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Visual Analysis of Contemporary Batik Motifs: The Meaning Behind Tribusono Batik

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ABSTRACT

Tribusono batik is a contemporary form of batik that developed in Surakarta (Solo), Central Java. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the combination of traditional and modern elements in Tribusono Batik design and its symbolic meaning. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and literature studies, then analyzed using the Pyramid Base Guiding Craft Innovation framework which includes traditional artifacts, local ecology, local teachings, and non-material cultures. The results show that Batik Tribusono is not only a textile art product, but also a visual communication medium that is full of philosophical, spiritual, social, and ecological values of the Javanese people. Its motif carries the philosophy of regeneration and harmony, distinguishing it from classical batik, and making it a medium of cultural revitalization in the midst of local economic dynamics. In addition, Batik Tribusono plays an important role in cultural preservation through the process of hereditary inheritance and supports the economic sustainability of the community.

INTRODUCTION

The archipelago is known to have extraordinary cultural richness, one of which is Batik which is the creative work of the nation's children. This work reflects the fusion of elements of art and technology. Every motif and pattern in Batik has a deep meaning, reflecting the high value of art. The world's recognition of the cultural value of Batik is marked by its designation by UNESCO on October 2, 2009 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

This traditional fabric has high historical and aesthetic value, and reflects the cultural identity of the Indonesian people. Apart from being an art product, batik also has a deep symbolic meaning which is reflected in the motifs used. In the midst of the development of the creative industry and the commercialization of cultural products, the symbolic meaning of batik is often reduced to just a decorative motif.

Batik is one of the cultural heritage that has existed for a long time and is widely known in Indonesia. Batik is also a social, cultural, and spiritual symbol that reflects local identity and values. One of the famous batik making centers in Indonesia is Solo, Central Java, which is known for its variety of traditional motifs that are rich in symbolism and meaning. One type of batik that has experienced rapid development in recent decades is contemporary batik, which combines traditional elements with modern design innovations. The younger generation tends to recognize batik only from its visual side, without understanding the cultural values contained in it. Batik can be interpreted as a technique of decorating fabrics by protecting certain parts using barrier materials. The barrier material that is often used in the manufacture of batik is wax or night.

Tribusono batik, which is the main focus of this study, is one of the most interesting examples of the

development of contemporary batik. The name "Tribusono" itself comes from two words, namely "tiga" and "suno", which reflect the use of three dominant colors: sogan (golden brown), blue, and red in the batik design. Tribusono Batik, although rooted in tradition, adopts more freer and expressive design techniques and patterns, giving a dynamic and modern impression in each of the works it produces.

Batik Tribusono describes a shift in the world of batik, where innovation and adaptation to the development of the times not only affect design, but also people's perspective on batik itself. The motifs found in this batik often contain the symbolism of nature and life, but are expressed in a more contemporary way. This makes Tribusono batik not only a textile art product, but also a visual communication medium that reflects the aesthetic and cultural values of modern society.

Previous research related to Batik Tribusono specifically does not exist. Sutrisno, 2018 emphasizes Tribusono as one of the important examples of the development of contemporary batik that utilizes traditional symbolism, but is presented in a more experimental and dynamic style. Similarly, Prabowo, 2020 put forward how traditional coloring techniques and motifs are combined with modern touches to attract the attention of the global market. Wulandari, 2017 shows insights into how batik design and motifs function as a visual communication medium in the social and cultural context of Javanese society.

the lack of studies that delve into the symbolic meaning and combination of modern traditions in Tribusono Batik, which has actually developed rapidly as one of Solo's contemporary batiks. This research aims to examine the various motifs used in Tribusono batik and examine the combination of traditional and modern elements in its contemporary design. Although these three studies make important contributions to the understanding of the evolution of batik, very few have specifically examined the symbolic synthesis between traditional and modern elements in Tribusono Batik. In addition, there have not been many studies that have analyzed this batik through a comprehensive framework that covers cultural, ecological, and spiritual dimensions such as *the Pyramid Base Guiding Craft Innovation* approach used in this study. This opens up opportunities to study Batik Tribusono not only as a textile product, but also as a holistic representation

