

Peranakan Batik: Cultures Connection in Indonesia, Malay Peninsula, and Thailand

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Abstract

Pesisir batik (Coastal batik) is one of the batik categories in Indonesia besides *Vorstenlanden* batik (Surakarta and Yogyakarta). One type of batik that is included in *Pesisir* batik category is *Peranakan* batik. This batik also has its uniqueness that is not inferior to the *Vorstenlanden* batik. *Peranakan* Batik is produced mainly by Chinese *Peranakan* entrepreneurs who live on the north coast of Java. All batiks produced outside Solo and Yogyakarta are included in the *Pesisir* batik category. Foreign cultures influenced many of the *Peranakan* batik motifs because of the large number of migrants who conduct business ventures then settle in the coastal areas, making *Peranakan* batik proof of the fusion of multicultural cultures in Indonesia. The characteristic of this batik is having a combination of *pesisir* and *Vorstenlanden* patterns, such as the bouquet/*buketan* style, *hong* (phoenix) motifs, roses, tulips, peonies, butterflies, and animals (Chinese, Dutch and Javanese motifs) which are popular on the north coast of Java. *Peranakan* batik is also a popular choice for Chinese *Peranakans*, also known as Baba and Nyonya in Malaya Peninsula, who live in Indonesia, Penang Malaysia, and Phuket Thailand. Most of whom come from well-known, well-educated, and wealthy *Peranakan* circles. One of the reasons for these tight family ties between *Peranakan* communities in different regions because of marriage alliances and business relationships. The colorful Pekalongan batik, another type of *Peranakan* batik, with a combination of Dutch-influenced bouquet motifs also known as Nyonya batik in the early 20th century, was favored by Chinese *Peranakan* Nyonyas. This research will focus on *Peranakan* batik produced in the late 19th century to the early 20th century. With the historical research method, the researcher conducted literature reviews from various sources of books, journals, and online material to find why *Peranakan* batik is the choice for Chinese *Peranakan* Nyonyas.

Keywords : Pesisir Batik, Chinese Peranakan, Multicultural, Motifs

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บทคัดย่อ

เพสเชสเซีย (Pesisir) เป็นชื่อเรียก ผ้าบาติกประเภทหนึ่งในประเทศอินโดนีเซีย นอกเหนือจากผ้าบาติกที่ใช้ใช้กับกษัตริย์ราชวงศ์ หรือที่เรียกว่าแบบฟอสเทอแลมปีเดอ (Vorstenlanden) ที่ผลิตมาจากเมืองสุราการ์ตาและเมืองยอกยAKARTA ซึ่งผ้าบาติกประเภทเพสเชสเซีย (Pesisir) ยังมีผ้าบาติกชนิดหนึ่งที่น่าสนใจที่จัดอยู่ในหมวดหมู่นี้ คือ ผ้าบาติกเปอรานากัน (Peranakan batik) ซึ่งมีเอกลักษณ์ที่(สวยงาม)ไม่ด้อยไปกว่า ผ้าบาติกแบบ(ราชวงศ์หรือ)ฟอสเทอแลมปีเดอ(Vorstenlanden) โดยผ้าบาติกเปอรานากันถูกผลิตขึ้นมา โดยพ่อค้าชาวจีนเปอรานากัน (Chinese Peranakan) ที่อาศัยอยู่ทางชายฝั่งตอนเหนือของเกาะชวา ซึ่งผ้าบาติกทั้งหมดที่ผลิตนอกเมืองโซโลและเมืองยอกยAKARTA จะถูกจัดอยู่ในประเภทของผ้าบาติกแบบเพสเชสเซีย (Pesisir) เนื่องจากมีวัฒนธรรมจากต่างประเทศที่มีอิทธิพลต่อลวดลายผ้าบาติกของชาวเปอรานากัน เหตุเพราะมีผู้อพยพต่างชาติจำนวนมากที่เข้ามาทำมาค้าขาย และตั้งถิ่นฐานในพื้นที่ชายฝั่งของเกาะชวา ทำให้ผ้าบาติกของชาวเปอรานากัน เป็นหลักฐานพิสูจน์ถึงการผสมผสานของหลากหลายวัฒนธรรมในประเทศอินโดนีเซีย ลักษณะเฉพาะของผ้าบาติก ชนิดนี้ คือ มีการผสมผสานระหว่างลวดลายแบบเพสเชสเซีย (pesisir) และฟอสเทอแลมปีเดอ (Vorstenlanden)เข้าด้วยกัน เช่น ลวดลายแบบช่อลวดลายหงส์หรือนกฟีนิกซ์ ,พวงดอกไม้/ ,ลวดลายดอกกุหลาบ ,ดอกทิวลิป ,ดอกโบตั๋น และลวดลายสัตว์ (ที่มาจากประเทศจีน ชาวดัตช์ และเกาะชวา) ซึ่งเป็นที่นิยม (มากกว่าบนชายฝั่งทางเหนือของเกาะชวา นอกจากนี้ผ้าบาติกแบบเปอรานากัน ยังเป็นตัวเลือกยอดนิยมสำหรับชาวจีนเปอรานากัน หรือที่เรียกว่าบาบาและย่าหย่าในแหลมมลายู ที่อาศัยอยู่ในประเทศอินโดนีเซีย , เมียนมาร์ ประเทศมาเลเซีย และจังหวัดภูเก็ตในประเทศไทย ซึ่งคนส่วนใหญ่ที่นิยมใช้ มักจะมาจากแวตงชาวเปอรานากันที่มีชื่อเสียง มีการศึกษาดี และมีฐานะร่ำรวย สาเหตุหนึ่งที่ทำให้ความผูกพันในครอบครัวมีความแน่นแฟ้นระหว่างชุมชนชาวเปอรานากัน ในภูมิภาคต่าง ๆ นั้นเป็นเพราะจากการมีพันธมิตรที่มาจากสมรสและจากความสัมพันธ์ในเชิงทางธุรกิจ เป็นต้น. สีเส้นที่สดใสของผ้าบาติกแบบเปกอลองแกน (Pekalongan batik) ซึ่งเป็นผ้าบาติกแบบเปอรานากัน (Peranakan batik) อีกประเภทหนึ่ง ที่มีการผสมผสานระหว่างลวดลายช่อดอกไม้ โดยได้รับอิทธิพลมาจากชาวดัตช์ หรือที่เรียกว่าผ้าบาติกเนียนยา (Nyonya batik) ที่ปรากฏในช่วงต้นศตวรรษที่ 20 ซึ่งเป็นผ้าบาติกที่ได้รับความนิยมจากชาวจีนเปอรานากันเนียนยา (Chinese Peranakan Nyonyas) . งานวิจัยนี้ จะมุ่งเน้นไปที่ผ้าบาติกแบบเปอรานากัน (Peranakan batik) ที่ผลิตในช่วงปลายศตวรรษที่ 19 ถึงต้นศตวรรษที่ 20 ด้วยวิธีการวิจัยเชิงประวัติศาสตร์ ซึ่งผู้วิจัยได้ทำการทบทวนวรรณกรรมจากแหล่งหนังสือวารสาร และสื่อออนไลน์ต่างๆ เพื่อค้นหาว่าเหตุใดผ้าบาติกเปอรานากัน จึงเป็นตัวเลือกสำหรับชาวจีนเปอรานากันเนียนยา

