

Ornamental Patterns of Contemporary Indonesian Batik: Clothing for Strengthening the Articulation of Appearance Characteristics

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Published online: 30 September 2024

To cite this article: Setyo Budi, Tiwi Bina Affanti and Sayid Mataram. 2024. Ornamental patterns of contemporary Indonesian batik: Clothing for strengthening the articulation of appearance characteristics. *Wacana Seni Journal of Arts Discourse* 23: 16–28. <https://doi.org/10.21315/ws2024.23.2>

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.21315/ws2024.23.2>

ABSTRACT

Batik is a significant aspect of Javanese and Indonesia culture, celebrated for its complex motifs, rich history, and deep cultural values. The research method used is qualitative research based on exploration and explanation supported with Iconographical Analysis and Elegant Design Theory. UNESCO's recognition of batik as a world culture heritage, has led to a revival in interest and respect for this art form in Indonesia. Historically, batik was reserved for the nobility, but nowadays, it has evolved into national attire with contemporary significance. The focus of this study is to position batik as not only a traditional work of art that has developed into contemporary fashion, but also contains various ethical and aesthetic boundaries as a reflection of the intelligence of clothing culture. Contemporary batik is seen as a medium that can enhance the wearer's appearance. Several characteristics of a person's appearance that can be strengthened based on batik ornamental patterns are authoritative, openness, responsible, dynamic, and simplicity. This pattern is actualised in fashion design with a format resembling the letters or punctuation marks of Y, +, \, Z, and I.

Keywords: batik, classic, contemporary, Javanese, clothing

INTRODUCTION

When Indonesians mention the word “batik,” they think of traditional Javanese attire and national clothing. Technically, batik is the result of an ornamental decoration process on a sheet of *mori* (white cotton cloth) as clothing material using the resists-dye technique for colouring (Chen and Cheng 2020). Embryonic batik technique has emerged during the Kediri kingdom in East Java in the 13th century (Zilberg 2007: 5). Historically, batik has been synonymous with the clothing of Javanese nobles since the mid-18th century (Jasper and Pirngadie 1916: 227). During the reign of Paku Buwono III (1749–1788), certain batik motifs were prohibited (taboo) were reserved exclusively for the king and nobles (Margana 2010: 293).

Indonesian batik originates from old Javanese cultural traditions (Wang 2019), even though it has been existing on for generations until now and is still positioned as a respected and dignified cultural object (Yudhoyono 2010: 107). This endowment is not only based on the complexity of the manufacturing process, the beauty of the ornamental motifs, the symbolic and philosophical meanings contained, but also the *pakêm* (Javanese traditional rules) in the context of its use (Elliot and Brake 2004: 199). As in various life cycle rituals and sacred ceremonies (Stephenson 1993: 112), the use of batik cloth, specifically “classic batik” motifs, is calculated based on the suitability or connection between the meaning or philosophical value of the motif and the type or purpose of the ceremony or the ritual.

One of the honoured batik motifs is the *parang* motif, believed to have been created by Panembahan Senopati or Sultan Agung, the founder of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom in Java (Prasetyo 2010: 54). *Parang*

motif, particularly *parang rusak* (Figure 1) and *parang barong* variants (Figure 2) have become part of the regalia of the Javanese Kings (Figure 3) from the Kasunanan Palace of Surakarta and the Kasultanan Palace of Yogyakarta since the middle of the 18th century (Doellah 2002: 56–57) until today. This king’s clothing tradition continues to this day even after Indonesia’s independence, as these two kingdoms are considered as cultural heritage. It is not without reason that the choice of batik motif regarded as regal clothing, apart from containing many symbolic meanings, it also has ornamental characteristics which can support the appearance and strengthen the character of a king as a ruler who is responsible for his people.

