



The Potential of Hindu-Buddhist Temple Reliefs in East Java as Batik Motifs Based on the Values of Tolerance and Harmony

Wahyu Djoko Sulistyo^{1*}, Indah Wahyu Puji Utami², Arif Subekti³, Bayu Kurniawan⁴,
Novdya Indra Trisnawati⁵, Zhahwa Aqila Puteri⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia
wahyu.djoko.fis@um.ac.id

Abstract. This study aims to explore the potential of Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in East Java as batik motifs based on the values of tolerance and harmony. The research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data collection techniques include literature study, observation, interviews, and documentation. The research focuses on four temples in East Java: Penataran Temple, Jawi Temple, Jago Temple, and Jabung Temple. These temples reflect noble values, namely tolerance and harmony between religious communities Hindu and Buddhist followers in the past within the archipelago. The results of the study show that the four temples possess Hindu-Buddhist elements that represent religious tolerance and harmony. These values are then developed into batik motifs. The batik motifs are applied to several products such as clothing, tote bags, mugs, and pins. The resulting batik motifs are not only aesthetically valuable but also contain moral and commercial value. These batik motifs are expected to serve as a means of preserving the noble values of the Indonesian nation for the younger generation, while also providing economic benefits to the community.

Keywords: Temple Relief, Batik Motif, Tolerance Values, Harmony Values.

1 Introduction

The historical development of Indonesia is inextricably linked to the grandeur of classical-era structures, particularly temples. The existence of these temples serves as evidence of the cultural and religious influence of India, which shaped a distinctive characteristic of classical Indonesia. A temple is a sacred site or place of worship often used for memorial ceremonies or the interment of the ashes of kings or individuals who held significant influence within a kingdom. The existence of temples also serves as a benchmark for the various kingdoms that once flourished across the Indonesian archipelago; almost every temple possesses distinctive characteristics specific to its respective era. For instance, temples from the Ancient Mataram and Majapahit eras differ in their structural layout; those from the Ancient Mataram era were built in strict accordance with the vastusatra principles. In contrast, during the Majapahit era, temple structures were more deeply rooted in local wisdom. Temple structures are also broadly categorised into two types: the Central Javanese

style and the East Javanese style. This distinction is based on form or structure; Central Javanese temples tend to be large and broad, whilst East Javanese temples tend to be slimmer and taller [2].

Indian architecture has influenced the construction of various temples across the Indonesian archipelago [3]. The influence of India on the design of temples across the Indonesian archipelago is evident in the principles of *vastusastra*, which emphasise harmony between architectural design and natural elements [4]. One of the influences of *Vastusastra* found in the temples of the Indonesian archipelago is the arrangement of mass and space [5]. Despite the influence of Indian culture on the Indonesian archipelago, the architecture of the archipelago's temples differs from that of temples in India. There is a significant blending of local cultures in the architectural design of the archipelago's temples [6]. One of these is a design for a terraced shrine, similar to a temple, built during the Majapahit era [7].

Owing to their unique structure, which harmonises with nature, the aesthetics of the temples are also evident in the variety of reliefs depicting a wide range of subjects—from the activities of the local community, which highlight elements of local wisdom, to various stories with spiritual themes. The presence of these reliefs within the temple structures is a key element that provides context for the temples themselves. The presence of these temple reliefs can also serve as a source of learning in the present day, given the abundance of stories that convey moral values [8].

