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Cultural Transformation and Aesthetic Innovation: Trenggalek's Heritage in Contemporary Batik Motif Design

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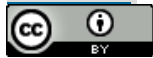
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ABSTRACT

The development of batik in the modern era shows a significant transformation, from a traditional heritage to a medium for aesthetic expression and cultural identity. Batik now serves not only as a symbol of tradition, but also as a means of design innovation that can adapt to global fashion trends. This research focuses on the exploration of Trenggalek's local culture as a source of inspiration in the creation of contemporary batik motifs. By combining a visual communication approach and the shape grammar method, the design process is carried out through the Panca Siti Ngawi Sani stages, which include exploration, reflection, idea processing, visualization, and finalization. This research produces contemporary batik motif designs that represent Trenggalek's cultural heritage, focusing on traditional dance cultural objects and natural symbols. Each motif theme is combined with classical batik motif elements that have relevant philosophies and are arranged with a contemporary visual style composition and a combination of traditional techniques, namely canting tulis (hand-drawn canting) with contemporary brush and splash techniques and banana stem stamps to create harmony between tradition and aesthetic innovation. The results of this study indicate that the process of cultural transformation through contemporary batik motif designs can be an effective approach in strengthening local identity while increasing the existence of batik in a global context. Conceptually, this research contributes to the development of a creative approach based on local culture and emphasizes the position of batik as a medium of visual communication between cultures, and is relevant to current developments

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation with diverse cultures across its regions. This diversity can be seen in various aspects, one of which is batik, which has become a cultural icon and has been recognized internationally by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on October 2, 2009. Batik is not merely a visual beauty but also contains profound philosophical values, has a historical story, and reflects hopes, prayers, and noble values for the community. A work of art can be considered batik if its motif is created through a color-blocking process using hot wax, using a canting (stamping tool), or a combination of both (Aini, 2022). The history of batik in Indonesia is closely linked to the development of the Majapahit Kingdom and the spread of Islam on the island of Java. According to several sources, the development of batik largely occurred during the Mataram Sultanate and continued through the Kasunanan Surakarta and Yogyakarta Sultanates. The art of batik then spread to become part of Indonesian society, particularly on the island of Java. In the late 18th or early 19th century, hand-drawn batik became a popular form of batik. After World War I, around the 1920s, stamped batik became popular, used for the batik-making process.

Batik motifs in various regions in Indonesia have experienced significant progress, marked by the emergence of various new motifs. Some traditional batik motifs are still preserved to maintain the sustainability of batik itself, while others have emerged recently, not originating from a particular region. Therefore, batik motifs are divided into two: classical batik and contemporary batik (AsanaBatik, 2019). Classic batik, also known as traditional batik, is a heritage passed down from the kingdom era and holds deep philosophy within each motif. Classic batik motifs tend to feature dark colors such as soğan (natural brown), white or cream, and dark blue. Contemporary batik, on the other hand, features modern motifs with a wide and freer variety, sometimes even tending towards abstraction. According to (Setiati, 2007), contemporary batik has a free pattern composition and typically draws on

primitive forms, sculptures, natural features, and so on.

In an effort to strengthen national identity, many regions in Indonesia have promoted their local cultural identity through batik motifs. Various batik-producing regions in Indonesia have distinctive and diverse motifs, one of which is Trenggalek Regency. Trenggalek has been famous for its hand-drawn batik crafts since the 1970s and 1980s. However, the Trenggalek batik industry declined for a time, but began to revive in the 2010s. Typical Trenggalek hand-drawn batik emphasizes cloves and Jaranan Turonggo Yakso as the hallmarks of Trenggalek batik. The clove motif is characteristic because it is a superior agricultural commodity in Trenggalek. Meanwhile, the Turonggo Yakso motif is distinctive because it is an icon of Trenggalek's distinctive art. Trenggalek batik has a wide variety of motifs, ranging from classic to contemporary motifs. Contemporary batik is considered more popular because of its diverse and brighter motifs, compositions, and colors, making it easy to combine with modern fashion and suitable for all ages. This is what makes the younger generation more interested in batik, as many still perceive batik as synonymous with formality and tradition. However, interviews with Trenggalek batik entrepreneurs indicate the need for innovative businesses to survive amidst the onslaught of fashion trends from imported products and large-scale industrial production (Interview with Rurik, 2024).

