

Indonesian Diversity reflected in Batik Motifs Worn by Asian Games' Mascots

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Abstract—This paper focuses in exploring batik motifs worn by Asian Games mascots: *Bhin-bhin*, *Atung* and *Kaka* that wear three kinds of Indonesian batik: *Papua batik*, *batik tumpal*, and *Palembang batik*. Batik is traditional cloth originated from Indonesia. Formerly, elder people used to wear batik only in special occasions like wedding ceremony, baby shower ceremony, courts, or other special and formal occasions but recently, younger generation or teenagers also interested in wearing batik is in any occasions. It also becomes Indonesian pride as batik often exhibited in international fashion events. The latest event celebrated internationally was Asian Games that involve many athletes from Asian countries. In this moment, Indonesia chooses 3 mascots wearing batik. It implies how Indonesia maintains its cultural heritage. Based on aforementioned phenomenon, this paper will explore Indonesian diversity as reflected in Batik motif worn by Asian Games mascots. Semiotics theory is applied in this research to gain the meanings and values behind the batik motifs. Applying descriptive qualitative method, the researchers take 3 mascots as the data and examine them based on Pierce's semiotic theory. The results reveals 3 batik patterns which represent the Indonesian philosophy particularly in term of diversity as mentioned by the slogan *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*. This research leads to the conclusion that Indonesian people still strongly preserved the philosophy *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* which represents the diversity and the richness of Indonesian culture.

Keywords: batik, semiotics, Asian games, Asian games mascots, *bhineka Tunggal Ika*

I. INTRODUCTION

Batik is one of Indonesian cultural heritages which develop rapidly in Java, as stated by Stephanie (1993: 106) that batik is also made elsewhere in the world but has reached its highest level of development in Indonesia, particularly in Java which is produced in villages, usually near the *Kraton* (palaces) and in urban factories and workshops. In the beginning, *Batik* used to be waxed with a *canting* using natural dye extracted from plants. This is called *batik tulis* which is nowadays considered as the finest *Batik*. As *batik* started to become popular in 2000, *batik tulis* is then replaced by printing batik that is more affordable for the consumers.

Batik has reached its popularity as it is acknowledged by UNESCO in 2009 as Indonesian intangible cultural heritage. Since batik started to be recognized worldwide, Indonesian government put it in three mascots of Asian games. Asian games is a multi-sport event held every four years among athletes from all over Asia. This refers to the second biggest sport event after Olympic Games. This event always set the mascots to represent the host country and in 2018, Indonesia decided 3 mascots taken from local animal to represent the energy of Asia. Those 3 mascots wear batik from Palembang, Jakarta, and Papua to show its identity.

Batik is not merely a detailed pattern resulted from wax-resist dyeing method. It does not only contain decorative shapes but also riches of symbols. Its motif represents cultural significance and aesthetic value as well as its history, philosophy, and society. Symbols are considered as an important aspect to analyze for they are part of the culture. This is in line with Herusatoto (2003: 9) who stated that culture consists of ideas, symbols, and values which are resulted from human's creation as well as action. Batik worn by Asian games mascots also delivers the cultural value preserved by Indonesian: *Bhineka Tuggal Ika* which can be defined as unity in diversity. This slogan is a founding principle of Indonesian which declares the essential unity of its members despite ethnic, regional, social or religious differences. This research will mainly focus to answer the questions: what are the signs found in the mascots of 2018 Asian Games? and How the mascots represent Indonesian cultural diversity? Utilizing semiotics theories, those two questions will be answered and elaborated thoroughly

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Semiotics

Semiotics helps people in studying how meanings are made and how reality is represented. It refers to the study of signs that deals with everything that can be taken as a sign. Sign considered important in human life since it allows people to recognize and identify patterns, it can be the plan for taking actions, then, it acts as a model of particular phenomena (Sebeok, 2001). In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. It also refers to any physical form which represents object, feeling, or event. Thus, semiotics deals with any signs used to deliver the idea, information, as well as command which enable someone to develop his perception toward what is heard, seen, felt, and smelled, (Natashia, 2015). Therefore, identifying the signs and the functions are the main focus of semiotics.