Local wisdom in temple architecture can also be seen in the relief patterns at Rimbi Temple in Jombang, which depict aspects of local life such as agricultural activities, social and political life, and the spiritual aspects of the community [10]. Furthermore, reliefs depicting the daily activities of the local community can also be found at Penataran Temple; there are reliefs showing agricultural activities such as ploughing rice fields and carrying loads on shoulder poles, as well as reliefs of horse-drawn carriages illustrating the mobility of the people living around Penataran Temple [11]. The values of tolerance and harmony are also evident in the reliefs of Bubukhsah and Gagang Aking at Penataran Temple, which depict the story of two ascetics of different traditions (Shiva and Buddha) who respect one another [12]. The majority of temple reliefs, particularly those found across Java, depict spiritual themes; for example, at Jago Temple there are reliefs with spiritual motifs such as Kunjarakarna, Parthayajna and Arjuna Wiwaha [13]. A moral lesson is also found in one of the fables depicted on the reliefs at Jago Temple [14]. The concept of interfaith harmony is also depicted in the reliefs at Jawi Temple, which portray joint learning activities between the Shaivite and Buddhist traditions [15]. The reliefs at Jawi Temple also depict the contribution of women to community life during that era [16]. At Jabung Temple, there is a relief depicting the story of Sri Tanjung, which recounts the origins of Banyuwangi [17].

Conservation efforts must, of course, be undertaken to ensure the long-term preservation of these Hindu-Buddhist reliefs and temples; measures to safeguard and promote them through various educational initiatives are necessary to safeguard the existence of Indonesia's historical heritage [18]. One form of preservation is to utilise them as an educational tool, by teaching the values conveyed through the stories depicted in the reliefs. One of the most striking aspects of the various Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs, particularly in East Java, is the value of tolerance and harmony. There are quite a number of temples featuring relief carvings depicting harmony and

coexistence between Shiva and Buddha. This is particularly evident in the case of Penataran Temple, Jawi Temple, Jago Temple and Jabung Temple, which feature reliefs depicting elements of tolerance between the two major religions of that era. Previous research has largely examined the erosion of the core values found in cultural heritage from the past [1], [9], [19]. However, very few have adapted the motifs from temple reliefs to create batik designs imbued with profound meaning.

One way to preserve the legacy of Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs is to incorporate them into batik designs. Research into the development and application of these relief motifs in batik craftsmanship has previously been carried out by [20] by selecting the reliefs of Jago Temple as the subject of a batik design aimed at conveying the moral messages found in the temple's reliefs. The development of batik motifs based on reliefs has also been undertaken by [21] which draws on the reliefs of Ngempon Temple as the basis for its motifs, with the aim of promoting Ngempon Temple on a large scale through batik. The development of batik motifs inspired by these temple reliefs has prompted the researcher to examine the potential of Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in East Java that could be developed into batik craftwork. The focus of this study is on the reliefs at four temples in East Java, namely Penataran Temple, Jawi Temple, Jago Temple and Jabung Temple. The reliefs found at these four temples embody the values of tolerance and harmony within a society.

2 Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods. Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social or humanitarian issues [22]. A qualitative approach is a research process involving the collection of empirical data, data analysis and drawing conclusions from the data, right through to the final written output, using non-numerical methods such as descriptive analysis, observation, in-depth interviews, content analysis, narratives, diaries and open-ended questionnaires [23]. This study aims to understand and describe the potential of Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in East Java as a source of inspiration for batik motifs that embody the values of tolerance and harmony. A qualitative approach with a descriptive methodology was chosen as it was deemed capable of exploring the symbolic meanings and cultural contexts contained within the temple reliefs in depth, whilst also enabling the researcher to interpret the relationship between cultural artefacts of the past and contemporary cultural expressions such as batik. This allows for a comprehensive description of the findings of this study.

This research was conducted at several Hindu-Buddhist temple sites in East Java, namely Penataran Temple in Blitar Regency, Jawi Temple in Pasuruan Regency, Jago Temple in Malang Regency, and Jabung Temple in Probolinggo Regency. These four temples were selected because their reliefs possess not only aesthetic value but also contain philosophical narratives reflecting the values of harmony in life, interfaith tolerance, and religious teachings in this context, Hinduism and Buddhism. The research was carried out from January to June 2025. This research involved

several parties, including batik craft partners such as Soendari Batik and Art Gallery Malang.