The development of motifs, design styles, and batik compositions is a key factor in increasing public interest in batik. This is to ensure that batik is widely enjoyed by all age groups. The use of local cultural aspects in Trenggalek as batik motifs is currently limited to specific art objects, with little exploration of other cultures in Trenggalek. It would be beneficial if these cultural motifs were also used as batik motifs, as this would also introduce Trenggalek culture to the wider community. The visual style, composition, and batik techniques in Trenggalek batik remain underdeveloped and under-varied. Current batik techniques still utilize traditional canting (canting tulis) and cap (stamping)

techniques. To compete in the global market and support economic prosperity, Trenggalek batik requires innovation, not only in motif development and composition, but also in the production process, incorporating other modern techniques.

To enrich Trenggalek batik motifs, the cultures of Trenggalek can serve as a source of inspiration for creating distinctive local batik motifs that convey messages about the values and symbolic meanings of local culture. Local culture is defined as customs, traditions, or habits that are deeply rooted and difficult to change in a particular area (Koentjaraningrat, 1997). The urgency of this research is to preserve and enhance the existence of Trenggalek hand-drawn batik and local culture to ensure their relevance amidst globalization. It also serves as an effort to preserve culture, develop the local economy, and promote regional identity. This innovation in the creative industry involves adapting traditional art into batik motifs to suit modern market tastes without diminishing local cultural values.

1. Batik

Batik is an important cultural tradition for Indonesian people throughout Indonesia. According to various opinions, batik is the process of decorating or painting unbleached cotton, silk, or calico. Before batik is made, the fabric is first processed to remove the starch. Afterward, the fabric is decorated with wax and repeated dyeing processes to create multiple colors. The final process is rolling and drying, resulting in beautiful motifs.

1. Classic Batik

Classical batik is a type of batik whose patterns and motifs follow specific rules and guidelines, complete with distinctive *isen* (or *isen*) as ornamental filler. Any deviation from these standard rules is no longer considered classic batik. According to (Susanto, 1980), classic batik has a recognized value or quality and is a benchmark of eternal perfection. Figure 1 below shows one type of classic batik motif, the *semen* motif.



Figure 1. Semen Motif (Classic Batik)

Source: (Kusrianto, 2021)

2. Contemporary Batik

Contemporary batik is the result of a fusion of traditional batik with new creativity, as well as the influence of modern developments and rapidly evolving technology. Modern batik itself is all types of batik whose motifs and styles differ from traditional batik, are not bound by specific rules like *isen-isen*, and are

free-flowing (Susanto, 1975). Modifications of classic batik motifs can be categorized as contemporary batik. Although contemporary batik still maintains the traditional essence of using wax and natural or synthetic dyes, the designs and ideologies it promotes are often more free-flowing and experimental. Figure 2 below represents one type of contemporary motif.



Figure 2. Contemporary Batik Motifs
Source: <https://batikputrabengawan.co.id/>

3. Trenggalek Batik

Hand-drawn batik from Trenggalek has been around since the 1900s, featuring classic motifs used as sewek or jarik (long cloth). Initially, Trenggalek batik was influenced by the batik motifs of Central Java and Yogyakarta, but over time, the region developed its own motifs and styles that better reflect local characteristics. Trenggalek batik

is famous for its Sekar Jagad motif, which reflects regional characteristics with the addition of clove and mangosteen motifs. The Sekar Jagad motif found in Trenggalek is characterized by the addition of clove motifs, reflecting the characteristics of the Trenggalek region (Wulandari, 2010). Figure 3 below shows a contemporary batik motif typical of Trenggalek.