Semiotics is considered as a science because it refers to one of the disciplines that equipped with reliable theories and methodologies, as stated by Danesi and Peron in Hoed (2014:18). Furthermore, semiotics can be utilized to find the research hypothesis and the result of semiotics research resulted in a new approach to change particular point of view. There are two leading scholars' perspectives on semiotics theory: a Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and a philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure's theories constituted a starting point for the development of various structuralism methodologies for analyzing texts and social practices. Then, Peirce concerns on the meaningful use of signs in form of words, images, sounds, odors, favors, acts or objects. He emphasized logical aspect in interpreting the sign, thus, logic is semiotics (Sudaryanto: 2012:40). Peirce offered a triadic model consisting of the representamen, an interpretant, and an object (Chandler, 2007: 29).

In short, the sign is a unity of what is represented (the object), how it is represented (the representamen) and how it is interpreted (the interpretant). *The representamen* is the form which the sign takes which is called by some theorists the 'sign vehicle'. It is not necessarily material, although usually interpreted as such. Then, *an interpretant* is not an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign, while *an object* refers to something beyond the sign to which it refers (a referent). To qualify as a sign, all three elements are essential.

In addition, Peirce offered three modes of relationship between sign vehicles and what is signified, which are: *icon*, *index*, and *symbol*. These modes are also known as types of meaning. Based on (Chandler, 2007, p 36; Merrel, 2001, p. 31), an *icon* refers to the sign that correlates with its object by its similarity or resemblance. Portrait or photograph is a good illustration of the icon which represents the original item. Photograph of cat directly represents the cat itself. *Icon* considered as the simplest mode since it merely shows the object represented directly or physically similar to the object. Printer icon as illustrated in a table is an icon of printing function since it resembles printer physically

Index is a sign that interrelates with semiotic object through some actual or physical or imagined causal connection. This refers to a mode in which the signifier is directly connected in some way to the signified. This can be interpreted as the indicators of a fact or condition. *Index* is defined as sensory feature of particular object. The meaning contains in index can be inferred and observed. *Index* is also characterized by cause and effect relationship. As the example, the natural sign like thunder is an *index* which indicates the rain, and footprint is also categorized as *index* since it indicates the coming of someone. Dark cloud is the index of the rain. People can predict the rain will come soon if there is a dark cloud which indicates this natural phenomenon. This cause and effect relationship is the characteristics of *index*.

Then, *symbol* that cannot be simply interpreted since the meaning is based on the social convention. In interpreting symbol, signifier does not resemble the signified. The meaning is purely conventional; the relationship must be agreed and learned. Morse code, traffic lights, and national flag are some illustrations of the symbolic mode. Symbol associates the object indirectly, thus, the meaning should be learned. Red rose is considered as a symbol of the love. This meaning is based on its characteristics which are beautiful and elegant.

B. Batik

Batik that is now admitted as one of world cultural heritages derives its name from an Indonesian term *titik* which means dot, point, or drop and it has correlation to the process of batik making itself. In the process of batik making, the artist uses a pointed cup called *canthing* to make a pattern by dropping the wax called *malam* on the cotton fabric called *mori*. After that, there are still several steps to go until the pattern and motif are fully made. Batik design develops well in Indonesia, especially in Central Java in which two historical kingdoms exist up to now, namely *Kasultanan Yogyakarta* and *Kasunanan Surakarta*. However, other existing kingdoms in other parts of Java are also influential to the growth of batik arts. In Indonesia, the growth of batik cannot be separated from the growth of three major religions; Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Each of those religions uses batik as a medium to spread the teachings. For example, Islam in Indonesia was mostly taught by Wali Songo or Nine Walis by means of cultural approach such as batik with its *kaligrafi* pattern since it is forbidden for Moslems to wear animal motif clothes. Hinduism and Buddhism reflect their teachings with some motifs like *kawung* which reflects sacred and regulated universe.

Apart from its function in religious matters, batik was also considered the symbol of nobelty in some regions. For example in Central Java, especially in Surakarta Kingdom, in 1769, 1784, and 1790 the ruler of Surakarta reserved specific patterns for his family. The sultan and his family were the most important personages, and for them, aristocratic women in the *kraton* traditionally

made the finest batik, just like the noble young ladies of the middle age in Europe used to stitch exquisite embroidery for their families and their lords. (Elliott, 1984, pp. 64–68).

