

## Research Article

# Spiritual Meanings and Symbols in Motifs of Batik Betawi

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**Abstract.**

The history of batik is one of the archipelago's craft products whose existence was born along with the history of human civilization. In its growth, batik in Java was closely associated with the nobility, royal/sultanate relatives, close to *priyayi* life and a symbol of feudalism. Motifs in batik are often associated with sacred symbols, have religious meanings as well as reflections of spirituality for people who believe in them. Spirituality is associated with religious activities and is seen as a reflection or form of religious appreciation, the depth of belief expressed generally in the form of worship. In the study of fine art, the reflection of spirituality is found in Betawi batik motifs. The reflection is also expressed in various visual elements, meanings and symbols and is lived as part of the reflection in the lives of the majority of Betawi ethnicity. The research method uses the theory of visual language, with a qualitative descriptive method, where the visuals found will be described descriptively, the meaning contained therein and the cultural background inherent in the visuals.

**Keywords:** Baritan, Betawi Batik Jakarta, meanings and symbols

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## 1. Introduction

People of Betawi can be said to be a society that maintains its survival amidst the pressure of migrants, and lives by maintaining its traditions and culture [1]. It can even be said that the Betawi people created Betawi culture itself as an effort to maintain the traditions that have been passed down by their predecessors. In its growth, various cultural elements mix and acculturate to give birth to various new cultural forms that are inherent and passed on to the next generation [2].

The growth of Betawi ethnicity itself is influenced by various cultures and is the result of cultural acculturation. The variety of cultures that influence Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, Bugis, Balinese as well as other nations such as Chinese, Arab, Indian, Portuguese and Europeans that affect human character, art and culture. The fact that

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the Betawi community is shrinking in number, even the number of settlements or villages that were once inhabited by the Betawi people has begun to disappear, one aspect of which is the development activities of the Indonesian government, and Jakarta as the capital, various and political aspects.

The presence of Betawi people in the Jakarta area is spread in several areas and can be distinguished according to where they live, namely the Betawi people who live in the suburbs and in the middle of the city, those on the outskirts of the city are scattered in the Jabodetabek area, and those in the middle of the city are scattered in several areas, such as Mampang Prapatan, Duren Tiga, Jagakarsa and in several other border areas [3]. As a result of sporadic regional development activities and government facilities, many ethnic Betawi eventually left and were scattered from their own neighborhoods.

The Betawi However, in some field data, there are still some original Betawi communities whose settlements are spread out, such as in Depok, Pasar Minggu, Condet, Bendungan Hilir and others. The spread of this area has an impact on the division of regions, namely Betawi Pinggir (udik), Betawi Dalam (city) and Betawi Tengah, which are distinguished based on their administrative areas, which also have an impact on the patterns of life, dialects and cultural products produced. With the influx of migrants, the mixing of customs and traditions in the Betawi cultural system is inevitable, resulting in variations in the Betawi ethnic identity. This is reflected in several things, such as dialect, ceremonies in the family circle, community, daily symbolic expressions and others [4].

Among the many ethnic cultural variations, one of them is the Betawi Seraci batik, which in its motif shows religiosity activities as a reflection of the Betawi people in carrying out their lives, which are very closely related to the teachings of Islam, which are not only believed but used as a guide in the cultural system for the Betawi people until now and apply to every aspect of their daily lives [5]. It is not surprising that this reflection is contained in a variety of visuals contained in one of the cultural products of the Betawi people, namely batik [6]. This research focuses on how the meanings and symbols contained in the visuals of Betawi batik, and it is important to analyze the visual aspects, so that the values embedded in one of these cultural products can be explored and preserved.

