

Gendhakan, *Lancur*, *Nyah Pratin*, and *Gemblong Sairis*. Next, the connotative meanings of these motifs are interpreted based on the social codes embedded in the Rifa'iyah community. In the third stage, the study examines the relationship between KH Ahmad Rifa'i's teachings and the structural composition of the batik motifs, as well as their connotative meanings. Finally, the research explores the role of mentifacts in the wedding ceremonies of the Rifa'iyah community, using the connotative interpretations of the motifs as a basis for analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

KH Ahmad Rifa'i and His Concept of Thought

KH Ahmad Rifa'i was born on the 9 Muharram 1200 Hijri (1786 CE) in Tempuran Village, located south of the Great Mosque of Kendal. He was the son of KH Muhammad Marhum bin Abu Sujak (also known as Raden Soetjowijoyo, was a descendant of palace nobility who served as the *penghulu* of Landraad in Kendal) and Siti Rahmah (Umi Radjiyah). Both his parents raised Ahmad Rifa'i until he was six years old. During this period, he was introduced to Arabic letters and taught essential religious practices, including prayer, Quranic recitation, and refined Javanese language (*kromo inggil*), which he used in communication with his parents and peers. His adolescence was immersed in a deeply religious environment, as Kaliwungu was a major centre for Islamic scholarship in Central Java. His early exposure to religious teachings shaped his intellectual and spiritual development, leading to his prominence as an Islamic scholar and prolific writer. His works continue to serve as essential references for his followers.

Ahmad Rifa'i began composing his renowned book *Tarajumah* (Ulfa 2009). His writings, often presented in poetry (*nazham*) or prose, primarily focused on Islamic teachings, including *aqidah* (creed), *sharia* (Islamic law), and *tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism). While referred to as *Tarajumah*, meaning translations of Arabic texts, these works were not strictly direct translations but interpretations of Islamic teachings tailored to the Javanese audience. The title "Tarajumah" was not just a name but a strategic choice to navigate the political landscape, as certain expressions within his texts were considered potentially subversive to the ruling government.

KH. Ahmad Rifa'i disseminated his teachings through structured methods, emphasising the importance of Islamic purification and adherence to religious principles. His propagation methods included translating the Qur'an, Hadith, and Arabic texts into Javanese, written in *Arabic Pegon* script using red and black ink, conducting home visits (*silaturrahim*) to foster close relationships with followers, and organising public religious studies and preaching sessions across different regions. Additionally, he facilitated discussions and dialogues to strengthen religious understanding, encouraged physical fitness activities as a medium for exchanging opinions, and led social and religious protest movements against the government. Marriage also played a crucial role in his teachings, as he viewed it as reinforcing religious and social bonds within the community.

Among his notable works, *Tabyin al-Ishlah* offers valuable insights into the significance of marriage in Rifa'iyah teachings. This book guides establishing and maintaining a harmonious family life following Rifa'iyah principles. Within the Rifa'iyah tradition, marriage is regarded as a highly encouraged worship act. Couples are expected to build families grounded in serenity (*sakinah*), love (*mawaddah*), and compassion (*rahmah*) while adhering to Islamic principles. Rifa'iyah doctrines emphasise the crucial role of marriage in fostering spiritual growth and maintaining social unity within the community. Through these dissemination methods, Rifa'iyah's teachings have profoundly influenced the personal lives of its followers, particularly in matters of matrimony and family structure.

The exact date of KH. Ahmad Rifa'i's passing remains a subject of debate, with four differing accounts. One version states that he passed away on Ahad Legi, 6 Rabi' al-Akhir 1286 Hijri (1871 CE) at age 85. Another account based on the Gregorian calendar claims that he died on Sunday, Rabi' al-Awwal, 1870 CE, at 84. A second-generation scholar, Syaikh Ahmad Bajuri Kendal, reported that KH. Ahmad Rifa'i passed away on Thursday, Legi, 25 Rabi' al-Awwal 1286 Hijri (1870 CE), at 84. Meanwhile, according to Kiai Abdurrazaq Banyumas, he died on 10 Muharram 1294 Hijri (1878 CE). These differing accounts add a layer of complexity to his life story and highlight the historical uncertainties surrounding his passing. KH. Ahmad Rifa'i was laid to rest in Kampung Jawa Tondano, approximately one kilometre from Kampung Jawa in Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi (Nafis 2012).

