

Batik Motifs from 1957 until 2000

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ABSTRACT

This study will use the resources of the idea of looking back at the question and idea in their pattern motif in various ways and aspects, from 1957 until 2000 in Malaysia. This paper with great emphasis on the diversity of alternative resources. It will start with the past motifs design and later designs more directed to the designs in the form of more freely or abstract form. This option is based on the value of the line through drawing, color, appearance and shape that could be new knowledge for creating new motifs with certain design principles guided. The principles are explained while producing report on patterns and motifs in the presentation.

Key Words: Traditional sarong, Batik block, Motifs, Design

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is known for its multi-cultural society. Malaysia is a young nation. independent since 1957, Malaysia is in the process of identifying it self in the modern world. the creative efforts of her populace are an important contribution to this new identity. while age-old traditions are important for a personal ,cultural and national identity, the product of the modern, comtemporany hand should not be overlooked The Malay/Bumiputera people are the largest group followed by the Chinese, Indian, smaller groups of Arabs, Sinhalese, Eurasians and Europeans and a few of the indigenous tribes scattered in the Malay Peninsula and in Sabah and Sarawak. The traditional batik is commonly used as part of everyday clothing in Malaysia. It is multi-functional for Malays and other ethnicities in Malaysia. The characteristics of traditional batik design are applied through the layout, motif, pattern and colour of the sarong and design. These features are important in determining the functional and symbolic meaning of the designs. Sarongs are used for ceremonial and festive occasions as well as everyday clothing. Differences are identified through the printed designs on the sarongs. The symbolic use of motifs and colour are required to signify a particular social standing and if the sarong is a gift, their incorporation in the design. Meaning is also associated with religious and cultural influences, which are transmitted through the batik compositions. Through this research on development and innovation in Malaysian batik design (Arney, 1987)(Dunsmore, 1996)(Yusof, 1980) and technique.

Significance of Study

This study is significant in with batik motifs from year 1957 untill year 2000. the need for extensive academic enquiry and documentation has become apparent in order to preserve the art form for the future. Samples of batik sarong artefacts were selected from museums, galleries, batik makers and personal collections, which were visited, viewed and photographed.



Scope of Study

The exploration and use of the Adobe software is a vital tool for conserving and cataloguing the various design samples. Tracing techniques are used in making drawings of the layout, motif and pattern configurations of the sarongs. There were difficulties identifying the characteristics of traditional batik sarongs of Malaysia, because Javanese sarongs have had such a strong influence on Malaysian design. There have been limited studies in Malaysia. Along with the Malay texts, there were some in Indonesian, Dutch, English. Research on Malaysian traditional batik sarongs is a growing field.

Delimitations

The researcher has put her concentration on the local elements of motifs and design. Through this research on development and innovation in Malaysian batik design (Arney, 1987) (Dunsmore, 1996) (Yusof, 1980) and technique, the need for extensive academic enquiry and documentation has become apparent in order to preserve the art form for the future.

Limitations

This study is limited to the specific time that the researcher cannot avoid. The first time limit is the period time of the research that made the researcher can only choose muzium textile, arkib Negara and people who involve in the industry.

Another limitation is secondary data gathered for the study is insufficient. Most of research and books about motifs and batik. Thus, most of data collected are from muzium, galleries and people that involve in industry.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Portuguese and Dutch were early colonisers who were later followed by the British and the Japanese. Having continuously been under foreign rule and finally gaining independence in 1957, Malaysia strongly pursued the formation of a national identity. In order to protect Malay heritage, governmental bodies were formed. This formal protection given to batik came about as a result of multiple historical and cultural influences and as a way of preserving and differentiating Malay traditions from those of Malaysia's neighbours (Uda R. F., 2002). In this research the batik in Malaysia, however the batik industry in Kelantan and Terengganu faced a recession in the late 1980s as mentioned by (Abidin, 1990). *This was due to three factors, namely the overall economic recession, the importation of Thai batik (which was sold at a lower price while being of higher quality due to the use of Japanese machines), and the emergence of fake batik from Thailand imitating the batik patterns of Kelantan and Terengganu. As a consequence, the demand for batik from Kelantan and Terengganu dwindled, affecting the income of the batik industry. These features are important in determining the functional and symbolic meaning of the designs.* Sarongs are used for ceremonial and festive occasions as well as everyday clothing. Differences are identified through the printed designs on the sarongs. The symbolic use of motifs and colour are required to signify a particular social standing and if the sarong is a gift, their incorporation in the design. Meaning is also associated with religious and cultural influences, which are transmitted through the batik compositions.

As mentioned, historical events such as Malaysia gaining independence in 1957 – and later Singapore's independence from Malaysia in 1963 – need to be taken into account when

considering shifts in cultural identity and the formation the design and motifs influence Malaysia batik.