## 2. Methods and Equipment

The focus of this research is on analysis, a qualitative descriptive study process, a process to reveal the meanings and symbols contained in Seraci batik Betawi ornaments that reflect the meaning of spirituality, there are two motifs that show reflections of religious activities and spiritual representations of the Betawi people, namely *Baritan* and *Rasamala*. The method used with the descriptive qualitative method approach, where data is obtained from the results of indepth interviews with direct sources. Arikunto (2014) explains that the method of tracking primary and secondary sources will strengthen visual analysis, to understand a work of art, it must view the work from two basic elements, namely intraesthetic elements and extraesthetic elements [7]. Intraesthetic elements are related to the physical manifestation in form, style, structure, elements, aesthetic principles, media and techniques of creating works, as well as the concept or idea of creating works. Extraesthetic elements relate to determinant or significant factors that are integrated into supporting the presence of the artwork in question, including psychological, social, cultural aspects, and the physical natural environment and its changes that accommodate the realization of a work of art. In this method approach, it is expected to unravel the meanings and symbols contained in the visuals found on the object.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Competitor (Attribute Positioning)

One of the motifs used as an object is the *Baritan* motif, the spiritual meaning of the Betawi *Baritan* batik motif relates to the level of religiosity of the Betawi people, where generally this behavior is reflected in the values of Islamic teachings inherent in aspects of their lives. The attitude of life and the Betawi people's view of their religious beliefs are reflected in their daily behavior and attitudes. One of them is in the field of education, Betawi people more often send their children to religious-based schools such as pesantren/madrasah.

A religious and spiritual meaning in Betawi batik is the *Baritan* motif, in Figure 1, which depicts the atmosphere or tradition of gathering together to give thanks to God for all the blessings given. *Baritan* is often associated with the Earth Alms process in some parts of the archipelago, a tradition held after a bountiful harvest, marked by making

offerings to be served at the celebration. The tradition of the Betawi people, *Baritan* is carried out in the month of Maulud, sometimes this event is often called the Month of Mauludan or often called the Feast of the Descendants of Aris [8].

The *Baritan* tradition is still carried out today, especially for Betawi people who live in East Jakarta, such as Pasar Minggu, Kramat, Cipayung and surrounding areas, on Friday for 2 days and begins with *Mangkatan*. This event is often associated with the descendants of Aris Wisesa, who is believed to be a student of Sunan Gunung Jati who was once a traditional elder in the Setu area. The local community believes that the figure of Aris Wisesa is a beginner whose life is able to provide blessings.

Many activities are carried out by residents and at the peak is the slaughter of animal offerings both goats and chickens to be carried during the procession, and the event area is at the *patilasan* where Aris Wisesa is believed to have stopped.



**Figure 1:** *Baritan* batik motif.

The ceremony is generally a joint prayer, asking for safety and smoothness and asking the descendants of Kramat Aris to get blessings and smoothness in all matters. From the visual aspect of batik, a group of people wearing clothes and accessories can be seen, such as a leader or a Kyai wearing a turban, with his hands facing upwards as if he is praying. Around him, there are young girls sitting as if listening. In the center can see various food offerings in the form of tumpeng and other snacks. This condition is as explained in various sources that the *Baritan* tradition is led by the *Juru Kunci* who maintains the Kramat Aris *Patilasan* on Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** An overview of the atmosphere of praying together in Kramat Aris Patilasan.

The symbol of religiosity in Baritan activities, tumpeng is provided and is one of the completeness of the ceremony that we often find the majority of every ritual event in the archipelago. In the manuscripts of Ramayana, Arjuna Wijaya, and Kidung Harsa Wijaya, it is stated that tumpeng is always a dish in various parties, in *serat centini*, tumpeng is known in various eating events. In the treasures of Javanese culture, tumpeng has existed since the time of the Hindu kingdom in the archipelago. Tumpeng is a symbol of the ecosystem of life in nature. Around the rice are various vegetables and meat (chicken / goat / beef), symbolizing the nature of life, symbolizing the natural world of life consisting of plants, animals, and humans.

The purpose of providing tumpeng in rituals is often associated with sukuran events or holding human thanksgiving to the Creator, as thanksgiving, being given blessings and asking for protection and safety, commemorating important events, and other expressions of gratitude. means that wishes can be granted. Etymologically in Javanese culture, the meaning of Tumpeng is tumapaking penguripan-tumindak lempengtumuju Pangeran, which means that humans must live towards the path of God. The meaning and symbol of the conical triangle on the tumpeng can be attributed to: Symbolization of the mountain (meru), as a form of hope for a better life, and a symbol of God's Majesty.

