

# Design Development of The Batik Majapahit : The Legacy of the Past and Present Creativity

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**Abstract** his article discusses the result of visual exploration from the Majapahit heritage which is set as the concept of design development for the present Batik Majapahit. The offered design development is not only based on the past but also in accordance with the present which will embellish the sustainable creative process. Specifically, this article will elaborate the creative process of the Batik Majapahit design development in today's era to bridge the definition of the Batik Majapahit in the past and the "sophistication" of the present design idea.

**Keyword:** Batik Majapahit, design development, Visual Legacy

## INTRODUCTION

Up to this time, the visual heritage of Majapahit has not been specifically explored the heritage of visual work as the cornerstone of Batik design. Nonetheless, the visual arts of Majapahit have the typical artistic power that generates the term "local genius" of Java since the visual arts of Majapahit become the milestone of the art style and the original Javanese elements (Kieven, 2014). The art style emerges as the positive response of Majapahit artists on the cultural climate which is influenced and dominated by the Indian art style in the earlier era (Holt, 2000).

One of the visual art heritages of Majapahit is batik. Trowulan people, Mojokerto, which was the area of the former Majapahit Empire, believe that there has been the cloth embellished by Batik technique in the era of Majapahit. The belief encourages the people of Trowulan to bring up Batik Majapahit until present. The emerged Batik Majapahit is the new work of Batik in which the motive is inspired by and is maintained by Majapahit arts heritage in the form of visual, philosophy, and cultural values.

Batik Majapahit possesses the potential in the form of wealth which is historic-social-cultural, artistic, iconographic, symbolic, and typical visual style of Majapahit (Setyawan, Studyanto, 2017). The potential is possible to explore to be the new product in the present. This article discusses the concept of design development in Batik Majapahit by reinterpreting the visual arts heritage of Majapahit in the past and explores them to be batik motives.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the global textile field, Indonesia becomes the reference to the ethnical textile and to be the country with the most complete diverse textile art. The cost of 6,5 million dollars paid by Australian National gallery to collect 400 textile artworks from Indonesia shows the international recognition of the existence of textile art in Indonesia which becomes the wealth of world arts (Bennet, 2002).

One of the traditional textile products in Indonesia that attracts the world's attention is batik. Basically,

Batik does not only exist in Indonesia. However, the world recognizes that batik from Indonesia, especially from Java, comes through sophistication in terms of the ornamental variety (motive), dying technique, and the production technique is in its best of other regions (Doellah, 2002; Pambudy, 2000)

One of Batik cloth that is developed in Java is Batik Majapahit. The existence of Batik Majapahit is intertwined with the historical fact of Majapahit as the Javanese civilization art that shares various artifacts of art and culture. It includes the pathways of development in terms of Batik tradition (Holt, 2000; Rahardjo, 2011; Yudoseputro, 2008). Batik tradition in the era of Majapahit becomes the milestone of Batik in Java to survive although Majapahit was collapsed. Batik will always be alive, overspread, and thrive in the trade center of the northern coastal area in Java Island to Central Java. On the top of that, according to Veldhuisen (1993), the well-known Mataram Empire along with its classic Batik also shared the batik tradition of Majapahit.

The traces of Batik Majapahit can be tracked through its archeological artifacts in the area of Trowulan which is the former area of Majapahit Empire. The history of Batik can be tracked through the temple relief of Majapahit heritage such as in the story of Panji or Ramayana. The use of batik and kebaya cloth worn by the women appears on the relief (Holt, 2000). Batik as the empire cloth has been painted on the statue as the embodiment of Majapahit kings and the consort (Yudoseputro, 2008). The statue in Ngrimbi Temple reflects the figure of Raden Wijaya, the first king in Majapahit (governed from 1294 to 1309), that wore the cloth with kawung motif. The motive in the cloth consists of the detailed lines and dots. It indicates that the batik technique is used in the representation of the cloth. Furthermore, the organized and geometric ornamental motives on the ornamental relief of the temple were reprocessed and applied in Batik. Several motives depicting the plants, animals, and the symbol of Hindu and Budha also appear in the ornamental variety of batik (Holt, 2000).

The trace of batik can also be read in Serat Pararaton. Batik is generally called the clothing material that includes the motive of *gringsing* and *ceplok* as batik ornamental variety. In this story, Raden Wijaya shared *lancingan* (cloth) gringsing to his servants: Sora, Ranga Lawe, Dangdi, and Gajah (Hasanudin, 2001). Likewise, the story of Ma Huan, a Chinese Indonesians who dropped by Majapahit in the early 15s, reported the performance of *Wayang Beber*. *Wayang Beber* is a type of puppet art performance depicting the pictures that are painted on a sheet of wood skin (*dlacang*), the clothes that were worn by the woman figure, and various pictures of flora fauna with the visual style which are closely related to batik.

### PROBLEM STATEMENTS

The problem of Batik Majapahit in the present era is the stagnation of the visual innovation (motive). The craftsmen of Batik Majapahit are not eager to explore and raise the new motives showcasing the history and typical characteristics of Batik Majapahit. Whereas, Batik motives are the important and decisive elements since the motive will determine whether or not a batik cloth has the "spirit". Motives also show where batik comes from.