Figure 3. Contemporary Trenggalek Batik Motifs
Source: Restu, 2024

2. Contemporary Aesthetics

Contemporary aesthetics emphasizes that beauty is no longer understood universally and absolutely, but rather is contextual, plural, and subjective. The word "contemporary" is derived from the combination of the words "co" (together) and "tempo" (time), emphasizing that contemporary art is a work that thematically reflects the situations, values, and experiences of the current era. Thus, beauty in art lies not solely in its formal aspects but

in the work's ability to express the intuition, inner experience, and authentic expression of its creator. This aligns with (Croce, 1909) view that "art is intuition or expression," where the essence of art is the embodiment of intuition stemming from inner experience and human feelings. For Croce, beauty cannot be measured by universal norms or standards, but rather through the honesty of expression that emerges from the artist's own soul.

3. Research Gap

Studies on batik in Indonesia generally focus on preserving traditional motifs and their philosophical values, without much exploration of visual communication approaches in the creation process. Research on Trenggalek batik itself is still very limited and tends to be descriptive, thus failing to address the cultural transformation into a contemporary visual language. Most contemporary batik studies have not utilized visual design methods to interpret local cultural symbols into meaningful new forms. This gap emphasizes the need for research that connects tradition and modernity through creative and contextual approaches.

4. Research Purposes

The purpose of this research is to identify and explore the cultural values, symbols, and philosophies contained in the traditions, folklore, and local wisdom of the Trenggalek community as a source of inspiration for the creation of batik motifs. Through a visual communication approach, this research attempts to analyze the meaning of Trenggalek cultural signs and symbols in depth to serve as a conceptual basis in the visual design process. Furthermore, this research aims to create contemporary batik motifs that combine elements of Trenggalek local culture with modern visual communication principles, while applying a combination of traditional and modern batik techniques in the creation process. The expected output of this research is the creation of contemporary batik motif designs that not only function as a medium for the preservation and revitalization of Trenggalek culture, but also can elevate the existence of Trenggalek batik by adapting to the aesthetic needs and lifestyles of modern society. This research is also expected to contribute to the development of local culture-based batik designs that maintain philosophical and aesthetic values, can strengthen local identity, and be able to compete at the global level.

METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a creative approach, employing the Panca Sthiti Ngawi Sani creative method, an idea developed by I Wayan Dibia, a professor and artist at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Bali. This approach was chosen because it is more relevant and can support the process of exploring local culture, as well as cultural transformation and aesthetic innovation in the context of creating contemporary batik motifs based on local culture. The qualitative descriptive method was applied to gain an understanding of Trenggalek's cultures, especially traditional dances, as a visual reference. This data was obtained through field observations, interviews with Trenggalek batik entrepreneurs and artisans, photo documentation, and archival and literature reviews related to the creation of batik motifs and local culture. The data obtained were then analyzed to identify visual elements and their symbolic meanings. Meanwhile, the Panca Sthiti Ngawi Sani creative method was applied as a conceptual and procedural flow in the batik motif creation process. This method combines practical and reflective work patterns through five main stages: exploration, contemplation, idea processing, visualization, and finalization (Dibia, 2020: 34 in (Arsana, 2022)). This method is used as a conceptual approach that balances traditional and contemporary aesthetics in creating contemporary batik motifs based on Trenggalek's local culture.

This study also uses a visual communication approach to translate Trenggalek cultural elements, such as traditional dances and symbols of natural resources, as well as elements of classic batik motifs, into a meaningful and communicative form of visual language. Lester, in (Hamidoyo, 2022), states that visual communication is a form of message that stimulates the sense of sight and can be understood by the audience. Visual communication has the power to attract more attention, can arouse emotions, and even influence the perception of the audience. This approach functions as a medium to transform messages and cultural values into visual symbols that can be