Another Betawi batik motif that can be interpreted as a representation of religiosity in it is the Rasamala batik motif, which depicts a male figure sitting on a prayer mat or prayer mat in a prayer position with his hands raised in a field area surrounded by trees, and surrounding plants. From his clothes, you can see a male figure wearing a cap and sarong, and in other parts you can see a tool similar to a mortar used to pound rice.



**Figure 3:** Rasamala Motif.

There are several names for this motif, some call it the *Rasamala* motif and some call it the *Nderep* and

*Nglajo* motifs on Figure 3. This often happens, considering that the distribution of batik motifs in the Betawi region is geographically widespread, reaching Bekasi, Depok and Karawang. Differences in names occur due to people's experiences and perceptions of a story or legend that is passed down regeneratively, there are often differences in the mention of terms in an activity, with different names. The meaning and understanding generally refer to one philosophical value, which is related to expressing gratitude and maintaining harmonious human relations with the universe or its creator. The motif of Rasamala can be seen visually there is a male position in the position of prayer and tafakur, which is interpreted as an activity of contemplating or thinking about something deeply by asking Allah SWT for guidance.



**Figure 4:** Some visuals showing objects and activities related to religious activities.

*Tafakur* is also drawn as a human effort to contemplate clearing the mind, which is exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad to get to know Allah SWT more deeply. *Tafakur* is not only used for worship, but sometimes also for contemplating, studying an event, a problem that is happening in human life in daily activities. Religious activity in artworks is often used as an idea, an inspiration for a work. Art and religious activities involve ritual practices and spiritual culture in the religious traditions of the artists who create them. In this case, the reflection of faith is represented in *Rasamala* batik, which indeed tells the story of the journey of the Betawi people at a time when they approached their God as a form of worship and meditation to the God.

Around the figure of a man in a prayer/prayer position, there is also a tool in the form of *Alu*, or a rice pounding tool, for Javanese people, this tool used to be a must-have because of its function as a traditional tool or *lumpang/ alu*, in Figure 4. The existence of this *lumpang-alu* kitchen tool is mostly used to pound rice into rice, but gradually its function has changed to pound rice into various food sources to be made into flour. That is one of the changes in function that occurred in the kitchen tool. Kitchen tools that are hundreds of years old are also used by other tribes in this archipelago, of course, with different names.

Many Javanese people consider *Lumpang* and *Alu* also as a symbol of fertility, where the shape of *Lumpang-alu* is likened to *Lingga - Yoni* in archaeological terms, where when *Lingga Yoni* meet will produce fertility. Javanese people in rural areas today use *lumpang* very rarely to pound grain into rice, but to pound rice into flour. As kitchen tools, mortar and pestle are also used by housewives to pound other kitchen ingredients, for example making *pecel* sauce, pounding *tolo* nuts to make *pelas* food, or traditional herbal ingredients. However, in urban areas it is difficult to find this kitchen tool. In big cities, kitchen tools that function to mash or pulverize kitchen spices such as *lumpang-alu* have been replaced by modern tools that use electric power, such as blenders.

The other visual shows a *Rasamala* tree, where this tree is often associated with the Betawi people, in connection with the Dutch occupation when they landed in the Sunda Kelapa area, historically it is said that the initial area where the Dutch landed was in the wild swamp forest area and there were also many *Rasamala* trees and became a refuge, a place of worship. *tafakur* during the escape during the war against invaders and others, so the existence of the tree is emotionally close to the Betawi people.

In natural habitats, *Rasamala* can grow to a height of 60 meters, based on research, this species originated in the Himalayan Mountains and then spread to Burma, the

Malay Peninsula, Sumatra to Java. Some regions in Indonesia know this tree by other names, such as Mala, Tulasan and Mandung. While in countries such as Burma it is called Nantayok, in Laos it is called Sop and in Thailand it is called Hom.

From the results of the description above, it can be said that Betawi batik is unique compared to batik typical of other regions, including those that exist in striking, contrasting colors, as well as motifs. Nowadays, batik motifs are more focused on Betawi cultural arts influenced by Arabic, Indian, Dutch and Chinese cultures. Meanwhile, many of the previous motifs also featured the Nusa Kelapa, Ciliwung, Rasamala, and Salakanegara motifs.