Data collection was carried out through literature review, observation, interviews and documentation. The literature review involved examining secondary sources such as books and academic articles on Hindu-Buddhist temples in East Java and several relevant topics. Direct observations were carried out at four temple sites in East Java Penataran Temple, Jawi Temple, Jago Temple and Jabung Temple to identify the reliefs on these temples. Interviews were conducted with several informants, such as history enthusiasts. Furthermore, documentation was carried out to corroborate the field findings with visual and textual references.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Identification of Hindu-Buddhist Temple Reliefs in East Java

Penataran Temple is situated in East Java, specifically in the village of Penataran, Nglegok Sub-district, Blitar Regency [24]. During the period from the Kingdom of Kediri to the Kingdom of Majapahit, Penataran Temple was known as Palah Temple. This temple was built as a place of worship for Bathara Palah, who resides on Mount Kelud. Penataran Temple was one of the most important kadewaguruan or mandalas during the Majapahit period [25]. Penataran Temple comprises three courtyards in accordance with the Tri Mandala concept. Tri Mandala is a concept of spatial division in the Hindu tradition, comprising Nista, Madya and Utama [26].

The reliefs at Penataran Temple depict human figures alongside a variety of symbols, natural scenes, animals and buildings [27]. One feature on the front courtyard of the Penataran Temple complex is a pendapa terrace adorned with reliefs. The reliefs on the pendapa terrace depict Sri Tanjung, Sang Satyawana, Bubuksah Gagangaking, Tantri Kamandaka, and a relief whose narrative is as yet unknown. In the second courtyard, there is a second gateway and the Naga Temple. The reliefs on the Naga Temple depict Tantri Kamandaka and, possibly, a scene from the Panji epic. Meanwhile, the reliefs on the main temple—which has three terraces on the third courtyard—depict scenes from the Ramayana and the Kresnayana. In addition, there are reliefs of Tantri Kamandaka on a pair of dwarapala statues and the patirnaan, as well as a relief of Sri Tanjung on a stone [25].

The relief depicting the story of Sri Tanjung on the second terrace of Penataran Temple comprises 16 consecutive scenes. The boundaries between the scenes in the relief are often marked by dense foliage, vines and buildings in the form of a pendapa [28]. The narrative concerning Sri Tanjung originates from a purification chant which evolved into the Panji tales [27]. The scenes depicted in the Sri Tanjung reliefs tell the story of Sri Tanjung's loyalty to her husband, Sidapaksa [29]. The Sri Tanjung relief at Penataran Temple conveys a message of virtue in life. When a person feels remorse for mistakes they have made, they should turn to the Creator, seek forgiveness and repent. The Sri Tanjung relief also symbolises spiritual purification.

In general, Penataran Temple embodies the values of tolerance and harmony between elements of Hinduism and Buddhism. Hindu-Buddhist elements at Penataran

Temple are evident in its architecture and reliefs. The architecture of Penataran Temple displays distinctive Hindu features, yet there are numerous dwarapalas

exhibiting Buddhist characteristics, and there are reliefs in both Hindu and Buddhist styles [25]. The discovery of reliefs at Penataran Temple, which display both Hindu and Buddhist motifs, suggests that the site was once both a place of worship and a religious centre [30].

Jawi Temple is situated in the village of Candi Wates, Prigen Sub-district, Pasuruan Regency. In the *Nagarakertagama*, written by Mpu Prapanca, Jawi Temple is referred to as Jajawa and was founded by the last king of the Singhasari Kingdom, King Kertanegara [31]. It is believed that the cremated remains of King Kertanegara are kept at Jawi Temple [15]. King Kertanegara embraced the teachings of Tantrayana Buddhism, but for certain reasons revived the concept of the Shiva-Buddha [31]. This temple stands on a raised platform and is surrounded by a pond [25]. The temple complex consists of two courtyards enclosed by brick walls and connected by a brick gateway [31].

The reliefs at Jawi Temple depict various events and activities from the past in Singhasari. The reliefs at Jawi Temple depict the lives of the people of Singhasari during the reign of King Kertanegara. The temple reliefs illustrate the community's religious rituals, social interactions within Singhasari society, and even the agricultural system. Furthermore, the reliefs at Jawi Temple provide a visual representation of the spatial layout of the temple itself [32].