The history of batik technique is discussed in order to determine its exact origin as well as the subsequent spread of the technique as it evolved from the islands of Java to Malaysia. Classifications of traditional batik techniques are also examined along with a description of the processes of batik making adopted in Malaysia. In the second part of the chapter the sarong is defined and discussed in relation to the application development of batik design.

In Malaysia, the states of Kelantan and Terengganu still produce batik sarongs using traditional processes that involve the batik block technique (stamping a block of motifs with hot wax on plain white cotton). The batik sarongs produced in Malaysia represent a unique variety of designs with respect to motif arrangement and colour. To some extent the character of the design motifs has undergone several changes that are unique to batik in Malaysia. This transformation became apparent to me from my observations and tracings when categorising a large cross-section of samples in the accompanying catalogue. The designs displayed have significantly different characters.

This chapter begins by considering the aesthetics of batik design and the elements that contribute to the beauty of batik sarong compositions. The significance and the role of

Motifs will be discussed. Batik sarong motifs can be classified into several types of design that are inspired by or associated with nature (flora and fauna), principally as represented in Malaysia; these motifs incorporate geometric and other combinations. The placement of the variety of motifs is integral to an examination of the layout of sarong design. Features such as motif, layout and colour that have been maintained in the traditional designs, as well as the change in motif design, will also be examined. In both Malaysia and Indonesia the beauty of batik sarongs can be seen in their composition, which is designed to fulfil their function as lower body garments.



Hibiscus, hand-blocked with crackle effect on cotton, 1960s collection of P. Raman Nair Sdn Bhd



The idea of the placing design in batik sarong.

In Malaysia, the term 'aesthetic' is similar to the *Bahasa Malaysia* word *estetik* or *estetika*.

There are also other Malay words that have a similar meaning in describing the attractiveness of textiles and other relevant forms of visual art. The words *cantik* (beautiful), *lawa* (attractive), *indah* (precious), and *halus* (fine) are some terms that refer to beauty. The 'formal' notion or field of aesthetics in Malaysia was influenced to a degree by foreign ideas that merged together with the local culture.

In the literature on Malay visual arts, the words of design in sarong involve the cultural elements and this is clearly seen in its form, style, line, movement, design and colours. But, of course, Malay visual arts are also rich in beauty in addition to – or in conjunction with – their 'formal' elements,

Pattern is created from the repetition of an element or motif and pattern can also be a vital part of physical structure. It is not unreasonable to argue that the application of motifs that form patterns can be an important – indeed, integral – feature in the visual appreciation of aesthetics. For example, in fabric design – either weaving or printing – various arrangements of motifs are useful in decorating the layout design. With textiles and clothing in which the design motif creates a pattern, the resultant aesthetic aspects can influence an individual's choice of – and reaction to – the clothing or fabric.

There is a range of fabrics for making Malay sarongs that use the traditional batik techniques. It has been noted that batik sarong motifs are derived from a mixture of plants or fauna motifs and geometric shapes. Hence, the aesthetic values in a batik sarong are related to the choice of motif or pattern design. The development of style for motif design

has been influenced, firstly, by the cultural and religious setting in Malaysian communities and, secondly, through the external culture that has been transmitted through intermarriage, trade, migration and colonial factors. The traditional batik decoration method continues to this day and is accepted by Malays, thus perpetuating Malay values of beauty.

Another significant element to have influenced Malay aesthetics in batik sarongs has been the Islamic code of not using overtly figurative illustration. This encourages the use of geometric features and certain colour combinations. Apart from the elements of motifs and patterns, the use of various colours is important in forming sarong designs. Colour has significance because it has played an important role in culture, whether from an aesthetic or a symbolic point of view. Batik sarong designs, with their balance of layout, variety of motifs, and the combination of colours, all contribute to harmonious patterns. Sarongs are created for their appropriate functional use.

Cloth has aesthetic characteristics that carry social symbolic communication through their colours, designs, shapes and textures. The element of colour is also related to Malay culture, as Malay people have their own preferences in terms of colours, especially in relation to fashion. In general, Malay people favour four main colours, namely white, yellow, red, and black. In Malay culture, red is the colour of warriors and expresses bravery, white represent the highest class, yellow belongs to the ruler, and black plays an important role in mourning. Women wear sarongs featuring a lot of black and they are also used as shrouds for the deceased. Moreover, colours can be related to religion and beliefs. Islam favours the colour green, so this colour appears prominently in the works of Muslim people. Colour is a source of beauty in any form of art, and in batik-making colour is essential as it serves to support the motifs and define the layout of the material. **Motifs**

