



# The Role of Visual Communication in Ornament as an Indonesia Cultural Identity

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**Abstract.** Indonesia is a country that has a variety of cultures. Ornament as an art form can be a sign of Indonesian cultural identity. Ornaments have the role of visual communication of a culture which is historical evidence of the meeting and mixing between local culture and foreign culture which is often called cross-cultural mixing.

This research focuses on the ornaments that carry the message of cultural diversity which can become a cultural identity. Descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques. The results of this study prove that there is cultural diversity found in ornamental motifs that contain philosophical and historical meanings.

**Keywords:** Ornament. Culture. Visual Communication Identity.

## 1 Introduction

Decorative or ornamental art in Indonesia has been known to the public since prehistoric times. The term ornament is a component of an art product made for the purpose of decoration [1]. Ornaments can be found on various historical relics in various forms, such as architecture, handicrafts, jewelry, and decorations made on temple reliefs [2]. People's views in the past were that ornaments were a medium for conveying messages as a form of devotion, offerings, respect and worship to revered gods (the Hindu-Buddhist Kingdom period) [3].

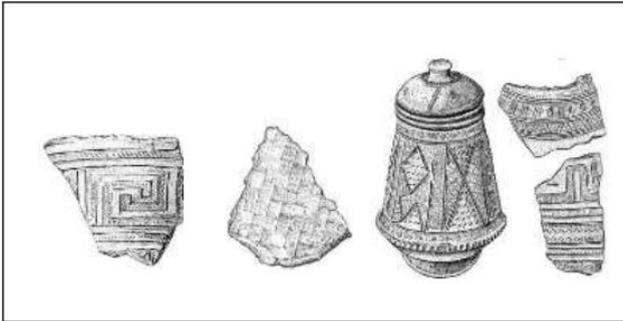
Ornaments continue to be preserved from generation to generation and passed down according to the rules and norms of society. Ornaments continue to be preserved from generation to generation and passed down according to the rules and norms of society. Motive is the main thing basic thoughts or forms in renewal ornaments or decoration. Ornaments, as a part of Indonesian culture, are often referred to as Indonesian ornaments. The various classifications of ornamental motifs are classified into geometric motifs, human decorative motifs, animal decorative motifs, plant decorative motifs, decorative motifs, natural object decorative motifs, landscape decorative motifs and technological objects. Miguel Covarrubias in the book "Island of Bali" states that ornaments are the embodiment of the soul taken from nature in the form of rocks, mountains, plants, then they form the parts.

An ornament as a work of art is a work of art that has meaning as a marker. Signs are a unique communication medium from creators or artists to provide information to

the audience [4]. Ornament as a sign is not just a visualization of a work of art, but as a 'sign' that holds meaning that needs to be revealed and understood, so that it can be treated proportionally.

## 2 Ornament

Indonesia is known as a country that has a very diverse cultural heritage. Ornaments are an important element in a culture. The history of ornaments in Indonesia in prehistoric times was known as 'ancient religion'.



**Fig. 1.** Ornaments on pottery are still done by incising, gouging, pressing or stamping them wet is the discovery of prehistoric objects.

People get to know art by drawing and measuring objects and tools for religious purposes so that it gradually becomes a symbol or 'sign' [5]. Ornament is a form of cultural acculturation that starts from the combination of two or more cultural systems. The ornaments that are often found in Indonesia are the result of a combination of cultural diversity. Local culture with immigrant culture such as Hindu-Buddhist culture, Islamic culture, Chinese culture, and Western/Colonial culture. Each ornament that emerges as a result of cultural acculturation has its own characteristics which become markers with its philosophical meaning. An influence of religion brings spiritual life and the concept of places of worship is adapted to native Indonesian beliefs.

Ornaments in the classical art era were a form of traditional ornament that followed pre-existing rules, norms and patterns. Traditional ornaments have developed over a long period of time so that they each have their own character and symbolic value. An example of symbolic ornamentation is clearly visible in classical art, namely the tree of life. The tree of life is the 'land of soul' of the Indonesian people which to this day still has an important role in the world of ornamental art [6]. The tree of life is very well known because it is a symbol of life.

Ornamental art emerged in the collective life of society and has a communal nature, which means it is a collective idea and belongs to the community. The creator of the ornament never mentioned his name because it was made together with the people around him. In the end, an ornament that has 'special features' can last from generation

to generation and become a noble ornament, full of value, and ready to be passed down from generation to generation.



**Fig. 2.** Kalpataru Tree of Life on Prambanan Temple Relief

An ornament cannot be separated from motifs and patterns, because they are the main elements in ornamental art. Ornaments have characteristics, including: constant and regular repetition of shapes, stylization (simplification of shapes), division of decorative areas that have been adapted to the media. The motifs of the ornaments are depictions of animals, plants and gods. Each motif used has a philosophical and symbolic meaning. Ornaments can be found in various media such as *gebyok* (teak wood room wall coverings filled with carved ornaments), batik cloth, paintings, masks, jugs, urns, and *wayang* characters.