In the eighteenth century, the sultans of Yogyakarta and Surakarta decreed that certain motifs were forbidden to commoners. Although many people, especially those on the north coast, paid little attention to the decrees, within the hierarchical and strict court etiquette the proper use of the forbidden motifs by the “right” people at the “right” time was taken seriously. Yet, while the motifs originally were full of meaning, eventually they became designs with no particular significance except for their beauty. Those motifs are described below:

1. *Kawung* resembles the cross section of the *aren*-palm fruit, with the crosses in the center of each oval suggesting the seeds of the fruit. It also looks like a four-petaled blossom, a simplified lotus. The motif may have evolved from fish scales. *Kawung* is an old design, part of the *ceplok* category of patterns based on repeating squares, rectangles, ovals, and stars. Designs in the *ceplok* group reflect the Javanese belief in a structured universe; the cross in the center is thought to represent a universal source of energy.
2. *Parang*, the sword pattern, implies power and growth and was worn by rulers. This pattern had to be faultlessly executed. A flaw would destroy the magic power of the cloth. *Parang* means "broken dagger," and it is probably related to the dagger, or *keris*, "universally worn by all classes" in early nineteenth-century Java. Legends emphasize the supernatural power of the *keris*: it made heroes in war, brought good luck to the unfortunate, and healed the sick.
3. *Parang rusak* is an elegant, diagonal variation of the *parang* pattern. *Rusak* means "damaged or destroyed" and with *parang* it could mean "enemy destroying. The mythical significance of this design is similar to that of the *parang*.
4. *Cemukiran* is a raylike pattern similar to *parang* that probably owes its origin to the lotus. *Cemukiran* often borders a plain-colored centerpiece called the *modang*; the *modang* was worn only by royalty.
5. *Sawat*, or "large wings," represents the *garuda*, according to legend, a birdlike creature with the body and limbs of a man and the beak and talons of an eagle. In Hindu-Javanese mythology the *garuda* carried Visnu through the heavens.
6. *Udan liris*, or "light rain," combines a variety of designs and natural shapes within parallel diagonal lines. Most likely *udan liris* is a fertility symbol related to agriculture.
7. *Semen*, which may be related to the same word in English, means "to sprout" or "to grow." The *semen* design is so full of symbolism that it may represent the worship of fertility as well as the Javanese belief in a cosmic order. Mountains suggest holy places of the gods; temples and pavilions represent places to meditate; wings provide a means by which to move into the spiritual realm; animals represent the earth; birds, Father Heaven (especially *garuda*); and the snake (*naga*) symbolizes Mother Earth, the underworld, and creatures of the sea.
8. *Alasalasan* or "Virgin wood" is similar to the *semen* design and may have been its precursor. It lacks the pavilions and gateways but presents a multitude of animals and plants against a solid background. The flora and fauna suggest that *alasalasan* encouraged productivity and protection of the crops. This pattern often is applied to cloth in gold outline.

Those motifs or patterns are the commonest and most popular patterns of batik that can be seen today and along with the growth of batik industry, batik artisans are competing with each other to produce batik with various motifs, and many of them still hold the value of batik as a cultural representation of their regions. During its development, batik is not only functioned as clothes and symbol of nobility, but it is also used to represent certain message in certain events or occasions especially in its origin country, Indonesia.

C. 2018 Asian Games Mascots

Since 1982, the Host of Asian games had to decide the mascot which usually taken from the local animal which represent the country. About the event mascots, previous Asian Games events had shown that there were more than one animal served as the mascots. 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou and 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, five rams (A Xiang, A He, A Ru, A Yi and Le Yangyang) and three spotted seals (Baramé, Chumuro, and Vichuon). However, it is not just enough to have one single type of mascot; it takes three kinds of animals to prove that there is something convincing about Indonesian diversity. To get the better illustration, the animals taken as Asian games mascots are displayed below.