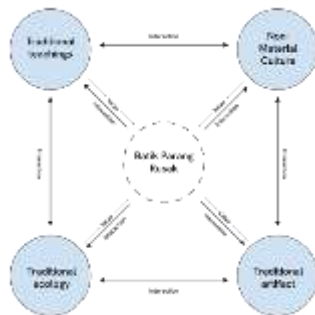
of Javanese philosophical thought . It is hoped that the results of this research are not only important to understand the direction of the development of batik aesthetics in the modern era, but also to highlight the role of batik as a visual expression medium that is adaptive to social, cultural, and economic changes in society. By studying Tribusono Batik, this study is expected to contribute to enriching the study of contemporary batik design while supporting efforts to preserve cultural values.

Describe the background of your article in a concise and detailed way by using data and/or literature review to show the novelty. This section describes the problematic reality that is studied based on a scientific perspective. The introduction concludes by describing the purpose of writing the article.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the Pyramid Base Guiding Craft Innovation approach through observational data, interviews, and literature studies. Observations are focused on Batik Tribusono which can be found in the village of batik laweyan, Surakarta (solo), Central Java. In this study, the researcher evaluated the visual structure and meaning contained in the Tribusono Batik motif through a visual morphology approach, with an emphasis on the analysis of the shape of the motif and the use of color. Interviews were conducted with Rina Pandansari and also Reni Suprihatin as batik makers and also batik preservation. To gain a deeper understanding of the batik making process, the cultural values that are integrated in each motif, as well as the various challenges faced in efforts to preserve tradition and data validation along with the dissemination of information about Tribusono batik. In addition, a literature study was conducted to trace and analyze the findings of previous research related to Batik Tribusono, as an effort to enrich the conceptual foundation and research context. The data collected from the three sources were analyzed using *the Pyramid Base Guiding Craft Innovation* approach (Ciptandi, 2021). This approach aims to identify the main foundations in traditional craft products, which include four core components: traditional artifacts, traditional ecological environments, local teaching values, as well as non-material cultural elements.

The series of stages of this research can be seen visually in Figure 1.



Source: Ciptandi (2021)

Figure 1. Limas Innovation Guide

At this stage, data analysis is carried out with a phenomenological approach through the study of four main elements:

1. The Object Itself refers to a tangible form or artifact that can be observed directly through various aspects that can be sensed by the five senses.
2. Non-material culture in Tribusono batik refers to the values, beliefs, philosophies, and traditions contained in the motifs and use of batik in people's lives.
3. Ecology Tradition, Ecology not only refers to the relationship between humans and nature, but also includes the social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions that exist in the batik tradition, especially in the making of tribusono batik.
4. Traditional Teaching, The teaching process used in the preservation of tribusono batik.

To reveal the most basic values contained in each element. After blending, the overall value contained in the four elements will form the identity and foundation of Batik Tribusono. These four elements are interconnected and form a reciprocal relationship. Elements of traditional artifacts interact with nonmaterial cultures, which further have an interactive relationship with traditional teachings. Simultaneously, traditional teachings also interact with traditional ecology, which then returns to traditional artifacts. The interconnectedness of the values of each element forms the complete unity of Batik Tribusono which represents the essence and cultural identity it contains.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tribusono batik is a type of contemporary batik that developed in Surakarta (Solo), Central Java, in the 1950s to 1970s. Batik Tribusono is known for its combination of flora and fauna motifs, such as flowers, leaves, and birds. Bird motifs, especially phoenixes, show strong Chinese cultural influences in their designs. The colors used vary from light to pastel. These motifs reflect a freer and more decorative style compared to the classic palace batik which tends to be symbolic and bound by certain rules. Tribusono batik flourished among wealthy merchants outside the palace environment, who had the economic ability to order high-quality batik. This type of batik is usually made in the form of a long cloth.