Rifa'iyah Batik: A Cultural Treasure and Religious Expression

A community in Kalipucang Wetan, Batang, Central Java, identifies as the Rifa'iyah group. Generally, male members of the Rifa'iyah community work as farmers, while women are housewives and batik artisans. The women were assigned to make batik so they would have a job inside the house, aligning with the teachings of KH Ahmad Rifa'i, which prohibited women from engaging in activities outside the home that could lead to undesirable consequences. As a result, Rifa'iyah women create batik in their homes. This craft is not unfamiliar to them, as many in the past were artisans working for batik entrepreneurs in Pekalongan. The skill of batik-making has been passed down from generation to generation, from mother to daughter. Initially, batik was made solely to fulfil family clothing needs, but over time, it became a source of additional income, with pieces sold to Rifa'iyah communities in other villages. Batik-making is done in one's spare time after completing household chores, and because it is not the primary occupation, completing a single piece can take several months. However, the result is a high-quality, delicate batik, considered more of a household handicraft than a product of the large-scale batik industry (Mustika 2018).

In Rembug Batik, batik-making in the Rifa'iyah community is described as a practice of sharia and a form of da'wah, contributing to forming a da'wah community. For Rifa'iyah women, batik-making is an essential part of their life journey. When they reach adulthood or await marriage proposals, they dedicate themselves to producing the finest batik they have ever made. The groom then wears this batik piece during the wedding reception (Marzuqi 2016). This practice highlights the deep cultural significance of batik-making within the Rifa'iyah community. It serves as a rite of passage for young women, symbolising their skills, patience, and dedication as they prepare for marriage. By wearing their best batik creations alongside the groom at the wedding ceremony, these women display their artistic talents and weave their identities into the fabric of their new lives as married couples.

Rifa'iyah Batik possesses distinct characteristics and follows specific religious principles. First, it avoids visual representations of living beings, except for plants. Second, if animals are depicted, their forms are altered or abstracted to ensure their bodies are not fully represented. Third, batik-making is exclusively done by women. Fourth, creating motifs (*nglowongi*) is performed directly by applying hot wax through a *canting*—a small copper tool with a bamboo handle—onto the fabric without using pencil sketches. Additionally, the batik-making process among the Rifa'iyah community in Kalipucang Wetan Village is accompanied by religious practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance and praise of Allah) and *shalawat* (prayers and praises for the Prophet), following the teachings of KH Ahmad Rifa'i. Consequently, Rifa'iyah Batik is not merely a material artefact but a spiritual product, embodying Islamic values through pictorial cloth as its canvas. The act of batik-making provides a space for inner expression, allowing artisans to practice the teachings of KH Ahmad Rifa'i while simultaneously fulfilling personal and economic needs.

Rifa'iyah Batik also adheres to strict rules regarding motif design, ensuring compliance with Islamic teachings. Depictions of animate beings are prohibited unless they are altered beyond recognition or resemble inanimate objects such as plants. This restriction aligns with Islamic principles that discourage drawing living creatures (Cahyo 2022). Within the Rifa'iyah community, it is believed that prayers (*shalat*) performed while wearing batik featuring forbidden motifs are considered invalid. Thus, Rifa'iyah Batik is a visual reminder of the community's commitment to upholding Islamic values. An example of a spiritually significant motif is *Pelo Ati*, which originates from Sufism and is referenced in *Tarjumah Asnal Miqashad*, 11:408. This motif represents the dual nature of human qualities—eight virtues and eight vices. The virtues include *zuhud* (detachment from worldly matters), *qana'at* (contentment with God's grace), *shabar* (patience), *tawakal* (trust in God), *mujahadah* (perseverance), *ridla* (acceptance), *syakara* (gratitude), and *akhlasa* (sincerity). Conversely, the vices encompass *hubbub al-dunya* (excessive love for the world), *thama* (greed), *itba' al-hawa* (succumbing to desires), *ujub* (self-admiration), *riya* (seeking praise), *takabur* (arrogance), *hasad* (envy), and *sum'ah* (boasting of one's piety) (Lukman et al. 2022).

For the Rifa'iyah community, batik is an essential marker of identity in daily life. Its unique characteristics distinguish community members, making them easily recognisable among themselves and the wider public (Afad 2023). By wearing Rifa'iyah Batik, they express their cultural heritage and affirm their adherence to religious values and communal identity.