In the contemporary era, the exclusivity of classic *parang* motif has diminished. This motif has begun to be widely used by the common people, which was originally in the form of *jarit* (long cloth for lower clothing) and has been adapted into clothing (Natanegara and Djaya 2019: 11). There are no longer any taboos, and it has even grown rapidly as a commercial commodity (Yuan, Xu and Jian 2018: 578). However, it is still culturally respected as a batik motif full of wisdom and philosophical values. Despite this commercialisation, UNESCO’s recognition on 2 October 2009 mentioning that batik was included in the status of “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” (Smend and Harper 2015: 9), has led to a batik boom in Indonesian society. Various large companies and batik artisans have experienced a surge in production to meet market needs. Starting from as daily “neat clothes,” various semiformal social events, institutional uniforms, to as dress codes for official events at the Indonesian State Palace.

Starting in 2010, batik has undeniable become the favourite item of clothing for Indonesian people, strengthened by the designation of 2 October as “National Batik Day.” Limitations of classic motifs, *larangan* (prohibited) batik, *kraton* (royal) batik, *pesisiran* (coastal areas) styles and local batik have encountered significant melting in previous years (Iskandar 2008: 47). Overall, it blends into contemporary batik. Producers and craftsmen enjoy the freedom to create new motifs without regard to caste boundaries or taboo, even the *pakêm* of manual batik-making standard has to compete with printing machine technology which is capable of producing mass batik cloth quickly. On the other hand, however, the position of *batik tulis* (hand-inscribed/handwritten batik) has become increasingly exclusive and expensive (Achjadi 1999: 88) since it has unique and genuine artistic value. Over the past decade, Indonesia has experienced a “batik renaissance,” marked by a surge in new batik motifs, the number of users, the increase in the number of large producers and local craftsmen, as well as the increase in the value of batik exports showed an extraordinary escalation (Sulistianingsih and Pujiono 2018: 200).



Figure 1 *Parang rusak* classic batik motif.

Source: Rifda (2023).

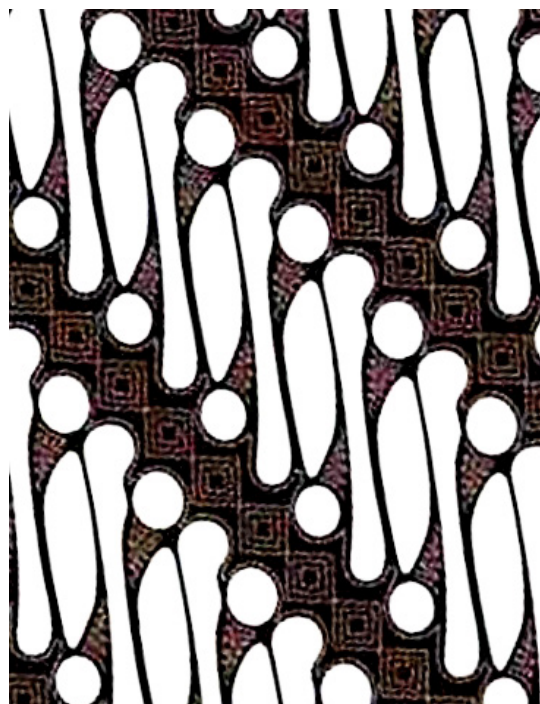


Figure 2 *Parang barong* classic batik motif.

Source: Saiputra (2022)

This phenomenon is the aim of this study, i.e., there is a tendency that batik is not just a clothing ornament and a trend clothing style, instead it rather contains cultural intelligence, especially in the field of clothing. In addition, based on the flow and direction of ornamentation, it becomes a representation of clothing that has an influence in strengthening the appearance and even the personality characteristics of the person wearing it (the wearer). This study intends to serve as a reference for the fashion world, highlighting that batik ornamentation and similar design have both aesthetic and expressional functions, offering wearers a mean of personal expression.