There is an interesting aspect to be observed in the reliefs of Jawi Temple, namely the role of women. Some reliefs depict women accompanied by attendants, whilst others show female figures without any attendants or courtiers. The roles of women in the reliefs at Jawi Temple include those of a princess, an ascetic, attendants, and members of the royal court carrying offerings or *gebogan*. These reliefs demonstrate that women also played important roles, not merely confined to the domestic sphere as was often dichotomised in later eras [16].

The reliefs at Jawi Temple also illustrate the human life journey. Depictions of women in various panels represent the stages of life within a spiritual tradition, namely *Brahmacari*, *Grahashta*, *Wanaprasta*, and *Biksuka/sanyasin* known collectively as the *catur asrama*. *Brahmacari* refers to the stage when a person is unmarried and is acquiring knowledge, pursuing spiritual studies, and becoming a *yogiswara*, *sastrambara*, and *sastrajna*. *Grahashta* is the period of life spent in marriage or family life. *Wanaprasta* is the stage when a person has come to understand the true nature of life and begins to distance themselves from worldly or transient matters. Next, *Biksuka* or *Sanyasin* is the stage in which one has renounced worldly life [16]. Embarking on the path back to Him, known as *moksha*. The reliefs at Jawi Temple also depict the human journey through life.

Jawi Temple embodies deeply ingrained values of tolerance and harmony. There is a sense of harmony between the Hindu (Shiva) and Buddhist traditions at Jawi Temple. The lower section, or base, of Jawi Temple features Shiva (Hindu) motifs, with *kala* and *makara* decorations on the temple steps and entrance, whilst the upper section, or roof, is shaped like a stupa, which is a Buddhist symbol. The statues in the Shiva (Hindu) style include those of the Trimurti, Goddess Durga, Lord Ganesha and Kalki. The statue in the Buddhist style is that of *Aksobhya*; however, this statue is no longer located within the Jawi Temple complex. [15]. At first glance, the reliefs at Jawi Temple appear to depict real-life events interwoven with the narratives of Sang Satyawana (Hindu) and Gandawiyuha (Buddhist). This

archaeological evidence supports the hypothesis that Jawi Temple is a Shiva-Buddhist temple [25].

Jago Temple is situated in Jago Village, Tumpang Sub-district, Malang Regency. The name 'Jago' derives from the word 'Jajaghu', which is taken from the *Negarakertagama* manuscript [31]. Jajaghu is the ancient name of what is now the village of Jago. According to the *Nagarakertagama* and the *Pararaton*, the Jawi Temple is described as the site of the memorial ceremony for the king of Singhasari, Wisnuwardhana, also known as Ranggawuni [33]. This temple is in the Tantrayana Buddhist style, as evidenced by the statue of Amoghapaśa the tantric form of Avalokiteśvara—accompanied by his attendants. The statue represents King Wisnuwardhana. [31]. Although it is known as a Buddhist temple, there are indications of Shaivite (Hindu) elements in Jago Temple. There is only one Buddhist relief, whilst there are five Hindu reliefs, which include Buddhist statues such as the Amoghapaśa pantheon [25].

Jago Temple is rich in reliefs depicting a variety of stories. On the first level, there is the Tantri Kamandaka relief, carved into the base of the stepped temple on the south-east and north-east sides. The second level features Ari Darma, carved into the base of the stepped temple on the north-east side. The third level features Kunjarakarna, carved into the base of the stepped temple on the north and west sides. The fourth level features the Parthayajna and Arjunawibhawa reliefs, carved on the double-tiered base on all sides. The final level features the Kresnayana relief, carved on the body of the temple on all sides. Some of these reliefs have been eroded by the weather, whilst others have been lost entirely as the walls have collapsed [25].