Theory of Culture

Culture, a multifaceted concept with various dimensions, is not just a theoretical construct. In this section, we will investigate cultural theories derived from the sociological perspective, categorising culture into mentifact, sociofact, and artefact. These theories, while fascinating in their own right, also have practical applications. The semiotic view that culture is a pattern of meaning stored and transmitted through symbols to guide the behaviour of each community group member will be explored. Both theories will be used to analyse Rifa'iyah Batik for wedding ceremonies as cultural artefacts, demonstrating their real-world relevance. Specifically, we will examine the role and influence of mentifact and sociofact on Rifa'iyah Batik, providing a comprehensive understanding of its cultural significance within the community.

From the sociological point of view, based on Julien Huxley's theory, culture consists of mentifact, sociofact, and artefact. Mentifact is an invisible or abstract culture in the form of mental aspects that underlie human behaviour and material outcomes. Mentifacts are ideas, thoughts, beliefs, ideologies, and human views on the universe. Sociofact is a culture that places humans as members of a society. Human behaviour results from adaptation to a society's values, morals, norms, and culture. Artefacts are tangible material forms of culture, such as houses, clothing, household utensils, and work equipment. The three cultural elements are interrelated and can be explained as follows: an artefact involves a habit (sociofact) for the use of the tool, and the habit consists of the idea or concept behind it (mentifact) (Titit et al. 2023).

Geertz defines culture as a pattern of meaning that is historically stored and transmitted through symbols to guide the behaviour of each member of society or community. These symbols and meanings are the result of a mutual agreement to communicate, perpetuate knowledge, and shape the community's attitude toward life (Mustika 2018). Humans communicate using symbols in language, painting, dance, architecture, clothing, rites, religion, kinship, and more. They can give meaning to any event, action, or object related to thoughts, ideas, and emotions (Hendro 2020). Symbolic interactionism is based on three premises as follows: (1) Humans act on an object based on the meaning of the object to themselves, (2) The meaning comes from social interaction, and (3) These meanings depend on and are modified by the interpretive process of

the people who interact. One of the functions of culture is to provide a meaning of identity that concerns group inclusion based on in-group and out-group attachments. The meaning of identity obtained from culture is constructed and maintained through communication in everyday life so that a person is affiliated with a particular cultural group. Cultural identity formed in a society will affect the self-perception of each member, how they perceive themselves, and how they should behave (Widyastuti et al. 2021).

Understanding a community's cultural practices that produce various texts and meanings in certain situations and activities is a key aspect of social semiotics. To understand reality, it is necessary to comprehend the actual code and the semantic system because culture is a semiotic structure. The interpretation of the meaning of an object, that is, a material medium, is always carried out concerning a particular subject. Thus, the targets of social semiotics are the interrelationships of subject and object, context and meaning, social structure, and power. To convey meaning and understand it, communicators and communicants must understand the code, a set of rules for choosing and combining semiotic signs. Code is an interpretive framework used by producers and interpreters of text. Signs with code known to us must be selected and combined to create text. Marcel Danesi's concept of "macro code" can be used to understand the cultural features people use to communicate, create, and interpret meaning.

Chandler (quoted in Long and He 2021) emphasised that when we study cultural practices, semiotics treats each object or action as a sign that has meaning to members of a cultural group based on the rules or coded conventions underlying the production of meaning in that culture (Long and He 2021). Therefore, understanding the codes, their relationships, and the context in which they fit is part of what it means to be a member of a particular culture. Chandler (2022) considered the sub-codes under the macro code of culture to be food, linguistic code, dress code, and non-verbal code. Since this study deals with certain batik used for weddings, the dress code will be discussed in detail. According to Chandler (2022), a dress code is a social convention for clothing that is appropriate for a specific context or formal occasions, such as weddings and funerals. How someone dresses can be a marker of social background and subcultural loyalties (Olorunsogo 2018).