There are several variants of batik motif ornamental flow that can be chosen to suit the context of the event that must be attended or a particular personal character which must be strengthened and displayed in public. Indeed, there are no social rules or cultural agreements in Indonesian society that require wearing certain batik motifs for certain events, but the wearers have sensitivity in choosing appropriate (context-appropriate) ornamental motif styles in terms of social ethics and cultural tastes. Sensitivity in wearing batik is the main priority of this study. Therefore, the results of this research can be an illustration or guide for batik lovers so that they will not wear “the wrong batik clothes” in their social interactions.



Figure 3 King of Kasultanan Palace of Yogyakarta.

Source: International Institute for Indonesian Royalty and Nobility (2011).

METHOD

Batik as a cultural product has a close relationship to various social fields, and even has broad psychological and ideological influences. The method used to examine the complexity of the study object is qualitative research which is based on exploration and explanation. The theoretical approach used is Iconographical Analysis (Panofsky 1982: 28–41) to study the existence of batik in a socio-historical context and Elegant Design Theory (Iandoli and Zollo 2022) to describe the ornamental characteristics of batik motifs.

The data used in this study include (1) informants—company owners, craftsmen, designers, batik lovers, and observers; (2) artefacts—Batik Semar Co., Batik Keris Co., Batik Danar Hadi Co., Kampong Laweyan Batik, and Batik Trusmi; (3) location—Klewer Batik Market Surakarta, Bringharjo and Malioboro Batik Market Yogyakarta, Setono Market and International Batik Centre Pekalongan; and (4) event—trends in batik clothing patterns and styles among people in the cities of Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Pekalongan, Semarang, and Jakarta (see Table 1). Data collection techniques used include (1) analysis of batik work based on motif specifications and ornamental flow characteristics, (2) observation of current social phenomena and people’s behaviour in wearing batik, (3) direct observation at batik producers and market centres, and (4) interviews with several batik producers and designers, batik collectors, and cultural experts.

Based on the characteristics of the methods, theoretical approaches, and data sources used in the study, researchers encountered event data that were sometimes confusing due to the improper contextual use of the batik motifs. For instance, individuals who should present themselves neutrally might wear batik with motifs that are overly attractive or dominant. This observation highlights the importance of considering spatial context in the use of batik clothing. Future studies should note that the appropriateness of batik motifs must align with the context in which are worn to avoid such mismatches.

Table 1 Data and sources of information using purposive sampling basis.

Data Source	Sources of information	Total
Informant	Owners of batik companies (national level)	3
	Traditional batik artisans	5
	Batik designer (classic and contemporary)	3
	Batik art observer	4
	Managers of batik museum	3
	Batik sellers	9
	Collector of <i>lawasan</i> (antique) batik motif	3
Location (city/people who wear batik)	Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Pekalongan, Semarang, Jakarta	4
Location (batik trading centre)	Kampoeng Laweyan and Klewer Market of Surakarta, Bringhardjo Market and Malioboro Yogyakarta, Setono Market and International Batik Centre of Pekalongan	6
Event	Process of making batik	5
	Javanese traditional ceremony	9
	Social activities	14
	People who wear batik clothing	500
Artefact	Classic batik motif	150
	Contemporary batik motif	1,120

Note: Adapted from Yin (2011: 88).

DISCUSSION

Classic and Contemporary Batik Motif

In the traditional rules (Javanese term: *pakê m*) of Javanese batik, “motif” is the smallest ornamental unit resulted from the abstraction of a particular form or object capable of implementing a certain meaning. When units of batik motifs are drawn in a row, continuous, repeated and interrelated in a certain formation, they will form a visual representation called a “batik pattern” (Guntur 2019: 379). The purpose of determining the pattern is to form a certain impression, meaning, and symbolism. However, when a piece of cloth is entirely filled with motifs, it is still referred to as a “batik motif” for simplicity (Rustopo 2008: 83–84). Throughout the process, from motif to pattern and back to motif, messages of local wisdom, symbolic meanings and philosophical values of Javanese culture are integrated. Therefore, it is very appropriate that several classic Javanese batik motifs become special clothing in Javanese traditional rituals or ceremonies; not as a magical device, it is rather as an integrated motif symbolism. The concept of using “ritual clothing” is relatively different from several other cultural areas, such as *simbut* cloth (protective cloth) from the Baduy Tribe (West Java) believed to be “heirloom cloth” which is also made using resist dyeing techniques with ancient ornamental patterns in the form of sunlight, circles, triangles, cardinal points, directed lines and points (Djumena 1990: 86–87; Fraser-Lu 1986: 2). On the other hand, the relatively distant existence of classical Javanese batik as a “magical object” is what makes it open to development in a sociological direction to become an economic commodity, even accepted as national clothing.