Motif constitutes a unit that serves to form a pattern, while the element of repetition helps to form the design. A pattern can be defined as a design composed of one or more motifs, multiplied and arranged in an orderly sequence, and a single motif as a unit with which the designer composes a pattern by repeating it at regular intervals over a surface



*Birds, hand-blocked on cotton, 1970s
Collection of P. Raman Nair sdn Bhd*

In being repeated in a design, motifs attract the viewer's attention. Motifs for fabric design have a decorative role, which serves to produce patterns contributing to the object or artefact's aesthetic characteristics. Extensive studies have compared the Javanese and Malaysian batik sarong motif design (see for example, Roojen,1993). The introduction of Javanese batik spurred local batik makers not only to imitate and reproduce their motifs, but also to use their structure and decorative patterns as the source of reference; for example, "as a result, the batiks of Pekalongan, Gresik and Lasem were the main source of inspiration for early Malay producers" (Arney, 1987, p. 48). The availability of Javanese batik in Malaysia, especially on the East Coast, prompted producers to use the flowering tree motif in their compositions: "one of the first designs applied in this manner in Kelantan was called *pohon bunga* (flowering tree), which was a composition of flowers, leaves, buds, etc., connected to curved stems" (Roojen, 1993, p.50).

In the Malay handicraft design it was seen that in batik sarong design 'motifs are composed in two styles – organic (plants, natural element, birds, animals) and geometric (*pucuk rebung*/triangle)



Flora series, hand-blocked discharge on cotton, 1970s-1980s Designed by Ariff Batuk, Collection of P. Raman Nair Sdn Bid



Some research said, the use of plant or floral motifs in batik sarongs are related to those used in Malay woodcarving. Some argued that this influence is due to the technique of printed batik, which used wood blocks to print colour on the fabric. This method in Kelantan is called *batik pukul*, while in Terengganu it is referred to as *batik terap*. The batik makers usually requested the wood carvers to carve motifs that they (wood carvers) deemed suitable for use in their design compositions. He also remarked on several changes that occurred in motifs after Independence. He noted an increase in geometric or floral motifs, which are similar with arabesque designs. Javanese batik sarong design motifs often contain

cultural symbols that have been stylized over time and this can also be seen in developments in Malaysian sarong design.

The formation of the pattern depends entirely on the arrangement and repetition of the motifs. The element of repetition shows continuity and contributes to the beauty and balance of the pattern. Repetition is an important aspect of embellishment in all Malay traditional arts, such as textile, ceramics, woodcarving, weaving and embroidery. The beauty of a decorative pattern depends on the efficacy of its composition and the choice of motifs, whether they are inspired by geometry, flora or fauna, as featured in batik sarongs design.

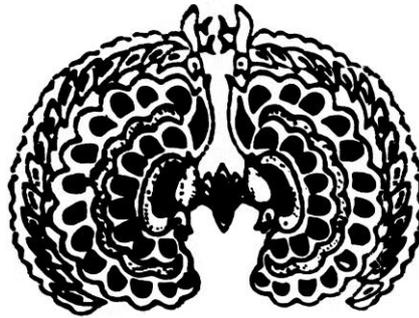
Plant motifs

The motif that is derived from plants is constituted from various parts of plants. The beauty and features of plants are selected from specific elements, such as flowers, leaves, shoots, tendrils, fruits and stems. Flowers with their different shapes and colours are favoured motifs. The flowers that have grown in the vicinity of where batik craftsmen have lived and worked have, over the generations, acquired symbolism reflecting their day-to-day functions as well as their use in ritual.

Fauna motifs

The use of fauna motifs is more widespread in Javanese batik sarongs than in Malaysian batik sarong. The fauna motifs found in batik sarongs are generally small in size and are used as both main and filler motifs. The scenery that is composed in batik designs habitually show the relationship between flowers and the flying insects, as many flowers require special insects for their pollination.

In contrast, it has been noted that batik sarongs that show fauna motifs can be problematic for Malay Muslims. Various designs with fauna motifs “constitute continual exceptions to the general rule of foliated patterns while still satisfying the naturalistic Malay aesthetic” (Arney, 1987, p. 58).



*Mirror image of peacocks, hand-blocked on cotton,
1960s Collection of Eng Leong Hin*

Geometric, cosmic, and cuisine motifs

Islamic geometric design principles are one of the significant features to be added to

Malaysia's batik sarong tradition. The formation of geometric motifs combine various basic shapes: "there are the squares and rectangles, the circles and semi-circles, the triangles and diamonds, the pentagons and hexagons, the octagons, the variously shaped crosses and the stars of five, six, eight, ten, or even more points. Thus, geometric motifs are closely related to the knowledge of mathematics, because mathematical understanding is needed for their creation in order to ensure accuracy. Geometric motifs are an essential part of Islamic art.

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