Barthes (1977) explains the three classes in the images that are direct analogies that convey meaning, namely (1) linguistic messages, which refer to texts that can be analysed denotatively and connotatively; (2) non-coded iconic, namely natural messages which refer to denotative analysis of "first-order clarity"; the image is described as seen without code, and (3) iconic or symbolic code, namely a cultural message that refers to the connotative analysis of the image, namely "rule-governed transposition" that depends on the viewer's cultural background (Jadou and Al-Ghabra 2021). Denotation reflects literal meaning, while connotation explores cultural and individual associations. Denotative meaning can be viewed as objective and focuses on a specific meaning. Denotation has nothing to do with society, culture, ideology, or values; therefore, its meaning is both conceptual and literal. Connotative meanings reflect cultural meanings, memories, feelings, and thoughts, so they can be said to reflect particular meanings and contain hidden meanings. Connotative meaning is subjective, so that it can be understood differently by each individual, group, and community. Connotative meanings also reflect culture, geographical area, and historical period. Connotative meanings can be divided into negative, neutral, and positive (Güzel 2023). Data and theories from the literature review can be used to consider Rifa'iyah Batik as an artefact, a medium containing a symbol whose meaning must be interpreted through the social code of the Rifa'iyah community.

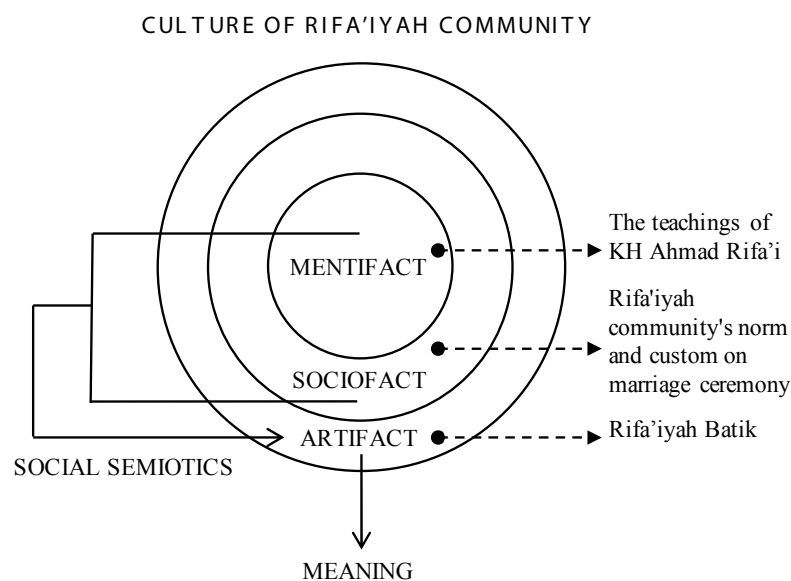


Figure 6 Comprehensive developing system of mentifact (Rifa'i teaching on Islam), sociofact (customs of the Rifa'iyah community), and artefacts (batik for wedding ceremony)

From Figure 6, it is evident that culture serves as a comprehensive system of mentifact (Rifa'i teaching on Islam), sociofact (customs of the Rifa'iyah community), and artefacts (batik for wedding ceremony). These elements are respectful guidelines for individual and group behaviour and action (Taum 2022). Of the 24 batik motifs, the Rifa'iyah community selected four motifs that were considered suitable as dowries (*Satria Materos*, *Gendhakan*, *Lancur*, and *Nyah Pratin*) and one motif for wedding cloth (*Gemblong Sairis*). These motifs have designs and meanings following the teachings of Rifa'i (mentifact) and the Rifa'iyah community's (sociofact) customs about the *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *warohmah* marriage. *Sakinah* means peace, *mawaddah* means affection and willingness to share, while *warohmah* implies a willingness to accept each other's weaknesses.




RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Table 1 presents batik motifs used in Rifa'iyah wedding ceremonies: *Materos Satrio*, *Gendhakan*, *Lancur*, *Nyah Pratin*, and *Gemblong Sairis*. Each motif serves as a text embedded with symbolic signs whose meanings are realised within the semiosphere of the Rifa'iyah community.

Marriage holds profound significance in the Rifa'iyah community, strengthening familial and communal relationships. Within this tradition, marriage is reserved exclusively for community members. If an outsider wishes to marry into the community, they must first embrace the teachings of KH Ahmad Rifa'i in all aspects of life. Notably, Rifa'iyah women play a crucial role in this tradition, as they are expected to prepare high-quality batik attire for their wedding ceremonies, which include the *seserahan* and *akad nikah* rituals. These garments, meticulously crafted by the women, serve as artefacts and embodiments of KH Ahmad Rifa'i's teachings on an ideal (*sakinah*, *mawaddah*, *warohmah*) marriage.