The name Batik Tribusono comes from the name of the village of Tribusono in a village in Baki District, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java, which is about 10 km from the center of Solo City. So, the name of this batik indicates the geographical origin of the batik, not a motif name or philosophical term as in classical batik. If the meaning of the word *Tribusono* is etymologically traced in Javanese, it can be interpreted that *Tri* means three and *Busono* comes from the word *fashion* which means clothes. Tribusono batik reflects the shift from the palace batik that is full of rules to a more free and expressive folk batik. This shows the social and cultural dynamics of Javanese society in the mid-20th century, where the middle class began to have a role in the development of art and culture, including in the world of batik. The main innovation lies in the use of *isen-isen* (motif filling) in the form of dots that form a new pattern, giving a fresh and different feel from the palace's classic batik motifs which are more rigid and symbolic.

Traditional Artifacts

As a physical object (The Object Itself) refers to a tangible form or artifact that can be observed directly through various aspects that can be sensed by the five senses.

- a. Materials and Dimensions

An interview conducted with Mrs. Reni Suprihatin (batik maker and Tribusono batik preservation) the owner of tresno dharma batik revealed that since ancient times, batik artisans have used cotton materials (Mori and Sutra) as the main materials for textiles. The cotton fabric used in the batik making process has various types, such as mori, primisima, prima, and premium, each of which has its own characteristics and quality level. Even in one type of fabric such as mori or primisima, there are variations in quality levels, for example mori A and B, or primisima cap A and cap B. This variation is generally due to differences in producers, the quality of the fibers used, and the composition of the mixture between cotton and synthetic materials. In general, the difference between mori and primisima can be seen in terms of quality. Primisima is known to have higher quality, with smoother, tighter, and uniform yarns, resulting in a soft fabric texture. In contrast, mori fabrics generally have thicker yarn fibers and longer spacing between threads, so the fabric feels coarser and more porous. This difference in quality also affects the batik process, especially in the canning technique. Fabrics with a smooth texture such as primisima allow the canting to be smoother and more stable, while more taut fabrics such as mori tend to complicate the process because the canting ends are easier to get caught in the fibers of the fabric. The type of material is made of natural fibers which have good color absorption ability. This fabric does not come from Solo, Central Java. but it is obtained from traditional markets such as klewer markets or large markets, and batik makers say that many batik makers in Solo get mori and primisima fabrics from domestic textile factories that produce high-quality fabrics for batik purposes. Traditionally, Tribusono batik uses natural and synthetic dyes According to an interview with Ms. Rina Pandansari, the use of synthetic dyes is more dominant for large-scale production due to considerations of efficiency, time, and cost. This is as stated by Ciptandi & Arumsari, 2024 due to the rapid development factor in the batik industry market as a whole which prioritizes practicality, time efficiency, and low costs. with the dominance of reddish-brown color

(sogan/old brown) obtained from the bark of the sogat tree, giving a warm and elegant impression. Black to provide sharp contrast and accentuate patterns. White is used for isen-isen (small details) that embellish the motif. Yellow is also used in floral motifs or other decorative elements. Green is used as an accent on flora motifs. The color is as shown in figure 2.



Figure 2 Materials and Dimensions

b. Batik Process

Along with the emergence of batik artisans, the basic materials used for this mori fabric have shifted to cotton such as primisima or prima. In the past, the materials for the fabric were cotton plants, which are part of the agricultural ecosystem which is also the economic support of the community. The color in Tribusono batik, especially in traditional batik making, is obtained from natural dyes such as bark, leaves, or flowers that grow around the batik community.

The equipment and supporting materials in the manufacture of Tribusono Batik are generally similar to those used in the process of making written batik in general. All of these production components are not sourced from the Solo area, Central Java, but are obtained from the nearest batik center areas. Some of the tools and materials used include:

1. Canting

The main tool for carving night (batik candles) on the surface of the fabric according to the pattern. It consists of a small tube (nyamplung) and a small pipe (pouch) to drain the liquid night. Small canting for detail, large canting for large field.

