

# Chempaka: A Flora Motif as Design Identity in Batik Chempaka, PPDK Merbok

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## ABSTRACT

*Batik Malaysia refers to the traditional Malaysian art of batik-making which includes the application of wax and dyes to cloth to produce elaborate patterns and design. Batik has a long history in Malaysia and is a key part of the country's cultural legacy, representing its identity and customs. This paper discusses the floral motif as design identity and production of the Chempaka flower motif. It explores the history and cultural significance of the Chempaka flower motif in batik making and how it has been adapted to create modern design. Overall, the paper concludes with the importance of the Cempaka flower motif as a design identity and the need to preserve its cultural significance in the batik industry.*

**Keywords:** Batik design, Batik industry, Batik motif, Batik identity.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Batik Malaysia refers to the traditional art of batik-making in Malaysia, which involves the application of wax and dyes to fabrics to create intricate patterns and designs. Batik has a long history in Malaysia and is an important cultural heritage that represents the country's identity and traditions. The Malaysian batik industry has evolved over time from a traditional craft to a thriving fashion industry that produces a wide range of batik products, including clothing, accessories, and home decor items. Batik has also become an important tourist attraction in Malaysia, with many visitors seeking to learn about art and purchasing batik products.

A flora motif refers to a design element or pattern that is inspired by or represents various aspects of plant life such as flowers, leaves, trees, and other botanical elements. Incorporating the flora motif as a design identity can bring a sense of natural beauty, elegance, and vitality to a product or artistic creation (Morni et al. 2021). Flora motifs have been used in various art forms throughout history including textiles, ceramics, painting, and architecture. They can be found in traditional crafts such as batiks, where intricate floral patterns are meticulously hand-drawn or hand-painted onto fabric.

The choice of the flora motif as a design identity can evoke different emotions and convey various messages. For example, vibrant and colourful floral patterns may symbolize joy, vitality, and abundance. A delicate and intricate floral design can evoke a sense of elegance, grace, and femininity. In some cultures, specific flowers have symbolic meanings, such as roses representing love or lotus flowers, symbolizing purity, and enlightenment. By incorporating a flora motif as a design identity, a product or artwork can establish a connection between nature and the beauty of the botanical world.

The choice also reflects an appreciation for the environment, sustainability, and preservation of natural resources. Moreover, a flora motif can serve as a unique and recognizable signature for a brand or artist, helping establish a distinct visual identity and create a cohesive body of work. Overall, a flora motif as a design identity can infuse a sense of beauty, vitality, and neural inspiration into various creative endeavours, connecting them with a timeless and captivating world of plants and flowers (Morni et al., 2021).

In an article by Kari, Samin and Legino (2020), they explore the flora motif incorporated into block batik design and its role in establishing a unique design identity. It also shows how certain flowers and plants hold symbolic meanings in the local culture and are reflected in design choices. They also explored the techniques employed by artisans to create intricate and detailed floral patterns using the block-batik method. Abdullah and Samin (2020) highlight the sustainability of flora, fauna, and geometric motif designs in the batik industry. It also discusses how these motifs represent the aspects of nature, traditional symbolism, and artistic expression in the batik tulis industry.



**Figure 1** Logo Batik Chempaka, PPDK Merbok

This study is part of an ongoing visual research initiative to determine the quality of Chempaka flora applied as a design motif in the design identity of Batik Chempaka PPDK, Merbok. We identify that the nature of the Chempaka flower means that it is frequently with us in any circumstance. The designer applied the four design stages of imitation, denaturalization, stylization, and abstraction to interpret the Chempaka flower. Because their shapes and characters are distinct, the design motifs convey the physical beauty of Batik Chempaka.

## **2. MOTIF: CHEMPAKA FLOWER**

The motif was the main element in the design. This is a triggering point for creative inspiration. In the art of batik, motif is of high importance because it is the onset at which ideas are generated based on the creativity and instinct of an artist or designer. Motif selection is of prime importance in design because the value of the batik depends on it.