Classic Javanese batik can be categorised into three main groups based on the shape of the pattern: (1) *cêplok* family, based on a square geometric plane, (2) *sêmèn* (cement) family, organically based without being limited by planes, and (3) *lèrèng* or *parang* (machete) family, based on diagonal grooves or slanted 45° (Doellah 2002: 20). Most people recognise batik based on the name of its motifs and ornamental patterns. In the long journey of Javanese culture, hundreds of names and patterns of batik motifs have emerged from various areas of people’s batik artisans as well as from within the royal palace. Along with the dynamics of society, many of these motifs are neglected and no longer produced, but some copies are still made and continued to be mass-produced from generation to generation, even preserved as templates or masters that are never changed when reproduced. The main consideration for continuing to maintain certain types of batik motifs is not only based on the visual aesthetic representation of the motif but is more based on complex symbolism (Yunus and Tulasi 2012: 147) which is closely related to the purpose of traditional ceremonies or rituals.

In the golden age of the Javanese kingdoms, especially since the 18th century, batik was inseparable from ceremonies and rituals. Batik is an obligatory to fulfil the symbol system in traditional ceremonies and rituals (Borshalina 2015: 217), as well as these processions has indirectly preserved the authenticity of batik motifs and their symbolism so that they can continue to be used in processions. Even when certain rituals require magical symbols, the abstraction of batik motifs is the most adaptive choice to implement them. The mutualism between batik and traditional processions has evolved to position certain batik motifs as “classic batik motifs” (Lee 2016: 176) in the sense that starting from the creation process, the ornamental pattern, the choice of object and the style of shape abstraction, to the formation of the motif, it is forbidden to be changed. This means that Javanese batik can reach the highest level (classic) when it is able to convey messages of wisdom and fundamental philosophical values in an aesthetic representation which is difficult to re-abstract to become more beautiful and essential. In addition, the repetitive effect of motif patterns or formations is also conditional on being able to build beliefs that they can bring “magical power” (Kitley 1992: 8) when used in ritual processions. Indeed, it is the basic essence of the emergence of Javanese batik, of which the initial aim was not to create ornamental clothing, it is rather to present clothing as a ritual device instead as one of the main functions of traditional art works is always related to ritual (Turner 1982).

Along with the independence of Indonesia in 1945, the rule of the kingdoms in Java ended and it entered the government of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Thus, the existence of batik also experienced a shift in its function and meaning. Batik, originally specifically intended for ritual processions and royal clothing, began to loosen up and the general public, common people, was free to wear it (Kurniawan 2016: 27). This phenomenon opens up opportunities for the emergence of many new motifs that are relatively different from classic batik motifs, both in naming, abstraction style, and function. According to the notes of a Dutch writer at the beginning of the 20th century in his book *De Inlandsche Kunstnijverheid in Nederlandsch Indië* (III), around 210 types of batik motifs were developed in Java (Jasper and Pirngadie 1916). Besides, it is estimated that there were more than 3,000 motifs in the 1980s (Fraser-Lu 1986: vii), and these have most likely developed into tens of thousands of motifs today.