From the findings of field data during observation and analysis, the classification process of the motifs found on the object of analysis is a motif that has illustrations in which there are values and meanings that are closely related to the religiosity of the Betawi people. The reflection is not only in the form of visuals depicting religious activities, but also the local community's belief in regenerative beliefs that are closely attached to the community and believed collectively.

The spiritual understanding of a batik work is reflected in the beliefs of a group of people related to the process of making batik, the origin of batik motifs as well as activities that are often associated with activities with a religious approach, and there are even batik motifs that are associated with the context as a medium for the propagation of Islam, da'wah in the process of spreading religion in ancient times. In the process of making a piece of batik, there is often a series of rituals that are usually carried out before making batik, for example batik makers will perform the Duha prayer first, fasting, and it is often found that the batik process must be preceded by the accompaniment of Javanese and Arabic songs or poems which generally contain advice to humans and the environment and the universe.

The influence of Islamic culture can also be seen in the motifs depicted on batik cloth. In this activity, only 2 motifs are taken that visually show visuals depicting activities that are closely related to religion, although there are also some motifs that also have calligraphy images that are characteristic of Middle Eastern motifs. The visual aspects in them reveal elements of meaning and symbols, and when correlated with historical and cultural reviews, it can be understood some of the reasons behind the visual basis, such as religious experience, feelings of belief in God and others. The data findings can make learning materials as well as inspiring benefits for the development of observers



and studies of Betawi batik, and how to understand the various factors that influence the visual elements in batik.

The analysis above can be tabulated on several aspects regarding how the value is in contact with various aspects, including the value of religiosity, aspects of Batik Baritan & Rasamala Motifs, the influence and impact in educational activities, how it relates to Visual Preservation efforts and Cultural Heritage activities, broken down as follows :

TABLE 1: Relations motif with socio-cultural diversity of the Betawi tribe.

Aspect	Description	Relationship Spiritual Meaning	Implication Betawi Life
Value of Religiosity	Reflects a strong belief in the teachings of Islam, a reflection of the way of life of the Betawi	The religious value reflection as a symbol of identity and faith in batik motifs	Moral messages are used as the basis for daily life behavior, leading to an attitude of life based on Islamic teachings.
Motif	Both motifs symbolize Betawi spiritual values in the visual aspect.	The elements in the motif symbolize the value of tradition, belief, and spirituality of the Betawi tribe	Messages to the younger generation to understand and appreciate cultural heritage that has spiritual meanings and symbols.
Influence in Education	People of Betawi ethnicity choose religious-based education such as pesantren/madrasa in the school education	Islamic values as part of the Betawi cultural identity for the younger generation.	Traditional religious education plays an important role in instilling spiritual values from an early age.
Visual Preservation	The knowledge of the visual style in batik is to maintain the symbolic meaning so that it is not lost and preserved.	Pattern visualization helps to represent traditional and religious values continuously.	Preserving the continuity of spiritual meaning in Betawi culture through batik visuals.
Cultural Heritage	Sustain spiritual values to future generations through batik works.	Motives that contain elements of tradition and religiosity maintain continuity between the old and new generations.	Subsequent generations are expected to continue and develop Betawi cultural values.

#### 4. Conclusion

The cultural meaning of the Betawi *Baritan* and *Rasamala* batik motifs from a visual aspect is closely related to the level of religiosity of the Betawi people, where in general this behavior is reflected in the values of Islamic teachings inherent in aspects of their lives. The way the Betawi people live and view their religious beliefs is reflected in their

daily behavior and attitudes. Among other things, in the field of education, Betawi people more often send their children to religious-based schools such as *pesantren/madrasa*. This matter needs to be studied and known how the visual style is produced so that the representation and reflection are not lost in time and the meaning is maintained in each generation of supporters. The reflection of the Betawi people's worldview, which is strong in religious values, especially the teachings of Islam, plays a role in their daily lives. This value is represented through batik media so that the value can be passed on to each generation, and it is expected that the meaning and cultural identity stored in it will not be lost, since it can manifest as local wisdom that strengthens the cultural narrative of the Betawi tribe in the context of the archipelago's culture.

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