Figure 1. Variety in Asian Games mascots

The 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia has three mascots: *Bhin bhin*, the colourful bird of paradise or *cendrawasih*; *Atung*, the Bawean deer; and *Kaka*, the one-horned Javanese rhinoceros. *Bhin bhin* is chosen as its strength and power, *Atung* is chosen to represent the speed, while *Kaka* is the good illustration representing the strategy. Those names are taken from Indonesian motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* which means *unity in diversity*. *Bhin bhin*, *Atung*, and *Kaka* are animals from three different regions: Papua, Java, and Sumatera which represent the Eastern, Central, and Western regions of Indonesia



Figure 2. 2018 Asian Games mascots

Interestingly, each mascot wears traditional clothes: *Bhin Bhin* wears a vest with Asmat pattern details, *Atung* wears a *sarong* with *batik tumpal* pattern, and *Kaka* wears a Palembang *songket* with flower pattern. Asian Games mascots with its particular batik style reflect the cultural diversity of Indonesia and their unity. Besides, different batik motifs also reflect the diversity of ethnic, religious, and racial Asian communities who participated in the 18th Asian Games. The three mascots are displayed in the table below:




		
<p>Bhin bhin: greater bird of paradise/cendrawasih <i>Paradisaea apoda</i> Represents strategy Wears vest with Asmat/Papuan batik</p>	<p>Atung: Bawean deer <i>Hyelaphus kuhli</i> Represents speed Wears <i>sarong</i> with Jakarta's <i>batik tumpal</i> motif</p>	<p>Kaka: Javan rhinoceros <i>Rhinoceros sondaicus</i> Represents power Wears traditional flower pattern clothes from Palembang</p>

Table 1. Three mascots of 2018 Asian Games

III. METHOD

This research is conducted to explore the Indonesian diversity as reflected in Batik motif worn by Asian Games mascots. Semiotics theory is applied in this research to gain the meanings and values behind the batik motifs. Applying descriptive qualitative method, the researchers take 3 mascots as the data and examine them based on Pierce's theory of sign.

Qualitative approach is applied which focuses in answering two central questions and use exploratory verbs, as *explore* or *describe*. This is in line with the characteristics of qualitative research proposed by Creswell (2009:141). Referring to descriptive qualitative research, this research focuses initially on patterns of motifs which contain meaning and description rather than merely displaying number and frequency, as stated by Sutopo (2006:40). In descriptive-qualitative research, researchers emphasize on the description of real facts and investigate them deeply. The data of this research are in form of visual objects that can be described based on their pattern, resemblance, and also colour to create certain meaning and message.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Diversity is indeed a strong message carried in 2018 Asian Games. Starting from the venues, Jakarta and Palembang were chosen to be the sport settings showing their different activities as the national and provincial capital cities. While Jakarta shows its dynamic and go-getter life style with many developing sites, Palembang enjoys its tranquility and calming river-side culture.

Representing three different areas of west, central, and east of Indonesia, single-horn rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) named *Kaka*, Bawean deer (*Hyelaphus kuhlii*) named *Atung*, and Cendrawasih or bird of paradise (*Paradiscaea apoda*) named *Bhin Bhin* are chosen to bring the various values in sports such as strength, speed, and strategy. Their names are derived from the official national motto of Indonesia *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* meaning Unity in Diversity. The choice of these three animals along with their names shows the real value of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* itself. Through these mascot, diversity that exist significantly in Indonesia and throughout Asian countries is united together to symbolize unyielding Energy of Asia.

On the other hand, unity in diversity is also boldly represented by the distinctive *batik* clothing that the mascots wear. Indonesian Batik has gone far beyond its traditional roots from main batik-associated cities in Java like Yogyakarta, Surakarta, Cirebon, Pekalongan, and Lasem. Traditional motifs like *kawung*, *sidamukti*, *parang*, *truntum* or *mega mendung* are redesigned into up-to-date simple forms along with its earthy colors that turn into millennial bright chrome. Now, in every Indonesian province, batik starts to come up as one of its cultural characteristics.

A. Palembang batik worn by *Kaka*



Figure 3. Kaka

During 2018 Asian Games, batik stands up successfully to exemplify other significant values as beyond its usage, motifs, colour, and symbols. To represent west of Indonesia, Kaka the rhinoceros wears traditional batik attire with mixed flower pattern from Palembang. The patterns are taken from two kinds of clothes namely *batik tulis* (handmade batik) and *songket* (traditional woven cloth). Due to Islamic shari'ah, Palembang batik uses neither animal nor human as its ornamental motif. Most of the batik motifs like *kembang bakung*, *bungo teh*, *bungo dadar*, *bungo delimo*, *bungo pacik*, *bungo cino*, *bungo tanjung*, *babar emas*, *babar kecubung*, *kerak mutung*, *gribik*, *encim*, *jukung*, and *sumping* are inspired by plants and flowers. The motifs worn by the mascot are taken from batik *bungo teh* and songket *bungo jepang*.