The reliefs found at Jago Temple convey certain values or moral messages. One of these is the Ari Darma relief, which carries a moral message. Firstly, one should not turn a blind eye to a crime that has occurred or is about to occur, as depicted in the Ari Darma relief, which thwarts the evil intentions of a male dragon seeking to defile a female dragon. Secondly, all sinful acts will inevitably be met with retribution and are not condoned by the gods. Thirdly, one should be grateful to others who have offered help and repay their kindness with something of value, as depicted in the relief showing the female dragon's father bestowing valuable knowledge upon Ari Darma as a token of gratitude. Fourthly, one should avoid arrogance by not drawing undue attention to oneself whilst performing acts of kindness, as illustrated by the relief depicting the dragon king disguised as a Brahmin. Fifthly, one should demonstrate loyalty and honesty towards one's spouse, as depicted in the relief showing Ari Darma recounting all his experiences and sharing his supernatural knowledge with his wife [33].

Jabung Temple is situated in Jabung Village, Paiton Sub-district, Probolinggo Regency. Jabung Temple is of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, as evidenced by its architectural features, although there are no inscriptions to confirm this. The roof of Jabung Temple is thought to have been shaped like a stupa, but part of it has been damaged [31]. Jabung Temple is unique in that it is the only temple with a cylindrical body reinforced by pilasters as supporting columns [34].

Jabung Temple is divided into four sections: the temple plinth, the base, the body and the roof. The temple plinth, or lower section, features numerous coiled vines and lion reliefs that illustrate human nature. From the base to the body of the temple, there are numerous reliefs depicting the stories of Sri Tanjung and Patih Sidapeksa.

Meanwhile, the roof resembles a Buddhist place of worship and may have once featured a stupa, which has since been lost from the roof or summit of Jabung Temple. [35]. The story of Sri Tanjung contains religious teachings on how people should conduct themselves, as can be seen from its meaning [36]. Although it is regarded as a Buddhist temple, judging by its architecture and Buddhist statues, there are Hindu reliefs which indicate that Jabung Temple contains both Hindu and Buddhist elements [25].

3.2 Batik Motif Designs Based on the Values of Tolerance and Harmony Found in the Reliefs of Hindu-Buddhist Temples in East Java

Based on research carried out at several Hindu-Buddhist temple sites in East Java, it can be concluded that the four sites under study Penataran Temple, Jawi Temple, Jago Temple and Jabung Temple embody the values of tolerance and harmony. This relates particularly to tolerance and harmony between followers of the Hindu and Buddhist faiths in the past. These values of tolerance and harmony can be observed in the reliefs carved on the walls of the temples and surrounding structures, in the architectural design, and in the functions for which these temples were utilised. The values of tolerance and harmony embodied in these Hindu-Buddhist temples demonstrate interfaith harmony during the classical period in the Indonesian archipelago, specifically on the island of Java..

One of the most intriguing temple reliefs, with great potential to be used as a batik motif, is the relief at Penataran Temple. Figure 1 shows a relief depicting a woman on a palanquin carried by two men, followed by a group of women believed to be court ladies. Beneath the palanquin, a dog can be seen following behind. The scene depicted in this relief is thought to portray a bride. This is in keeping with the Javanese aristocratic wedding tradition of parading the bride on a palanquin, whilst the groom typically rides a horse. However, this tradition is rarely seen today. Nowadays, particularly in aristocratic weddings within the former Islamic Mataram sultanates, the palanquin has been replaced by a horse-drawn carriage.



Figure 1. Relief depicting a bride and groom in a palanquin at Penataran Temple
Source: Researcher's documentation



Figure 2. Design of the 'Bride in a Palanquin' Batik Motif
Source: Researcher's documentation



Figure 3. 'Bride in a Palanquin' batik motif
Source: Researcher's archives

The batik motif design developed was inspired by the relief of the bride and groom in the palanquin and was embellished with several ornamental elements to enhance its aesthetic value. In addition, there are several sections or points featuring scrollwork. The design of the 'Bride in a Palanquin' batik motif is shown in Figure 2, whilst the coloured version, or final motif, is shown in Figure 3. In addition to the 'Bride in a Palanquin' motif, this research also produced the 'Singa Sakyamuni' motif, as shown in Figure 4. These motifs were subsequently applied to various products, such as shirts, tote bags, mugs and pins. An example of the application of the 'Singa Sakyamuni' batik motif on a shirt is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. ‘Sakyamuni Lion’ batik motif
Source: Researcher’s documentation