understood by modern society without losing their philosophical elements. Each visual element in the batik motif not only functions as an aesthetic decoration, but also as a medium for conveying cultural messages that can strengthen the local cultural identity of Trenggalek. Then the shape grammar method is applied to combine the composition of batik motif elements into a structured yet dynamic and aesthetic unity, and in accordance with contemporary aesthetic developments. The shape grammar method is a method of compiling shapes that are formulated digitally with the help of a computer so that the resulting motifs appear more precise and different (Ismail, 2013). The integration between the visual communication approach and the shape grammar method makes the process of creating batik motifs not only aesthetic but also conceptual and communicative, bridging cultural heritage and the latest design innovations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The contemporary batik motifs in this study are the result of an exploration of Trenggalek's local culture, expressed in eight motif designs. The contemporary batik motifs in this study are the result of an exploration of Trenggalek's local culture and classical batik motifs. Their meanings and values were then analyzed and visualized into eight motif designs. These motifs originate from two distinctive cultural themes of Trenggalek: the traditional dances Jaranan Turonggo Yakso and Gandhong Dance. They also incorporate floral and faunal ornaments, such as cloves, which are characteristic of Trenggalek batik motifs, complemented by durian, mangosteen, banana, and so on. They are also combined with elements of classical batik motifs that have meanings relevant to the two traditional traditions mentioned above.









All of these cultural objects are then stylized in a symbolic style. These motifs are not visualized as living creatures, but rather presented symbolically and in a stylized manner. This aligns with Islamic teachings and traditions, which avoid figurative depictions of living creatures in artwork, allowing these motifs to convey cultural meaning without conflicting with Islamic norms.


The visual depiction of this batik motif uses a visual communication approach to convey the messages and values contained in the dance and classical motif elements into a communicative yet aesthetic visual language. The arrangement of the motif composition is presented through the application of the shape grammar method, resulting in a variety of compositions that are varied and in line with contemporary design developments. In addition to the depiction of symbolic objects, what is interesting about this motif is that repetition of motifs in this batik motif is not always done symmetrically, but is done in a veiled manner. The variation in composition aims to minimize the impression of symmetry that is rigid, formal, and seems very classic. This motif is designed with a more expressive and dynamic visual flexibility to suit the development of contemporary aesthetics in the world of fashion, which is more in demand by all ages. The contemporary style of the motif is strengthened through the application of the canting tulis technique combined with expressive batik technical effects, such as brush strokes, splash effects, and the use of stamps from banana stem waste. This approach gives the motif a unique visual character while emphasizing the creative discourse between traditional and contemporary aesthetics.

Jaranan Turonggo Yakso motif

1. Turonggo Yakso Motif Visualization Process

Table 1. Turonggo Yakso Motif Visualization Process

No.	Idea	Development Object
1		<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;">   </div> <p data-bbox="539 707 1390 943">Jaranan Turonggo Yakso is visualized as a knight riding a horse with a buto head, in keeping with its attributes. However, the depiction uses a deformation technique that does not depict the object in detail. The knight's crown is depicted without a human head or face. Meanwhile, the buto or barongan figure is also depicted in a deformed manner, emphasizing a larger head and a somewhat abstract, irregular body shape.</p> <p data-bbox="539 994 1390 1229">The illustrations of these symbolic objects are combined into a single whole, represented by plants and coffee beans surrounding the objects, resembling a pentagon. This pentagon symbolizes values such as Pancasila, progress, and happiness in life, as depicted in 2 cloves. Jaranan Turonngo Yakso is visualized as a knight riding a horse with a buto, reflecting the meaning of Jaranan Turonggo Yakso.</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;">  </div>
2		<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;">  <p data-bbox="887 1653 1038 1677">Clove depiction</p> </div>
3		<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;">  <p data-bbox="786 1883 1142 1904">Depiction of cassava farming results</p> </div>

4		 <p data-bbox="882 360 1046 387">Coffee depiction</p>
5		 <p data-bbox="775 853 1153 880">Depiction of the motive for the reasons</p>