2. Pan (Tjawan)

Place to heat the night until it melts so that it can be used with canting. It is usually made of metals such as aluminum or copper.

3. Stuttgart

A wooden/bamboo frame or support to spread the batik fabric to facilitate the canting and dyeing process.

4. Stove/Pitcher

Heat source for melting the night in a pan. In the past, they used charcoal, now they often use electric stoves or spirits.

5. Pelorod tools/basins/buckets

It is used during the process of peloroding, which is to remove the night by boiling the cloth in hot water.



6. Night/candle




is a mixture of *gondorukem*, paraffin, beeswax, and fat. There are three types of distinguishing nights, namely *Carik Night / Cat eye night* which is slightly yellowish in color so that the batik is written smoothly


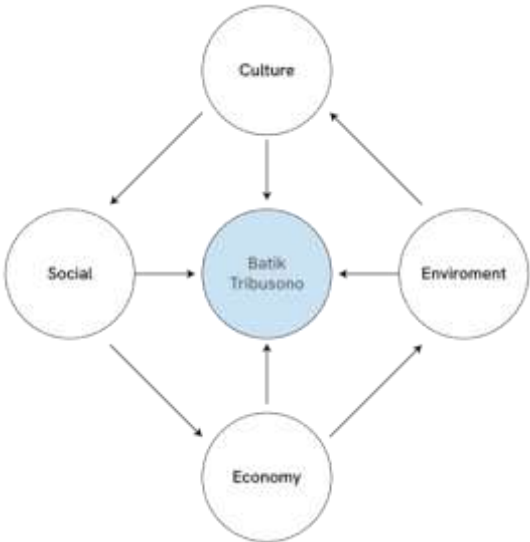
7. Batik Stamp

Used to print patterns on fabrics using liquid night (batik wax). Stamps are usually made of metal (copper, brass) that are sculpted with a specific motif. Stamps are used to press the night on the fabric and produce patterns quickly and uniformly.

This classification and the details of *Tribusono batik motifs*. For a more comprehensive understanding of the shape of the motif

| Main Motives | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| Motif Name | Parts Details | Information |
| Phoenix Bird |  | The shape of the phoenix bird as the main motif (uniqueness) of tribusono batik. Birds with long plumage and elegant decorations, are often accented with gold or white. |
| Anatomy (Head) |  | The head of the phoenix, black on the head and brown soğan for the crested part (crown of flowers or small fire.) are usually facing sideways or upwards, with a smoothly curved beak shape, resembling an |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| | | eagle or mythological bird. Beige/ivory/brown white for a smooth filling around the eyes, crests, and decorative lines. |
| Anatomy (Wings) |  | Phoenix Wing Part, black color emphasizes the outline of the wing shape, beige white for the inside of the wing or as the color of the feathers and contour details. The depiction of the wings on the batik is very clear and not silhouette. consists of a layered layer of feathers. The wings are depicted with graceful and open motion, creating an impression of freedom, majesty, and spiritual power. |
| Anatomy (Tail) |  | The shape of the tail, the tail is depicted in a flowing motion, dangling from the bird's body downwards or sides in large arches. The gold and white colors on the tail reinforce the sacred and divine impression in Tribusono's motif philosophy. |
| Motive Contents (Isen-isen) | | |
| Components of Sekar Jagad |  | It looks like pieces of a map with different shapes. This field is usually filled with stuffing motifs. It looks like a mosaic piece or a map collage. a visual representation of harmonious diversity. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| | | <p>The components include irregular fields filled with small traditional motifs and separated by bold lines, giving an intricate and beautiful aesthetic impression. Each field is separated by solid lines, marking the "boundary of the region" in the visual world map.</p> | | | <p>motifs. A symbol of harmony and balance.</p> <p>e. The pattern of stacked boxes resembles patches (patches). Contrasting colors and patterns indicate patchwork variations. Patches in batik often symbolize hope for repair and protection.</p> |
| <p>Description of Components of isen-isen</p> |  | <p>Each field in Sekar Jagad is often filled with various small motifs (isen) such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Counting patterns (syurups) and small hair-like lines (sawut) in geometric patterns. This pattern looks like a net or cross weave (X), the motif isen gringsing This isen is a variation of gringsing, with a more dense and regular shape. It often appears in patchwork motifs, as a symbol of the union of various elements of life. There are shapes like flowers or stars with white dots (checks). This star shape can also be said to be often found in truntum batik | <p>Traditional Ecology</p> | <p>Ecology not only refers to the relationship between humans and nature, but also includes the social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions that exist in the batik tradition, especially in the making of tribusono batik</p> |  |