Considering the above-mentioned facts, Batik Majapahit can be developed in an innovative way using a design approach. The design approach is directed to open any new possibilities in creating the motives and to go through the limitation of conventional batik that makes it stagnant. Using design approach considers that the problems of Batik are not merely the problem of textile product in a simple scope. Batik also relates to the problems in creating various opportunities, ideas development, values, identities, practices, social changes, knowledge and technology, and the use of new media (Pambudy, 2000). Referring to the thought proposed by Burdek (2005), creating Batik does not put down the opportunity for the approach to not only stop in the past but also in the present era as well as to embellish the sustainable process.

### METHODOLOGY

This article was conducted based on the qualitative research in 2018. The studies that were carried out were the research and development in the form of action research. The action that was done was developing the design of Batik Majapahit. There were two methods used in the implementation: visual research method and design method. The visual research method is in the accordance with the theory of Hannula et al. (2015) in which this method is used to investigate, interpret, and record the socio-cultural context from the visual product based on the fieldwork.

The design development used design method that is in accordance with the theory of Palgunadi (2008) by going through three main processes: (1) Exploration process, (2) Extraction process (3) Termination Point. Those three stages of the design process are expanded to be four operational stages: a) The process of design analysis and the determination of planning target. b) The analysis process of design aspects and the

arrangement of the design concept. c) The process of concept description and visualization. d) Product test.

### RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

The heritage of visual wealth of Majapahit depicts the peak of visual development and generates not only the tools for the living but also the high value of art expression (Sri Hardiati, 2000). Various visual works of Majapahit also give the visualization that Majapahit has the richness of visual products. Interestingly, the visual products of Majapahit are eager to feature the local elements which are more profane than the arts in central Java which have the richness of Indian taste and are sacred. The statues expressing the official belief of the Majapahit Empire, the God, adopt the local symbol in the form of more individual face and God's face that reflects the Javanese people. Likewise, pottery, terracotta, and the small statues also offer the strong local taste.

Visual arts of Majapahit that can be explored to be Batik motives are terracotta, temple relief especially Menak Jinggo Temple relief, and temple ornaments. Terracotta and the temple relief visually tend to be realistic, asymmetric, and somewhat in the caricatured way. The visual arts become the artistic notes that successfully record the event or occurrence, mood expression, dream, and fantasy.

### DISCUSSION

The design development of Batik Majapahit is brought up by the spirit to utilize the positive sides from the era of creative industry which puts the creativity, innovation, and the cultural wealth to be the main improvement of economic productivity and competition. The concept of design development in Batik Majapahit is exploring the richness of visual arts of Majapahit that have the artistic value and typical visual style of Majapahit, namely the relief of Menak Jinggo Temple and Majapahit terracotta.

The relief of Menak Jinggo Temple was chosen since it has the typical characteristics of Majapahit. This relief has the complete depiction of Majapahit landscape such as mountain, hill, rice field, trees (banyan, pandanus, coconut, sugar palm), place of water (lake, pond, river, sea, place of sacred water, shower), buildings (pavilion, palace, hermitage, temple complex, and bathing place), and various depictions of the human activities. The relief of Menak Jinggo Temple in the form of loose panels (in a frame) depicts the complete scene that can be developed to be the design of Batik motives.

The selection of Majapahit Terracotta for visual development of batik with the consideration of Majapahit terracotta turns to be the peak of terracotta artwork in the country. The creation achievement of Majapahit terracotta is on the technological making and surface making that create various forms and decorations. Various creations incorporating the ornamental variety along with the variety of surface making result in rich and complex terracotta. In this case, the development is done by manipulating the form and adding a touch of beauty to the terracotta. The

simple form and style of terracotta now turn to have the rich and complex design. The simple ornaments such as meanders, tumpal, thorns of fish, and the pattern of ornamental mesh which come from the pre-historic era have the symbolic meaning (the simpler the ornaments, the deeper the symbolic meaning) that are replaced by the variety of complex ornaments. Those ornaments likely tend to be the beauty satisfaction.

The making of artwork design uses the digital media (computer graphics). The use of digital media has the advantage in which the batik design can be remade and can be modified to have more varieties. The pattern can be changed to create the new motive which is more varied. Another advantage of digital media is seen when the design practitioners and the batik craftsmen will be open and not concern merely on the visual works that are slightly conventional. They are also eager to combine the artistic praxis even the visual experiment through digital analysis.



Figure 1. The example of design development of Batik Majapahit from the visual exploration of terracotta and the relief of Majapahit Temple.

## CONCLUSION

Batik Majapahit as the past heritage reappears to be the products in present era experiencing the renewal through design approach. The renewal is done to bridge the heritage of Majapahit visual arts with the concept and visualization in the present era. The renewal concept underlies the creative process, so batik products that are created are not merely a sheet of batik cloth. Nonetheless, the visual appearance beyond those batik products can communicate the historical values and the cultural heritage of Majapahit. Those values are represented by the motive appearance from other regions (product differentiation). The management process of this artistic expression can open up the opportunity as wide as possible for the development of new products and maintain what is bequeathed in the

past. The new development has its own beauty that can give the inspiration, while the heritage of the past can contribute to building the personal and collective identity in the present. The design development also prevents and takes up the new thing for Batik Majapahit in order to survive in this cultural flow.

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