2. Visualization results of motif composition using the shape grammar method

The visualization of the contemporary Jaranan Turonggo Yakso batik motif, combined with elements of the classical Alas-alasan motif, represents a creative effort to bridge traditional values and modern aesthetics through the application of a visual communication approach and the shape grammar method. The Jaranan Turonggo Yakso dance is a traditional dance that has become an icon of Trenggalek Regency. This dance represents heroism, spiritual energy, and harmony between humans and nature. These motifs are visualized in symbolic figures corresponding to the objects and props in the art. Furthermore, it combines Trenggalek's unique natural resources with elements of the classic Alas-alasan batik motif. The classic Alas-alasan motif has symbolic meanings of life, protection, and the balance of nature. This motif emphasizes that true courage is not for power, but for sincerity towards nature and others. The horseman with the head of a giant represents self-control, protecting the balance between humans and the universe. Turonggo Yakso symbolizes spirituality, where humans must be able to face their dark side,

namely anger, ego, and greed, to achieve enlightenment or a more balanced and peaceful life. The visual communication approach in this study serves to transform the story into a visual language by interpreting the history and meaning of Jaranan Turonggo Yakso into an aesthetic yet philosophical batik motif. The stylization of the motif shape is done using stylization and deformation techniques. The shape grammar method helps to organize the exploration process and the arrangement of varied motif compositions with several repetition alternatives. Although arranged repetitively, this motif tries to display a veiled repetition to produce a dynamic composition and a more contemporary impression. Because repetition that is too symmetrical will give a stiff, classic, and formal impression. The combination of the Jaranan Turonggo Yakso Dance and the classic Alas-Alas batik motif gives birth to a contemporary batik motif that transforms culture between tradition and modernity in an innovative and aesthetic visual form, while still upholding the local wisdom of Trenggalek. The visualization results of the composition of the contemporary Jaranan Turonggo Yakso batik motif can be seen in Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7 below.

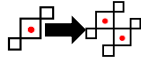


Figure 4. Turonggo Yakso *Repetition Techniques*
Source: Restu, 2025

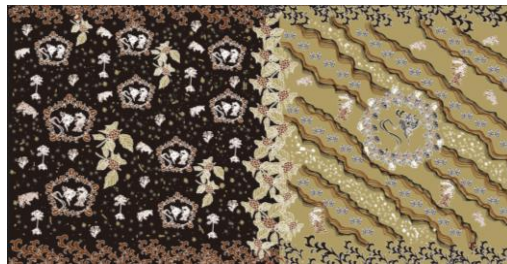
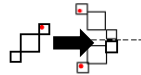


Figure 5. Turonggo Yakso *Horizontal Reflection Technique*
Source: Restu, 2025

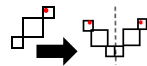


Figure 6. Turonggo Yakso *Vertical Reflection Technique*
Source: Restu, 2025

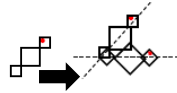
















Figure 7. Turonggo Yakso *Rotation Technique with Certain Angles*
Source: Restu, 2025

Gandhong Dance motif

1. Gandhong Dance motif visualization process

Table 2. Gandhong Dance Motif Visualization Process

No.	Idea	Development Object
1		<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;">   <p data-bbox="507 1335 1391 1527">The Gandhong dance is depicted with dancers carrying props, specifically kentongan (a wooden gong). The objects are depicted through stylization and deformation, not actually depicting the dancers. In practice, these objects are depicted as a single unit within a frame resembling flower petals or plants, surrounded by cloves, representing the agrarian life of Trenggalek.</p>  </div>
2		<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;">  <p data-bbox="855 1827 1043 1859">Clove depiction</p> </div>
3		<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;">  </div>

		Depiction of a cassava tree	
4			Banana depiction
			Vanilla depiction
5			Depiction of the parang motif

2. Visualization Results of Motif Composition Using the Shape Grammar Method

The visualization of the composition of the contemporary batik motif of the Gandhong Dance, typical of Trenggalek, combined with elements of the classical Parang motif, is a form of design innovation that integrates local cultural values with modern aesthetics through the application of a visual communication approach and the shape grammar method. The Gandhong Dance is a traditional dance depicting the spirit of togetherness, joy, hard work, and harmony of the Trenggalek community. This dance is visualized in symbolic forms and patterns that represent distinctive properties and express dance movements. The classical motif, the Parang, was chosen as a supporting ornament because it embodies the philosophy of strength, courage, and struggle, relevant to the spiritual and social significance of the Gandhong Dance. The combination of elements from the Gandong Dance and the Parang motif creates a batik motif that symbolizes a strong and courageous spirit of togetherness in protecting and fighting for the harvest for the benefit of the wider community. This motif emphasizes that courage, strength, and hard work must be grounded in a sense of social responsibility and sincerity. The visual communication approach