Figure 4. Batik Palembang

Meanwhile, colours in Palembang batik are strongly influenced by bright colours in songket like red, crimson, and yellow. Such colours also prove that there is a significant influence of Chinese culture in coastal cities like Palembang and Jakarta.

B. Batik sarong with tumpal worn by Atung



Figure 5. Atung

The central area of Indonesia is represented by Atung the Bawean deer. Here, Atung wears batik sarong with *tumpal* motif from Jakarta. Tumpal is one of geometrical ornaments with the shape of triangle. This ornament can be found in both cloth and architectural designs. In one side, this motif symbolizes that there is a cosmos concept united three elements: human

(microcosmos), nature (macrocosmos), and deity (metacosmos). This also shows a journey starting in the human world to the other transcendent world or immortality. Tumpal can be put in the center of a cloth or remain as the separating border line.

On the other side, tumpal symbolizes young bamboo shoot and it provides deeper meaning as in *pucuk rebung* motif. This motif has the meaning of good expectation and benefits toward life journey. This is because bamboo has provided a lot of valuable benefits since its young until mature age. Young bamboo shoot has been a lasting source of delicacy, while the full-grown bamboo has proved its ability to stand still during severe weather condition like stormy season.

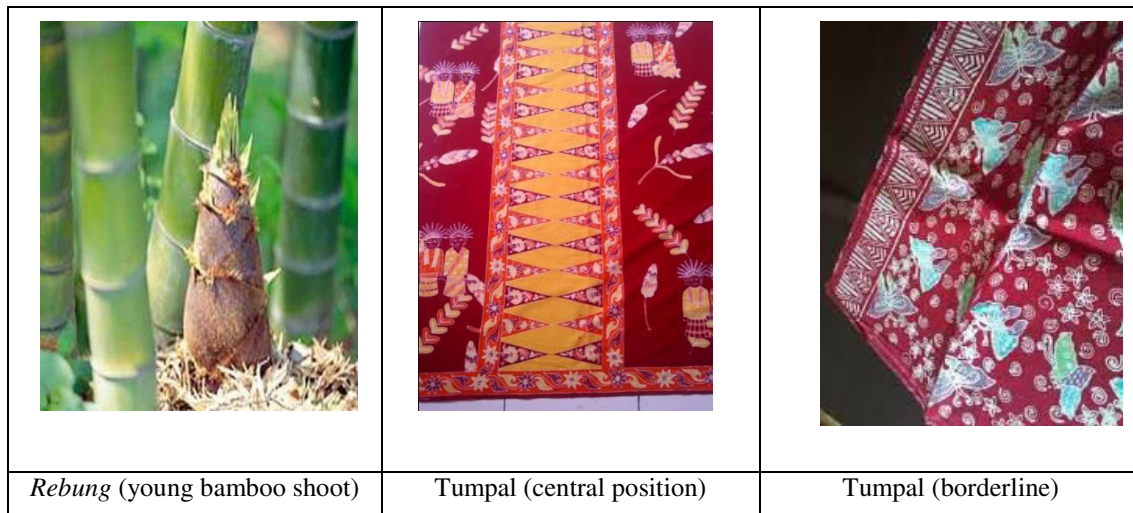


Figure 6. *Batik Tumpal*

Like coastal cities along Sumatera and Java, Jakarta or Betawi batik and the other *pesisiran* (coastal region) batik is highly influenced by many immigrants coming to Indonesia like Chinese and Indian. Bright colors like red, lime green, or ultramarine make Betawi batik stand out among other *pesisiran* motif.

C. *Batik vest with Asmat motif worn by Bhin bhin*



Figure 7. *Bhin bhin*

Last, Bhin Bhin the Cendrawasih or bird of paradise highlights the east area of Indonesia into something beyond language. Kaka uses a batik vest with Asmat geometrical motif from Papua. Talking about batik in Papua, it just started around 1985 when Indonesia government received grant from The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to increase cultural development in the east area of Indonesia. Therefore, batik trainers from Java, especially from Yogyakarta and Surakarta, were called to assist this program.