The motif produced not only makes textiles attractive, but also determines the features and functions of a certain textile or product. The flora motif refers to a specific type of design element or pattern inspired by various aspects of plant life, including flowers, leaves, and other botanical elements. As been explained by Wahed et al. (2022), flora motifs are commonly used in the design of batik fabrics. These motifs are created through the wax-resist dyeing technique, where hot wax is applied to specific areas of the fabric to create a barrier that prevents the dye from penetrating those areas. This allows the desired floral patterns and designs to be formed on fabric.





The surrounding environment typically influences a designer's ideas. Ideas are generated based on their ability to evaluate, observe, filter, compose, examine, and produce motifs that can form their own

identities. Every motif should be rich in aesthetic value, apart from being attractive, genuine, and unique. This philosophy should be accepted and shared with others.

The chempaka flower, also known as frangipani, is a tropical flower commonly used as a flora motif in various design contexts, including craft and textiles. The chempaka flower is known for its fragrant scent and visually appealing appearance, which makes it a popular choice for incorporation into artistic and decorative design. In traditional crafts such as batiks, the chempaka flower motif is often depicted with a distinct five-petal shape and vibrant colors. It is intricately incorporated into batik patterns, either as a standalone motif or as part of a larger floral arrangement. The chempaka motif represents beauty, elegance, and tropical charm, and has cultural significance in many Southeast Asian countries. Its graceful and symmetrical form lends itself well to artistic interpretations and stylized representations. Additionally, the chempaka flower is associated with spirituality and religious rituals in certain cultures, further adding to its symbolic value.

The use of chempaka as a flora motif allows Batik Chempaka to capture the essence of nature's beauty and incorporate it into their creative works. It adds a touch on tropical allure and a sense of harmony to various design applications, contributing to the overall aesthetic appeal and cultural identity of the artwork.

**Table 1** Type of Chempaka Flower

No.	Type of Chempaka Flower	Image of Chempaka Flower
1.	Chempaka Putih is a specific variety of the frangipani plant that has white or cream-colored flower. The chempaka putih is highly regarded for its fragrant blooms and is often associated with purity, spirituality, and beauty. Its delicate and elegant appearance, coupled with its sweet scent, make it a popular choice in gardens and floral designs.	
2.	Cempaka Kuning its bright and sunny appearance adds a pop of colour and a sense of warmth to gardens and floral displays. Is frequently used in religious ceremonies, festivals, and traditional floral arrangements.	
3.	Cempaka Ungu is a specific variety of the frangipani plant that bears flower in shades of purple or violet. Is appreciated for its unique and striking coloration. In some cultures, it is associated with royalty, luxury, and spirituality. Is often linked to mysticism, creativity, and individuality. Its distinctive colour and alluring fragrance make it a captivating choice for those seeking a visually and aromatically enchanting floral experience.	
4.	Cempaka Merah is admired for its vibrant and rich red blooms. In various cultures, it symbolizes passion, love, and vitality. The red colour is often associated with strong emotions, energy, and intensity.	

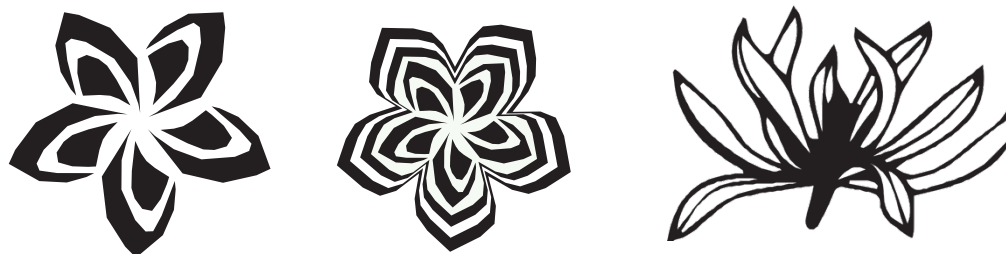
### 3. DESIGN

Generally, flora is seen as a very important source of batik motif creation because it has its own distinction and significance. The strong relationship the Malay people share with the plants and their life experience with this creation of nature have influenced their thinking and world view about nature which subsequently become the metaphor of life. The design method "Imitation of Nature," also known as biomimicry, is an approach that draws inspiration from the structures, functions, processes, and systems found in nature to create human-made products, technologies, and designs.