used in this study is used to interpret or communicate stories, meanings, and aesthetics, such as transforming the shape and color of the motif. The stylization and deformation techniques are used to style the motif. The composition conveys cultural messages aesthetically and communicatively. The shape grammar method is applied as an approach to arranging the motif composition into a new visual structure with various variations and innovations. Despite using the repetition method of motifs, this motif composition attempts to visualize with a veiled repetition technique to appear more dynamic, expressive, and contemporary. The resulting contemporary batik motif not only displays the cultural transformation between tradition and modernity, but also serves as a medium for preserving Trenggalek's cultural identity through an innovative, aesthetic visual language that is able to adapt to the times. The visualization results of the contemporary batik motif composition of the Gandhong Dance can be seen in figures 8, 9, 10, and 11 below.



Figure 8. Gandhong Dance *Repetition Techniques*
Source: Restu, 2025

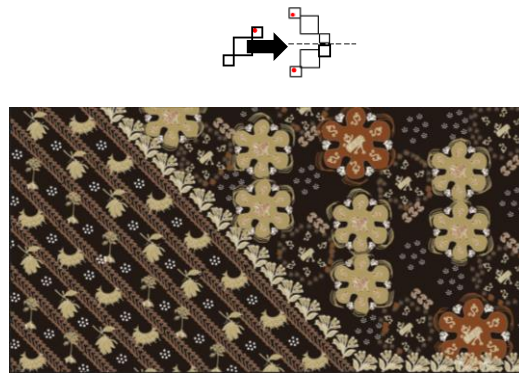


Figure 9. Gandhong Dance *Horizontal Reflection Technique*
Source: Restu, 2025

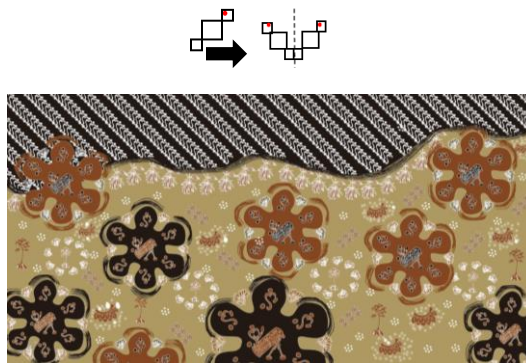


Figure 10. Gandhong Dance *Vertical Reflection Technique*
Source: Restu, 2025

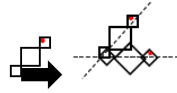


Figure 11. Gandhong Dance *Rotation Technique with Certain Angles*

Source: Restu, 2025

CONCLUSION

This research shows that Trenggalek's local culture has a very rich potential as a source of inspiration in the creation of contemporary batik motifs that not only emphasize aesthetic aspects but also contain symbolic values and communicative meanings. Through exploration of cultural elements such as traditional dance and symbols of natural wealth, this research proves that local elements can be transformed into a strong conceptual basis in the process of creating modern batik designs. The application of the Panca Siti Ngawi Sani method has proven effective in integrating exploratory, reflective, and creative stages, resulting in profound works both visually and philosophically. Supported by a visual communication approach and the shape grammar method, the motif structure can be constructed systematically without losing the character and unique identity the Trenggalek culture. The integration of contemporary visual styles and traditional elements creates an aesthetic expression that is adaptive to the development of the times, while still maintaining local values. The results of designing contemporary batik motifs from Trenggalek's dance art culture and natural wealth show that contemporary batik can act as an effective medium for cultural transformation, able to bridge traditional values with the needs of modern expression. The resulting motifs become visual representations of locality that are elevated to the global stage, strengthening batik's position as

a relevant and competitive medium for cultural communication. Thus, it can be said that this research confirms that the exploration of local culture through an interdisciplinary approach based on visual communication is a crucial strategy in developing aesthetic innovation and preserving regional cultural identity in the modern era.

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