Papua batik or in this case Asmat batik is inspired a lot by nature, tribal elders, and the relationship between generations among Papua tribes. Therefore, tribal artifacts showing human bodies like in *bisj* (wooden pole), canoe, or shields and even paintings found certain caves in Raja Ampat become the unique inspirations in making Papua batik.

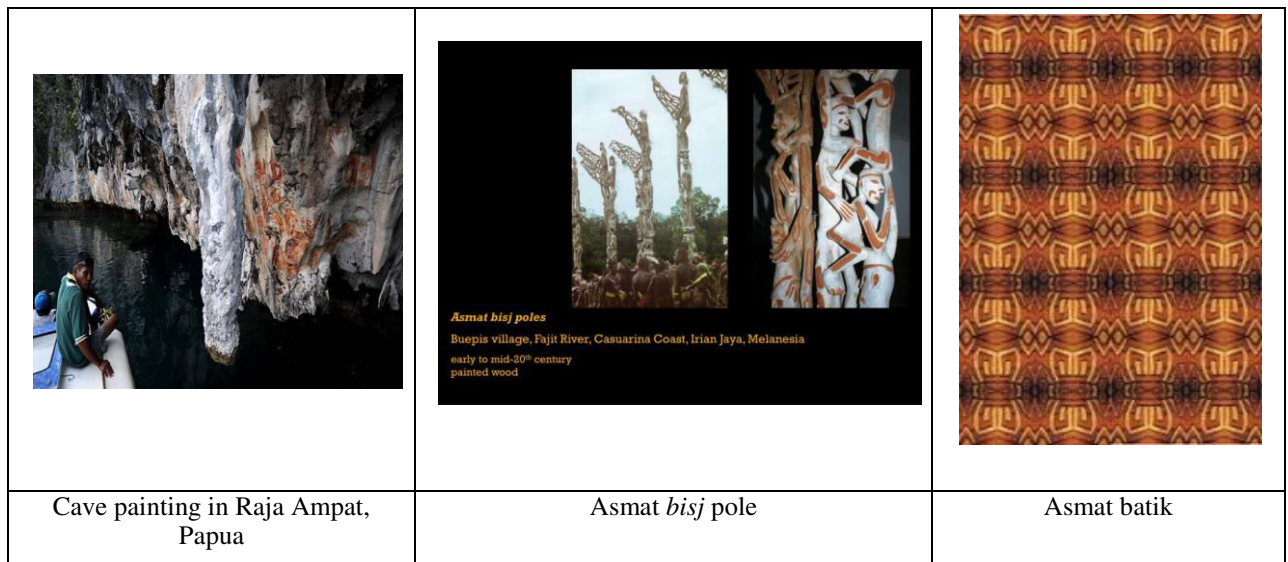


Figure 8. Asmat Batik

For coloring, despite new bright chromes, earthen color, ranging from brown, black, and white, is the main source of Asmat batik beside natural ones from barks or seeds.

V. CONCLUSION

Batik as one of Indonesian cultural heritages is chosen as a cloth worn by 2018 Asian Games mascots held in Indonesia. 3 mascots wearing batik are *Bhin bhin*, *Kaka*, and *Atung*. They represents three different areas of west, central, and east of Indonesia. Single-horn rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) named *Kaka*, Bawean deer (*Hyelaphus kuhlii*) named *Atung*, and Cendrawasih or bird of paradise (*Paradiscaea apoda*) named *Bhin Bhin* are chosen to bring the various values in sports such as strength, speed, and strategy. Their names are derived from the official national motto of Indonesia *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* meaning Unity in Diversity. The choice of these three animals along with their names shows the real value of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* itself. Through these mascot, diversity that exist significantly in Indonesia and throughout Asian countries is united together to symbolize unyielding Energy of Asia.

Furthermore, unity in diversity is also boldly represented by the distinctive *batik* clothing that the mascots wear. Through batik, Indonesia has been successfully communicated its vivid message about diversity that is united in a piece of adorned ornamental cloth. Classical and traditional patterns from long-experienced batik cities can go side by side and welcome the existence of modern and up-to-date patterns from new batik centers around Indonesia. This is worth experiencing for and it makes what Indonesia is now.

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