In the design process, the idea development for the design of the Chempaka flower involves a creative process of brainstorming, conceptualization, and refinement to come up with innovative and aesthetically pleasing designs inspired by the Chempaka flower. The first step in idea development is to conduct thorough research and observation of the Chempaka flower. This includes studying its botanical characteristics, such as the shape of the petals, the arrangement of the leaves, the colour patterns, and any unique features. Observing the Chempaka flower in its natural habitat helps designers understand its essence and functional aspects.

Imitation of nature: As the Chempaka flower is the source of inspiration, the idea development may involve employing biomimicry principles. Designers look for ways to mimic the Chempaka's natural features, such as using water-repellent surfaces, imitating its intricate petal arrangement, or incorporating its unique colour gradients into the design. In producing a design with a basic motif, basic forms of flora must be imitated with the intention of acquiring ideas and inspiration to create pictures. This step requires the designer to imitate the natural images. This step involves searching for analogies or comparisons between pattern or styling in the Chempaka flower and their potential applications in Batik design.

The idea development process for the Chempaka flower design is a blend of creativity, technical expertise, and a deep appreciation for the beauty and functionality of nature. By drawing inspiration from the Chempaka flower, designers can create unique and innovative designs to the natural world of Batik Chempaka.



**Figure 2** Example of image Chempaka flower – Imitation of nature

"Denaturalization" in the context of design refers to the intentional departure from the natural characteristics or features of the Chempaka flower in the design process. It involves abstracting or transforming the elements of nature into a more stylized, unconventional, or imaginative representation.

Denaturalization of nature: In this stage, designers may abstract and simplify the botanical features of the Chempaka flower. They might reduce the complexity of its petals, leaves, or overall structure into more geometric shapes or minimalist forms. By doing so, the design moves away from a direct representation of the natural flower. Denaturalization often involves adding a touch of artistic interpretation or personal style to the design. This could include incorporating artistic elements like swirls, patterns, or other artistic flourishes that deviate from the Chempaka flower's natural appearance.

The denaturalization of the Chempaka flower in design opens endless creative possibilities. It encourages designers to push boundaries, think outside the box, and create designs that evoke emotions, challenge perceptions, and inspire new perspectives, while still retaining the essence and inspiration drawn from the natural world.

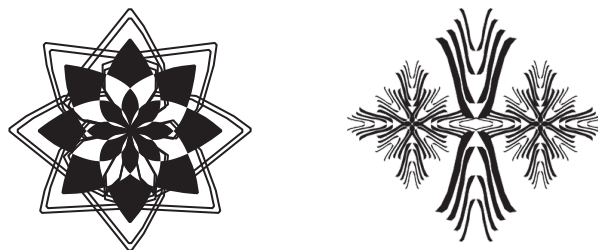


**Figure 3** Example of image Chempaka flower – Denaturalization of nature

Stylization of nature in the design of the Chempaka flower refers to the artistic process of simplifying, abstracting, or transforming the natural features of the flower into a more stylized and artistic representation. It involves incorporating artistic elements and to create a visually captivating and expressive design.

Stylization of nature: In stylization, designers simplify the intricate and detailed forms of the Chempaka flower. They may reduce the number of petals, streamline the shapes of leaves, or distil the overall structure into more basic and recognizable geometric forms. This simplification enhances the visual appeal and makes the design more approachable and aesthetically pleasing. Referring to the figure 4, the styling process involves the use of geometric patterns and shapes inspired by the Chempaka flower's natural structure. Designers might incorporate circles, triangles, squares, or other geometric elements to create a more structured and visually balanced representation of the flower.

The stylization of nature in the design of the Chempaka flower provides designers with the freedom to interpret and reinterpret the natural subject matter. It encourages creativity and the exploration of different artistic techniques to create visually compelling and emotionally resonant representations of this beautiful flower.



**Figure 4** Example of image Chempaka flower – Stylization of nature

Abstraction of nature is the process of turning design or motives into unknown, strange, unusual, or unfamiliar motifs. The final step is to make the design look new, exotic, or artistic. Any element in the design that appears representational to living creation undergoes abstraction. The result is the abstract and artistic design of a motif that can be used in any form and function. It breaks away from the idea of the imitation of subject matter.