The imagery in Rifa'iyah wedding batik motifs is derived from familiar objects such as plants (flowers, leaves, trees), poultry (peacocks, roosters, small birds), and food (*gemblong*). These elements function as visual symbols, comprehensible only within the socio-cultural codes of the Rifa'iyah community. Their interpretation necessitates understanding and active engagement with the community's unique semiotic framework, thereby underscoring the cultural context of the batik motifs.

Table 1 The influence of mentifact and sociofact on Rifai'yah Batik motif

Batik motifs	Denotative meaning	Connotative meaning
 <p>Materos Satrio</p>	Peacocks with a head resembling leaf and legs resembling twigs	Beauty, toughness, unyielding, intimacy
	Various flowers and leaves	Beauty, happiness, and fertility
	“Materos” or “ukel” (tiny sprout-like circular shape) motif in the background	The cycle of human life and kinship
	The colour scheme is predominantly yellow, adding ochre and dark blue	Cheerful and vibrant feeling
	Dense composition	Close relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of mentifact on visual signs: Leaf-like peacock head and twig-like legs • The influence of mentifact on meaning is <i>mujahadah</i> (earnest, unyielding) from the meaning of a peacock motif • The influence of sociofact on meaning: marriage is an important life cycle (from the meaning of the <i>ukel</i> motif) that must be filled with hard work in earning a living (from the meaning of peacock foraging for food in the garden) and have a close relationship between husband and wife (from the meaning of dense composition) 		
 <p>Gendhakan</p>	Deciduous and densely flowering trees	Life, protection, abundance, and happiness
	Birds disguised as foliage	Joyful
	The colour scheme is predominantly white, adding light blue, light brown, and black	Serene feeling
	Dense composition	Close relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of mentifact on visual signs: the birds disguised as foliage • Ideology (mentifact) on its meaning: humans must always be <i>syakara</i> (gratitude) and <i>qana'at</i> (always sufficient for God's grace) from the meaning of deciduous and densely flowering trees • The influence of sociofact on meaning: always remember God's protection in marriage, and have a close relationship between husband and wife 		
 <p>Lancur</p>	The long, intertwined tails of roosters	The long and blessed married life
	Various leaves and flowers	Fertility
	The colour scheme is cream, blue, dark brown, and red	Joyous and festive feeling
	Composition of organic abstract shapes in the background	Carefree and festive feeling
	Dense composition	Close relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of mentifact on visual signs: depicts only the tails of a rooster • The artefact's influence on meaning: humans must always be <i>syakara</i> (grateful) and <i>qanaat</i> (appreciating God's grace) for the blessings shown through the meaning of fertility from the motifs of various leaves and flowers • The influence of sociofact on meaning: a durable marriage can strengthen the relationship between husband and wife and their extended family, so that God will bless them 		

Batik motifs	Denotative meaning	Connotative meaning
 <p>Nyah Pratin</p>	A grid is a network of lines that cross each other to form a series of rhombuses	The Nyah Pratin motif, with its grid of lines that form a series of rhombuses, symbolises the Rifa'iyah community's meticulous planning and arrangement, evoking admiration for their attention to detail
	Various small animals whose heads are cut off or look like plants	Simplicity
	The colour scheme is predominantly broken white with red, blue, and black	Joyous feeling
	Dense composition	Close relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of mentifact on visual signs: little animals whose heads are cut off or look like plants • Mentifact influences meaning: the bride and groom should always be <i>shabar</i> (patience), <i>tawakal</i> (surrendering to Him), <i>ridla</i> (willing), and <i>qanaat</i> (sufficient for His gift) when experiencing difficulties in life • The influence of sociofact on meaning: when economic conditions are bad, husband and wife must carefully organise their lives and remain optimistic that they will have a better future 		
 <p>Gemblong Sairis</p>	A row of rhombic shapes from <i>gemblong</i> (sticky rice cake sprinkled with sugar) slices	Strong bond and happy marriage
	Various leaves and flowers	Fertility
	The colour scheme is dark brown, broken white, blue, and red	Solemnity and joyous feeling
	Dense composition	Close relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of mentifact on visual signs: the motive does not depict animals. • The mentifact influences the meaning: husband and wife should always be <i>qanaat</i> (sufficient for God's grace) and <i>syukaraa</i> (grateful to God) for His blessings of fertility and prosperity • The influence of sociofact on meaning: marriage must form a strong bond between husband and wife and their extended family to be happy 		