Source: Personal Documents (2025)

Figure. 3 Traditional Ecology

Environment to culture: providing materials and inspiration for culture, including batik motifs.

Culture to social: Tribusonos batik contains values oriented towards social life

Social to economy: encouraging batik to introduce/preserve culture

Economy to environment: the income generated can support batik makers, increase resources

The materials used in making Tribusono batik, the fabric used is usually made from cotton grown in fertile areas in Java, especially in Yogyakarta and its surroundings. This cotton crop is part of the agricultural ecosystem which is also the economic support of the community. The colors in Tribusono batik, especially in traditional batik making, are obtained from natural dyes such as bark (*soga javanica.*), leaves, or flowers that grow around the batik community. The color of sogan (golden brown) is a symbol of the warmth of the earth and the closeness of humans to the earth. Tribusono's motifs are also often associated with the philosophy of nature, such as the Phoenix (fire bird) this bird depicts the cycle of life and regeneration as nature is constantly renewing itself. The flora in batik shows gratitude for the biological riches provided by nature. In this context, ecology refers to how the motif describes man's relationship with the universe.

Solo Batik motifs, especially Tribusono Batik, are used in wedding ceremonies (Javanese customs). The family uses Tribusono batik with classic motifs as a symbol of sacredness and harmony. The **Truntum** motif present in Tribusono batik symbolizes the hope for prosperity, eternal love, and the power of family life. The use of batik in this ritual shows how culture and social ecology interact with each other, with batik motifs that are considered to bring blessings and symbolize resilience in life. In Solo (the sultanate of Surakarta), batik is not only a cultural heritage, but also a major source of livelihood for many families. The process of making

traditional batik requires special skills that are passed down from generation to generation, and this indirectly shapes and influences the social and economic structure of the local community. The majority of batik comes from farmers and artisans, so that a close link is created between economic activities, cultural values, and the surrounding natural environment.

As stated by Sutrisno (2012) in his book *Batik: Between Tradition and Creativity*, batik as a cultural product has integrated nature, human skills, and socio-economic systems in an interdependent ecosystem. This statement emphasizes that batik does not only function as a work of art or economic commodity, but also as a representation of a life system that unites the ecological, social, and cultural aspects of the Solo society

Tribusono Batik Teaching Tradition: The Process of Preservation and Inheritance

The tradition of teaching Tribusono batik, as part of the cultural heritage of Surakarta (Solo) batik, has strong roots in the system of inheriting values and skills from generation to generation. The teaching process is not only technical, but full of cultural values, patience, and spirituality because tribusono batik was born intersecting with the palace. Not only that, the creator of the batik is a courtier of the palace as a batik maker.