Batik, as an ornamental clothing creation, is not exclusive to Javanese culture: several other tribal loci in Indonesia also have their own batik traditions. Even though the technique, ornamental style and function may differ, it is still recognised as batik. These include Balinese batik, Palembang batik, Jambi batik, Toraja batik, Kalimantan batik, Bengkulu batik, and Abepura batik (Wulandari 2011: 68–69). The term batik is related to the name of the region or tribe because the motifs displayed are identical to the decorative styles typical of the local area. For example, Kalimantan handwritten batik is thick with Dayak ethnic decoration, as well as Papuan written batik which is rich in Asmat style ornamentation (Djumena 1990: 83–84). The open interaction of Javanese batik with other nations in the past also provided opportunities for the emergence of “ordered motifs” of foreign ornamental styles; such as Arabic calligraphy style batik; batik with morning–afternoon motifs, hibiscus flowers and Japanese *swastika* (*Hokokai* batik); batik images of phoenixes, peacocks, lions from China; to Dutch style flower bouquet batik (Fraser-Lu 1986: 38–49; Djumena 1990: 34–46; Wulandari 2011: 66–67). Among many batik loci and influences from abroad, most only focus on the aesthetic representation of ornaments on clothing which does not take into account the expressional impression on the wearer.

In recent developments, the visualisation of Javanese batik has experienced extraordinary relaxation, as if all creators and craftsmen have freedom of expression in creating batik motifs, and this phenomenon is a sign of the revival of “contemporary Indonesian batik” (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia 2008: 19). On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that although contemporary batik motifs appear different from classic ones, their visual characteristics cannot be completely separated from classic batik. These characteristics include the stylisation of flowers and flora, abstraction of fauna, and the formation of points, lines, and planes, often without considering perspective. Therefore, it can be concluded that contemporary batik motifs are the results of the abstraction and development of existing classical Javanese batik motifs. There have been quite significant conceptual developments between classic batik and contemporary batik, particularly in ornamental patterns. In the context of classic batik, this pattern is implemented in the visual of batik motifs on cloth for *jarit* as lower clothing, the focus is primarily on shape, colouring, technical perfection and motif characterisation. It is relatively different in the contemporary batik era because batik cloth is more widely used as upper clothing, where the ornamental patterns developed are more directed towards the effect of expressional articulation or appearance characteristics desired by the wearer.

In Indonesian society today, batik or batik clothing is understood as clothing related to official events, the identity of a group or a locality characteristic of a particular cultural area (Akhmad 2017: 12393). Based on the historical and cultural background of Java which positions batik eminently, batik remains honourable (Veldhuisen-Djajasoebrata quoted in Swallow 1987: 36) and has a special position in the contemporary era.

Starting from expensive types of batik which are made manually like the classic batiks of the past called *batik tulis* (handwritten batik) (Lee 2016: 175) to cheap types of batik which are mass-produced with printing machines, when they are called “batik clothes,” people will still treat it specially and differently from non-batik. Batik clothing is indeed just clothing filled with colourful ornamental images. Nevertheless, behind this simple fact, batik is actually covered by many socio-cultural ethics or normative rules. In sociological interactions, batik clothing can also reflect the cultural intelligence of the wearer, where each wearer of batik clothing must be able to bring about the level of formality of the context of the event they are participating in, including the selection of the type of motif used as well as a reflection of “position awareness” in an event, as the main subject or just invited guests. This shows that clothing is a dialectic of interpersonal values between perception and orientation (Crane and Bovone 2006: 321). Furthermore, it can personally also be a reflection of the user’s level of economic stability (Sulistianingsih and Pujiono 2018: 199) of which high-ranking officials or rich people tend to choose motifs that do not appear much on the market, this type of handwritten batik is made using manual techniques with high-quality materials, sometimes even accompanied by *prada* (gold liquid) to enhance the colouring.