The act of simplifying or distorting the Chempaka flower is undertaken with the intention of highlighting its intrinsic essence or emotional significance, as opposed to portraying it in a realistic or intricate manner. The process of abstraction frequently entails the distillation of natural forms into fundamental geometric shapes or essential attributes. By reducing the level of detail, one is able to direct attention towards the fundamental essence of the Chempaka flower, rather than merely replicating its outward physical characteristics. The experimentation could involve a study of the fundamental shapes

and structures exhibited by Chempaka flowers, including circles, triangles, and spirals. By manipulating the arrangement, size, and orientation of the flowers, one can create captivating compositions with intriguing motifs. The process involves the gradual accumulation of various hues and forms of Chempaka flowers, strategically arranged to generate a sense of depth and dimension within the motifs. In the process of creating the Chempaka flower motif, various textures were explored and experimented with in order to enhance depth and visual appeal within the subject matter.

The abstraction of the Chempaka flower can serve as a means of expressing emotions, moods, or sensations that are linked to nature, rather than aiming to create a literal depiction. The primary objective of this artistic endeavour is to evoke specific emotions and establish a particular mood through the recreation of Chempaka flower abstraction. The intention is to establish a strong association with Chempaka flowers, thereby eliciting a range of emotional responses. The utilization of abstraction in representing the natural world serves as a highly effective means of conveying and expressing various emotions and sentiments. The utilization of colours, textures, and brushstrokes has the potential to elicit emotions associated with serenity, tranquillity, energy, or chaos.

The implementation and study of the dynamic lines and flowing forms exhibited by the Chempaka flower are employed to symbolize the dynamic and perpetually evolving characteristics inherent in the natural world. The recreation of Chempaka flower abstraction artwork has the potential to evoke a perception of movement or rhythm, thereby mirroring the perpetual metamorphoses observed in the realm of nature. The natural phenomena, including fractals, waves, and organic growth, create inspiration from the abstract representation of the Chempaka flower.

The previously mentioned patterns are integrated into the compositions, thereby establishing a harmonious connection with the inherent design of nature. The creative use of gestural marks and expressive strokes to illustrate the dynamic motion and developmental process of flowers can be skilfully translated into visually captivating motifs. Through the exploration of various compositional techniques, such as asymmetry or unconventional cropping, one can effectively create visually captivating and dynamic motifs.



**Figure 5** Example of image Chempaka flower – Abstraction of nature

## 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Batik holds a significant historical presence within Malaysia and serves as an integral component of the nation's cultural heritage, symbolizing its distinct identity and traditional practices. This study delves into the application of the floral motif as a means of design identity and the production process of the Chempaka flower motif and as well as the exploration of the historical and cultural implications of the Chempaka flower motif within the realm of batik production, while also examining its contemporary adaptations in design. The motif served as the primary component in the design. This serves as an outlet for stimulating creative inspiration. In the area of batik art, the motif holds significant importance as it serves as the initial catalyst for the generation of ideas, relying on the creative prowess and instinctual abilities of the artist or designer. The process of selecting motifs holds significant importance in design, as the overall value of batik is determined by this aspect. The incorporation of chempaka as a floral motif enables Batik Chempaka to encapsulate the intrinsic allure of the natural world and integrate it into their artistic endeavours.

Throughout the design process, the development of ideas for the design of the Chempaka flower entails a creative progression involving brainstorming, conceptualization, and refinement. The objective is to generate innovative and aesthetically pleasing designs that draw inspiration from the Chempaka flower and translate them into a few numbers of design processes. The process of idea development for the Chempaka flower design encompasses a fusion of creative thinking, technical proficiency, and a profound admiration for the aesthetic and practical aspects of the natural world. Designers can derive inspiration from the Chempaka flower to develop distinctive and creative designs that pay tribute to the natural world of Batik Chempaka. Moreover, there exist numerous techniques and processes that have yet to be explored.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors played equal contribution to the production of this manuscript.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST / KONFLIK KEPENTINGAN

There are no conflicts of interests.

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Tarikh : 20 Januari 2023

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