**Fig. 3.** *gebyok* (teak wood room wall coverings filled with carved ornaments)

Ornaments are made using various techniques that are adapted to developments over time.

### 3 Ornaments as Indonesian Cultural Identity

The ornaments of the Indonesian nation have the characteristics of diversity and plurality of cultural diversity, tolerance, dialogue and respect for differences. Ornaments are often associated with the cultural identity of the Indonesian people, because ornaments are part of one of the material cultural heritages. Ornaments have an important meaning for Indonesia as a symbol of unification and national identity. It is hoped that the ornaments can be a source of information for educational purposes and maintaining local culture. Ornaments can become cultural identities because first, ornaments have historical value and cultural traditions. Second, ornaments can be an effective communication medium. Third, ornaments can enrich the aesthetic life of a society, because ornaments have beautiful shapes and details. Fourth, ornaments can be a medium of expression and creativity for artists/creators. Fifth, ornaments can become an identity and identity for an area which is a mirror to strengthen brotherhood in society. Sixth, ornaments can become cultural heritage that must be preserved because they can create diversity. Seventh, ornaments can provide economic opportunities for the community [7].

Ornaments are a form of cultural development that can become identity, character and cultural resilience. Support from the community, artists and the government is important in maintaining the existence of ornaments as Indonesia's cultural identity. Law Number 5 of 2017 is proof that the government pays attention to the preservation and promotion of culture as the nation's cultural identity.

### 4 Visual Communication in Ornaments

Visual communication in an ornament has an important role, because all the ideas and suggestions produced by the creator or artist who made it can be interpreted. Ornaments are not just objects consisting of visual elements but also return to the essence of an ornament, namely decoration. Each form of ornament is the result of the embodiment of beauty which has its own uniqueness because it is composed of visual elements (line, color, texture, shape, value and space).

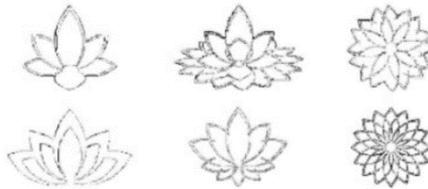


**Fig. 4.** Visual Elements

Learning about ornaments, which are a form of culture, means learning through a visual approach, thinking and understanding their meaning. The visuals of an ornament, the media of an ornament, and the materials of the ornament make every ornament viewer have their own perspective in accordance with the aesthetic, historical, cultural and religious understanding of the creator and the surrounding community who play a role in making an ornament [8]. Ornaments that have been passed down from generation to generation are said to have a philosophical depth that is important to continue to tell to future generations.

The visual elements in static ornaments pay attention to shape, color and motif. Visual elements can describe an ornament iconically and symbolically, because visual communication can be a system for fulfilling human needs in the field of visual information through symbols that can be seen [9].

Ornamental motifs are divided into floral ornaments, fauna ornaments, geometric ornaments, figurative ornaments, natural object ornaments and imaginary ornaments. One of the ornaments discussed is the lotus flower ornament.



**Fig. 5.** Lotus Ornaments

One of the ornaments discussed is the lotus flower ornament. Lotus flower ornaments can be found on the reliefs of the Singosari temple, which was restored in 1934-1937. The lotus flower takes the form of a throne for the god which is a symbol of purity and cleanliness. The lotus flower ornament in Buddhist cultural/religious beliefs means purity, this is because the habitat of the lotus flower is clean water or water that has never been polluted. The lotus flower motif can also be interpreted wherever the Buddha was born to bring peace and patience.



**Fig. 6.** Lotus Ornaments in

The lotus motif can be found on the stones supporting building pillars, one of which is the Bangsal Kencana building pillar. The placement of these ornaments still has the same meaning, namely purity and strength. The lotus motif on the pillars of this building has undergone a process of stylization and acculturation with Islamic culture. The lotus motif is made from the Arabic letters, namely mim ( م ), ha ( ح ), mim ( م ) and dhal ( ذ ) which is read by Muhammad). The color of the lotus flower motif is golden yellow which has the meaning of majesty.

## 5 Conclusion

Ornaments are one of the cultural elements that must continue to be maintained and preserved. Visual communication is one of the scientific disciplines needed to be able to read the meaning of an ornament. Ornaments have a passive nature, which means they are only used as decoration, and ornaments with an active nature mean that the ornament is not only a decoration but also supports other things, such as determining strength (functionality). Ornaments are a 'sign' and symbol of cultural acculturation. The cultural diversity present through ornaments proves the mixture of local culture with immigrant culture present in the archipelago. The cultures present have different motifs from each other. Ornaments can also be historical evidence that other cultures came and were accepted by local culture.

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