Among the five motifs examined, two—*Gemblong Sairis* and *Lancur*—are original creations of the Rifa'iyah community, while the remaining three—*Materos Satrio*, *Nyah Pratin*, and *Gendhakan*—are adaptations of *pesisir batik* from Banyumas and Pekalongan. *Gemblong Sairis* was inspired by rhombus-shaped slices of *gemblong* cake, a staple at wedding feasts. For the Rifa'iyah, *gemblong*—made from sticky rice and sugar—symbolises a resilient and joyful marriage. *Lancur* draws from roosters' long, intertwined tails, which, in Rifa'iyah culture, represent the deep and inseparable bond between spouses and their extended families.

The *Materos Satrio* motif from Banyumas Batik depicts peacocks in a lush garden. The Rifa'iyah community favours this motif for its aesthetic appeal and alignment with their cultural values. However, to comply with KH Ahmad Rifa'i's teachings, the peacock's head was modified to resemble a leaf, and its legs looked like twigs. This adaptation, reflecting the belief that marriage is a sacred life cycle requiring continuous effort (*mujahadah*) and perseverance, showcases the depth of cultural integration and evolution within the Rifa'iyah community.

Nyah Pratin is an adaptation of Pekalongan's Peranakan Chinese *pesisir batik*. The name "Nyah" or "Nyonyah" refers to Peranakan Chinese women, while "Pratin" means concerned. There are two primary interpretations of this motif: Gratha (2020) associates it with mourning a deceased

husband, whereas Astuti (2006) likens it to the Sido Mukti motif, symbolising aspirations for a prosperous and spiritual life. The Rifa'iyah adaptation modified small animal figures into plant-like shapes or removed their heads entirely, aligning with their religious beliefs.

Finally, the *Gendhakan* motif was inspired by the Tree of Life motif in Pekalongan coastal batik, featuring branches, flowers, roots, and birds. To conform to Rifa'iyah ideology, the birds were stylised to resemble floral and foliage patterns, reinforcing the community's deep emphasis on divine protection and gratitude. Batik in the Rifa'iyah wedding tradition is not merely decorative but a semiotic system deeply interwoven with the community's mentifacts and sociofacts. Whether through original creations or adaptations, these motifs embody religious teachings, social values, and aspirations for an ideal marriage.

CONCLUSION

Rifa'iyah Batik motifs are more than decorative elements; they are semiotic texts that encode the community's religious teachings, social norms, and cultural identity. Historically, these motifs functioned as a shared visual language, understood and upheld by all members of the Rifa'iyah community. However, as time progresses, this collective understanding has diminished, leaving only a few artisans and batik experts able to decipher their connotative meanings. The findings highlight that Rifa'iyah wedding batik manifests KH Ahmad Rifa'i's teachings, reflected in its motifs, production process, and socio-cultural significance. Despite its enduring role in marking marital unity, loyalty, sincerity, and resilience, contemporary brides increasingly select batik based on aesthetic preferences rather than its deeper symbolic meaning.

As the digital era accelerates cultural transformation, preserving Rifa'iyah Batik requires consciously balancing tradition with adaptation. While innovation is necessary for survival, it must not come at the cost of eroding its sociofact (collective identity) or mentifact (core values and teachings). Ultimately, the Rifa'iyah community itself is the key determinant in sustaining this cultural heritage, as individual and collective agencies shape the self-determination of the system (Sugiharto 2019). Strengthening community engagement, education, and documentation of these motifs is crucial to ensuring that Rifa'iyah Batik remains relevant and meaningful for future generations.

RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

Further research on the symbolic meanings of Rifa'iyah Batik motifs—both for wedding ceremonies and other cultural events—is essential for preserving the community's cultural identity. Without a conscious effort to study and document these meanings, the sociofact of the Rifa'iyah community may weaken, and the artefact—the teachings of KH Ahmad Rifa'i—may fade from collective memory, leading to a potential loss of our cultural heritage.

Although Rifa'iyah Batik is a household craft rather than a large-scale industry, its motifs and meanings hold deep cultural and spiritual significance. Research focusing on the five primary motifs, such as [specific motifs], used in wedding ceremonies, is crucial to reviving and safeguarding this knowledge. This effort will help ensure that, despite the rapid shifts brought by globalisation, the Rifa'iyah community retains its distinctive identity while staying rooted in the values and teachings that have guided it for generations.

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