

# ARTS & CULTURES

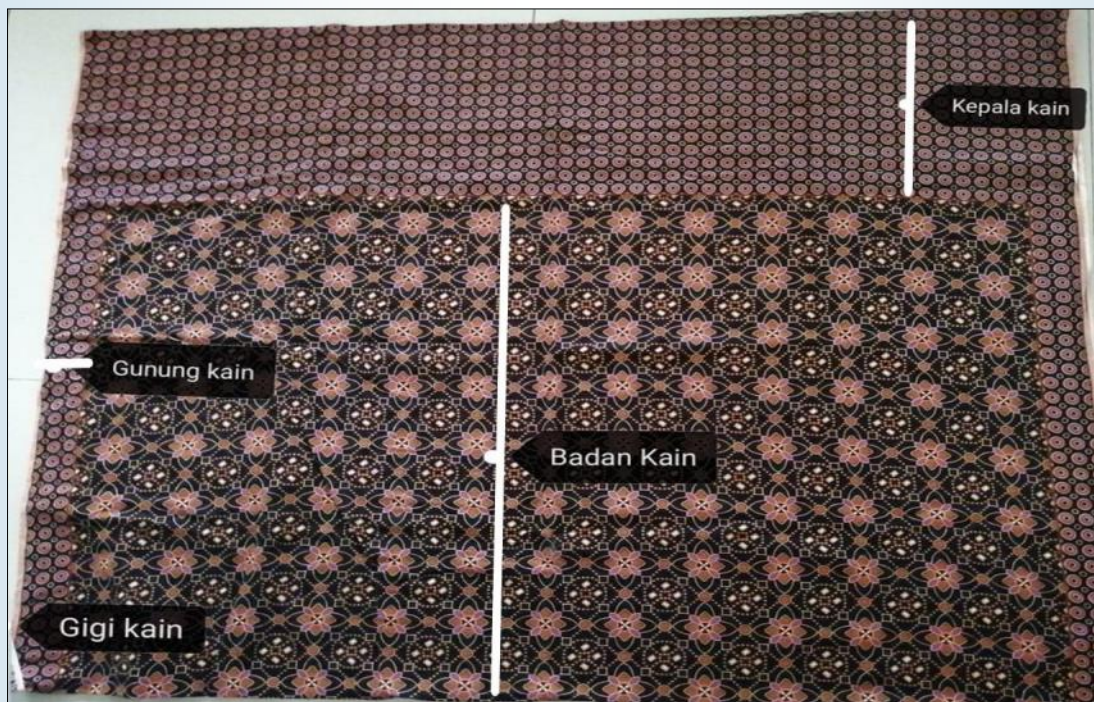
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Noraziah Mohd Amin

## Batik: More than just a Sarong

By Wan Noorli Razali

It is a very rare occasion for us to find Malay women wearing batik sarong when they are going out of the house nowadays. Many new generations find it a hassle to tie batik sarong as they are afraid that it may fall down, a risky situation no one would ever want to experience. Apart from that, some may also feel that it restricts movement especially when we are constantly rushing from one place to another. Today, most women were forced to wear batik sarong either during confinement or when they visit some traditional spa for a massage.

Women in the olden days wore batik sarong daily no matter where they go. It was recognized as the appropriate attire to wear when attending special events, not just limited as home-attire. Before we discuss further the multiple ways of wearing it, let us learn the different parts of batik sarong. Generally, batik sarong consists of parts known as *kepala kain*, *badan kain*, *gunung kain* and *gigi kain*. There are also designs that include *apit kiri* and *apit kanan* at each side of the *kepala kain*. These somehow are absent in the design below.



According to Assoc. Prof. Datuk Paduka Dr. Mohd Rosli Saludin, Malay culture and tradition has laid out ways to approach woman in a very gentle and respectful manner (Yahya, April 27, 2020). Regarding batik sarong, he added that each way of wearing it conveys the status of a woman. This sign is made not to undermine her position, but for people to treat her with utmost respect. Here are the four correct ways of wearing the batik sarong and the meaning behind each of them.

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Kepala kain is worn in the front position.

This is worn by unmarried women. Thus, it is another way of saying that should a man is attracted to her, he can seek for her hand in marriage.



Kepala kain is worn on the right side.

This is worn by a widow who has separated from her husband due to a divorce. She can be approached, but with respect.



Kepala kain is worn on the left side

This is worn by a widow whose husband has passed away. She most probably needs to be given some time and space before she can be approached.



Kepala kain is worn at the back.

This is worn by a married woman. They should not be disturbed and should be treated with respect by observing the social boundaries and limitations.

As we can see, the wearing style of batik sarong represents the delicate aspect of the culture. Just by looking at the position of the *kepala kain*, people can be more sensitive and respond accordingly. Now that we are aware of the different meanings behind the wearing of batik sarong, let us put this into practice. Let us wear accordingly and help preserve this beautiful Malay traditional culture.

## Reference

Yahya, A. (April 27, 2020). Adab memakai kain batik lambang peribadi pemakai. *Harian Metro*. <https://www.hmetro.com.my/mutakhir/2020/04/571748/adab-memakai-kain-batik-lambang-peribadi-pemakai>