Ornamental Patterns and the Strengthening of Appearance Articulation

In social interaction context, clothing marks the boundary between a person and others, between the individual and the social (Entwistle 2000: 326). In scientific discourse, batik has a multidisciplinary position, based on its motifs it is included in the field of art and design, based on its pragmatic function it is included in social and economic (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia 2008: 2), based on its cultural function it is included in the field of anthropology (Beward 1998: 303), even when interpreting the symbolism, it has educational and philosophical potential (Achjadi 1999: 12). Throughout the history of this motif development, it can function to strengthen a person’s “image” and performance in public spaces. As Javanese Kings in the past always used the *parang barong* batik motif as clothing to symbolise their greatness and power as the organiser of the lives of their people. The basic substance is not the partial choice of motif, the complexity of the process, and the fabric used, it is rather the “cultural intelligence” in choosing the motif which suits the context of the event or public space, as Panofsky named it “organic situation” (Panofsky 1982: 9).

In a period of five years (2010–2014), after batik was designated as a world heritage by UNESCO, the visualisation of batik motifs truly became an expression of contemporary Indonesian culture. The authority of classical motifs began to soften, various abstractions of flora and fauna no longer referred to the naming of objects but rather to their artistic representation. Element exploration of classic batik motifs through the expression of new creations become massively developed in the community (Guntur 2019: 379). Old classic batik ornaments provide endless inspiration for creating contemporary motifs. Various styles and motif tendencies have mixed up through the years and the characteristics of local batik motifs are no longer a representation of the regional origin of the wearer. Entering 2015, the “mixed” batik euphoria began to decrease as consumers and batik lovers began to increase their taste in clothing style. Understanding of batik motifs, especially among the elite, is starting to increase. Accordingly, the choice of motifs is no longer just visually beautiful, but is starting to take into account strengthening appearance performance. This phenomenon is motivated by the desire to appear as a person who “understands batik,” in addition to reflecting social intelligence in batik clothing.

Clothing is a fundamental to the micro-social order (Entwistle 2000: 324). In the world of fashion, it is believed that clothing can cause re-marking (rearrange) the articulation of a person’s desired subjectivity (Barry 2018: 640). The decision to wear batik in the context of awareness to increase the articulation of appearance characteristics is not based on the type of motif, it is rather on recognising ornamental patterns (Li, Hu and Yao 2009: 1042) or compositional tendencies of motifs based on the direction of their formation. Based on field data, both from a number of batik clothing displayed in markets, shops, showrooms, and batik museums, as well as motif variants worn by the public, both for everyday clothing, semiformal events, and at important events at the central government level, batik can be grouped into several variants of ornamental patterns. This leads to the psychological effect that a person feels when they see another person wearing batik clothes with certain ornamental patterns. Several types of articulation of a person’s appearance characteristics that can be formed or strengthened by the tendencies of batik ornamental patterns include supreme character, open character, responsible character, dynamic character, and simple character (humble).

Supreme character

In the context of Javanese culture, a person's appearance or performance, mainly in a social environment, is considered very important and is taken into detailed consideration. One of the proverbs which contains local wisdom values is "*ajining diri saka lathi, ajining raga saka busana*" (Endraswara 2010: 175) which means a person's self-worth is based on his talks, and his bodily value is based on his clothes. In general, the body height of Javanese people is commonly short compared to that of White people, as well as their body posture is in the medium group. Based on cultural aptitude, cultural products related to clothing tend to respond to these limitations. Body image can influence clothing behaviour and clothing can also influence body image as well as a person's psychological nuances (Kodzoman 2019: 92). Likewise, the characteristics of contemporary batik ornamentation which are currently developing, from several variants of ornamental patterns, some are designed to create a dashing, big and dignified impression for the people wearing it.

The tendency of ornamental motifs is to give the impression of being dignified or dashing for men or elegant for women, focusing more on the point of interest on the chest, then branching out in two opposite directions, i.e., the right and left shoulders. This composition psychologically resembles the letter "Y," where the flow of observation is upward, open, and wide (Figure 4). This type of batik clothing with ornamental patterns will strengthen the wearer's appearance to make it look more dignified, exclusive, and dominant.