3.3 The Potential of Batik Motifs Based on the Values of Tolerance and Harmony in the Reliefs of Hindu-Buddhist Temples in East Java

Batik motifs based on Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in East Java, which embody the values of tolerance and harmony, hold potential in terms of aesthetic value, noble values or virtues, and commercial value. Firstly, in terms of beauty or aesthetics, batik motifs based on Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in East Java possess visual beauty. This is because the batik motifs developed feature attractive colour combinations and blend well with other motifs, such as the ‘mega mendung’ (cloud) motif. These two elements constitute the aesthetic appeal of these batik motifs.

Secondly, noble values or virtues: these batik motifs embody the noble cultural values of the Indonesian nation. Inspired by the reliefs on temples in East Java, these batik motifs reflect efforts to preserve the historical heritage and noble culture of the Indonesian nation, particularly from the Hindu-Buddhist era. These batik motifs serve as a means of introducing the cultural richness and civilisation of the archipelago’s past to the younger generation of Indonesians. Amidst today’s rapid technological development, the younger generation—the nation’s future leaders—must not forget the past glories of the archipelago. Through these batik motifs based on Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in East Java, it is hoped that the younger generation will be inspired by the values of tolerance and interfaith harmony from the past, and

that these values will be realised in contemporary life within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Thirdly, the commercial value: batik motifs based on Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in East Java can generate economic benefits if these motifs are applied to various products, such as clothing, tote bags, mugs, pins and other items of commercial value. The community can utilise these batik motifs to develop various products, and the realisation of such activities will undoubtedly bring economic benefits to the community, particularly for those living near the Hindu-Buddhist temples in East Java. Thus, historical relics from the past can provide benefits for the community of today.

4 Conclusions

The historical development of Indonesia cannot be separated from the grandeur of classical-era structures, particularly temples. The existence of these temples serves as a benchmark for the various kingdoms that once flourished across the archipelago. These historical relics in the form of temple structures must be continually maintained and preserved. By maintaining and preserving these temple relics, younger generations can emulate the moral values embodied within them. These moral values can be seen in the reliefs carved onto the temple structures and the surrounding buildings. Indonesia possesses historical heritage in the form of temple structures scattered across various regions, including the province of East Java. The subjects of this study are four temples in East Java, namely Penataran Temple, Jawi Temple, Jago Temple and Jabung Temple. These four temples are believed to have both Hindu and Buddhist influences, indicating a strong sense of tolerance and harmony between religious communities in society in the past.

At the Penataran Temple complex, the reliefs generally depict Sri Tanjung, Sang Satyawana, Bubusah Gagangaking, Tantri Kamandaka, Panji, the Ramayana and the Krisnayana. Meanwhile, at Jawi Temple, the reliefs generally depict life during the Singhasari Kingdom, including religious rituals, social interactions, agriculture and the human life cycle. Furthermore, the reliefs at Jago Temple depict the stories of Tantri Kamandaka, Ari Darma, Kunjarakarna, Parthayajna, Arjunawiwaha and the Krishna epic. Finally, the reliefs at Jabung Temple predominantly depict the story of Sri Tanjung.

One of the relief scenes at Penataran Temple has been developed into a batik motif by researchers; it depicts a woman being carried in a palanquin by two men and accompanied by court ladies. This relief is believed to represent a bride. In addition to the 'Bride in a Palanquin' motif, this research has also produced the 'Sakyamuni Lion' motif. These motifs can be applied to various products such as clothing, tote bags, mugs, pins and other items of commercial value. Batik motifs based on Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs in East Java possess potential in terms of aesthetic value, moral or ethical value, and commercial value. These batik motifs can serve as a means of preserving and introducing Indonesia's noble heritage to the younger generation, whilst also providing economic benefits to the community.

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