Batik learning, including Tribusono batik, is carried out in the environment around the kingdom by former courtiers (palace servants) who have been trusted to maintain and preserve the art of batik. This teaching is generally carried out with a mentorship system, where the surrounding community will observe and be taught under the guidance of a former courtier who is experienced in batik science. During this process, the philosophical meaning behind each motif will be explained, such as the value of

constancy, passion, and loyalty, which is translated in batik motifs. Tribusono batik is also studied and taught in batik artisan families. Here, knowledge and skills are usually passed down from parents to their children, often in the form of hands-on learning at home. This process is part of the tradition of informal learning, where children will be taught from a young age to draw, write, and color batik. In ancient times, batik was not only considered an economic skill, but also as part of the preservation of family culture and identity. Tribusono batik is distributed/taught by merchants in kauman to the community as a form of revitalization.

Non-Material Culture

Non-material culture in Tribusono batik refers to the values, beliefs, philosophies, and traditions contained in the motifs and use of batik in people's lives. Although Tribusono batik is a material object (as a cloth made of mori or silk with natural dyes) it also contains non-material elements that are very important in Javanese culture, such as symbolism, philosophical meaning, and role in traditions and social rituals. Non-Material Culture Tribusono batik is firmly rooted in the life view of the Javanese people, namely kejawen (Javanese teachings that teach about life balance, inner peace, and relationship with God). The Phoenix/Peacock symbol is one of the main symbols in Tribusono batik. In Javanese culture, the peacock symbolizes beauty, splendor, and immortality. Flora symbols In Javanese culture, it is often interpreted as hope and fertility, both physically and spiritually. The flower motif in Tribusono batik reminds people to always live with good morals, beautify the world with positive actions, and maintain relationships with nature and others. In an interview conducted with Mrs. Reni Suprihatin as a developer/preservationist of batik, including tribusono motifs Geometric

Motifs (Truntum) in Tribusono batik are often found in combination with organic motifs such as birds and flowers. Geometric motifs such as Truntum symbolize balance and flatness in life. Balance is a basic principle that must be maintained in all aspects of life. This motive teaches that life must be balanced between spiritual and physical, between personal interests and social interests. Bringing harmony between two different poles is the key to achieving peace in life.

Tribusono Batik in Social and Spiritual Life

a. Harmony with Nature

Batik Tribusono teaches that human life cannot be separated from nature. All elements of nature from birds, flowers, to water represent a close relationship between humans and the environment. Harmony with nature is one of the values that is highly valued in Javanese culture, which is also taught through the making and use of this batik.

b. Patience and Perseverance

The process of making Tribusono batik, which involves precision and diligence in drawing motifs and dyeing fabrics, reflects the Javanese philosophy of life that prioritizes patience and tenacity. This batik teaches that everything that is valuable takes time and effort. Just like making beautiful batik, life must also be lived with patience, perseverance, and appreciation for every process that is passed.

c. Symbol of Eternal Life

The Phoenix/Peacock motif symbolizing beauty and splendor illustrates that even though this life is temporary, the beauty and values we inherit will remain eternal. Through batik, previous generations instilled values that they considered important to pass on to the next generation.

Conclusion

Tribusono batik is a representation of contemporary batik that integrates traditional and modern elements in design and philosophy. Originating from Surakarta, this batik not only highlights visual beauty through distinctive flora-fauna and color motifs, but also contains a deep symbolic meaning. Through visual analysis and the Pyramid Base Guiding Craft Innovation approach, this study found that Batik Tribusono contains philosophical, spiritual, social, and ecological values that reflect the life view of the Javanese people.

The main motifs such as the phoenix symbolize regeneration and immortality, while the flora element depicts fertility and hope. The process of making it, which relies on perseverance and hereditary inheritance of values, shows the important role of this batik in cultural preservation. Batik Tribusono also contributes to the revitalization of culture in Central Java and local economic dynamics, while strengthening community identity through visual expression that is adaptive to changing times. Thus, Batik Tribusono is not just a textile work, but a cultural communication medium that is vibrant and full of values, and deserves more attention in the study of contemporary Indonesian art, culture, and design. Exploration of Creative Economy and Social Impact It is necessary to conduct research on the role of Tribusono Batik in local economic empowerment and how this batik contributes to the welfare of the batik community, especially in the context of creative economy and cultural tourism.

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