Figure 4 Ornamental batik clothes with a "letter Y" pattern to convey a dignified and elegant impression, suitably worn by figures or someone in an important position at an event.

The appearance of celebrities, public figures and politicians in public has sufficient provided prevalence for the general public (Moorhouse and Moorhouse 2017: 1957) in the etiquette of wearing batik. Variants of ornamental patterns which can create an impression of authority will be worn by people who are in important positions at an event or are the main subject at formal meetings. For example, a figure who will give a speech at an event, open an activity, or inaugurate an institution or large building. It looks more formal when the batik shirt worn has long sleeves.

Open character

Patterns of ornamental batik designed with the centre of interest in the middle of the body with motif formations spreading symmetrically to the right, left, top, and bottom (Figure 5) are the most flexible type of batik in any situation. The impression emerging from the batik clothes leads to a nuance of openness, togetherness and equality (egalitarianism). This nuance will be captured when the entire motif formation is seen as a unified whole, there is no visualisation of the dominant part of the motif and everything is spread out with even intensity of attention. This formation can be analogous to the mathematical symbol "+" (plus). Batik with ornamental patterns is suitable to wear in the moments of togetherness, semiformal events, without dominance and in a neutral atmosphere. This type of batik motif is usually worn by someone who wants to appear semiformal, still polite, and not in a primary position at an event. It can also be worn by one person or together as the organising committee of an event with the same motif visualisation (uniform).



Figure 5 Ornamental batik clothes with a “plus punctuation” pattern for articulating an open impression, suitable for wearing in moments of togetherness or semiformal events.

Responsible character

The third tendency of ornamental patterns has motif formations such as the punctuation mark “\” (back slash) or “/” (forward slash), of which the main strength is in the cross groove from the waist to the shoulder (Figure 6). This pattern is quite effective to attract other people attention, as the formation crosses diagonally to the left or right giving the impression of contrast compared to the anatomy of the human body which is dominant in vertical and horizontal directions. This contrasting impression can create a dynamic feel for the wearer, who will appear more enthusiastic, optimistic and serious. During the reign of the Javanese kingdom in the past, diagonal lines, especially *parang* motifs, were once one of the motifs which could only be worn by the ruling kings (Figure 3). Apart from containing certain philosophical values in the context of its time, this motif expressional emit the impression of a responsible personality.

In this freedom era of expression, batik ornaments with slanted grooves retain this impression. Batik motifs with a slanted ornamental style can be worn by anyone, but the remains of respect for the patterns that were once the regalia of kings are felt. Not in its symbolic and philosophical meaning, but rather in the impression created by these crossing nuances. This variant of ornamental pattern is suitable for wearing by figures who have certain duties, authority, and responsibilities when they have to appear in public. This is reminiscent of Miss World who appeared on stage with a sash with the name of their country written on it, as a reflection of their duties and responsibilities to carry the name of their country.



Figure 6 Ornamental batik clothes with a “slash punctuation” pattern to articulate the impression of responsibility, suitable for someone who is carrying out duties or on the committee at an event.

Dynamic character

The fourth pattern variant of contemporary batik ornamental has a motif formation like the letter “Z” or an inverted Z. Although the letter Z is not realistic, the flow of the motif composition tends to follow the way the letter Z is written. The strength of this batik ornamental style lies in the complexity of the direction of observation or flow of reading the motif formation. Starting from the middle of the shirt, the ornamental flow rises across to the shoulder, then to the opposite shoulder, and when it feels finished with that sequence it returns to the visualisation of the bottom part (Figure 7). This is done on and on, over and over again, making it seem as if the gaze never stops tracing the movement of the ornamental flow.



Figure 7 Ornamental batik clothes with the “letter Z” pattern to create a dynamic impression, suitable for individuals who want to look progressive, intelligent and inspiring.

This pattern is quite effective to attract other people’s attention, since the formation crosses diagonally to the left or right but actually turns when it approaches the shoulders, and this is also the case with the lower shirt ornaments. The ornamental nuances which are unique enough to predict the flow are what generate the dynamic impression. When someone wears batik clothes with this pattern, it can evoke a more passionate and progressive feel. This pattern is generally the choice for individuals who want to appear intelligent and inspiring in public, for example motivators, panellists, or presenters.

Simple character (humble)

Cultural signs, when arranged to convey meaning, they become visual markers and mental concepts (Breward 1998: 306). The ornamental patterns of batik clothes most widely worn by the general public tend to give a simple and neutral impression, with motif formations and visual intensity that are evenly distributed (Figure 8). Initially, classic Javanese batik was created for *jarit* (lower clothing fabric) with an ornamental pattern that evenly filled the area of the fabric, and when used as clothing, it gave off a simple impression. Correspondingly, contemporary batik with a spreading and even ornamental pattern will strengthen the articulation of the wearers’ appearance character so that it looks simple, harmonious, humble, and egalitarian. This visualisation tends to be a reflection of the basic character of the Javanese people who prefer to live simply, without much attitude, being together and not controlling each other. Like the batik motif with an ornamental pattern, the impression of simplicity can be analogous to the letter “I,” which is a motif that is very flexible to be worn at any event and atmosphere, from casual, non-formal, to formal moments.



Figure 8 Ornamental batik clothes with the “letter I” pattern to articulate a simple impression, the most flexible variety of batik motifs to wear at any occasion.

Batik for the Javanese people is a traditional spirit rapidly growing in the modern era. Although it is receding in the realm of symbolism and philosophical values, it has become a glorifying cultural asset of the nation and is even capable of becoming an economic sector that supports many people. Batik as a contemporary cultural work is a sociological discourse whose many possibilities to be studied, developed, and even developed for world civilisation. Batik has created worldwide admiration, and people are starting to appreciate that batik is not just pragmatic functional clothing, but it has extraordinary artistic values and can strengthen social relations (Forshee 2006: 67, 140). Contemporary batik seems to be a cultural product that has always been open for study and development for world civilisation. Batik has become *eudaimonia*, i.e., one of the tools for achieving an ideal life guided by practical wisdom and moral virtue (Nagel quoted in Manchiraju and Sadachar 2014: 361). A type of Javanese dress art that has developed into a variety of life interests and related scientific perspectives, ranging from the fields of philosophy, aesthetics, economics, anthropology, sociology, to environmental awareness.

CONCLUSION

The adherence of old Javanese people to traditional standards and respect for batik as a ritual tool means that several classic Javanese batik motifs are maintained and perpetuated by future generations. Even though the implementation of conservation is relatively different, anything called batik is positioned as “special” until today. Batik has become an inseparable part of Javanese society in particular and Indonesian people in general. Whatever writers’ and historians’ claim regarding the cultural region where batik originated or which brought batik’s influence to Java island, there is inadequate evidence that the cultural region where batik originated was able to develop it to a classical level or to preserve it until now.

Batik is not merely an ornamental representation for clothing, it has become part of the social system of Indonesian society. Batik in the form of clothing is able to build a layered social dialectic, can always be present and accepted in any atmosphere and event. The multi-functional and multi-effect nature of batik, both sociologically and psychologically, has ensured its acceptance through the times. There is no word “outdated” to describe certain motifs. In fact, classic batik motifs which are hundreds of years of age are increasingly respected and continue to be explored to become new creative batik motifs in the contemporary era. One of the strengths of Javanese traditional art, including batik, is its adaptability and evolution over the ages, symbolically synergising pragmatics between traditional and contemporary trends, between art and design, and between social ethnics and personal expression. Batik is an object of the study that invites interdisciplinary exploration. While not an urgent necessity of life, batik adds beauty and meaning to it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research article was funded by Research Funds from BIMA—National Research and Innovation Agency of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023. Contract number: 055/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2023

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