คำสำคัญ :Pesisir Batik, Chinese Peranakan, ความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรม, Motifs

Introduction

Batik in Indonesia has a long history and has become part of its people's life cycle. The statue of *Prajnaparamita*, a masterpiece of classical Hindu-Buddhist art of ancient Java from the 13th century Singasari Kingdom, East Java, Indonesia, depicts the goddess wearing cloth/batik with 'Prabha' (*Dharmacakra-kalacakra*) ornament/motif, a circle filled with arrows divided into eight decorative arts sections. Another proof that batik permeates Indonesians' lives from beginning to end is that the mothers carry infants in batik slings decorated with symbols designed to bring the child luck and health. Meanwhile, the dead are shrouded in funerary batik decorated with specific motifs only for a funeral ceremony.



Figure 1: The Statue of Prajnaparamita (Retrieved November 20, 2020 from <https://luk.staff.ugm.ac.id/candi/Singasari/01.html>)

The name Batik emerged from the 10th-14th century during the Galuh and Pakuan-Padjaran Kingdoms in West Java, Indonesia. Batik derived from the Ancient Sundanese word *Ambatik* which means drawing. The term *ambatik* (*mbatik* in the new Javanese language) started to be used in the 11th century (Kusnin, 2014: 13). UNESCO recognized batik as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on October 2nd, 2009. One of the reasons is because batik motifs in Indonesia have deep philosophical values and meanings. Even each region that produces batik has its distinctive motifs with philosophical values following the local wisdom of each region. According to the philosophy adopted, the creators of batik motifs design their creations with various good intentions, hopes, and wishes. A piece of batik contained three interrelated elements, namely motifs, functions, and philosophy (Suliyati and Yuliati, 2019: 62). Batik techniques can be found in various regions globally, for example, in Malaysia, Thailand, China, and Africa. This evidence has led several countries to propose their batik also as a world cultural heritage. However, UNESCO recognizes the intangible heritage of the Indonesia batik motifs, not the batik technique.



Figure 2: Hand drawing batik using a *canting* to apply wax-resist to cloth (Retrieved November 20, 2020 from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/indonesian-batik-00170>)

Premium fine hand-drawn (*tulis*) *Peranakan* batik is the choice for Chinese *Peranakan* or the Nyonya-Baba community living in Indonesia, Phuket Thailand, Penang Malaysia, and Singapore. This type of batik is interesting to be studied because of its unique development compared to *Vorstenlanden* batik. *Peranakan* batik, a part of *Pesisir* batik, is influenced by the culture of immigrants who settle and marry locals to enrich the motifs and colors of *Peranakan* batik. When the Mataram kingdom ordered their employees and families to wear batik, batik entrepreneurs around the coastal areas saw this as a business opportunity. They combined the *larangan* motifs (forbidden motifs, reserved only for the royalty) of Surakarta and Yogyakarta with naturalist motifs such as flowers, birds, animals, *buketan* emerged. In other words, a marriage between two types of batik adds to the cultural richness of *Peranakan* batik.

Most *Peranakans* come from well-educated and wealthy families, and they prefer to choose expensive premium hand-drawn batik to show their status. The Nyonyas wear batik sarongs for their daily activities, and they choose colorful *Peranakan* batik with *buketan* or flower motifs, such as Pekalongan batik and Tiga Negri batik. These hand-drawn batiks are also an option for wedding dowry and a family heirloom passed on to future generations. Thus, it can be said that batik has become part of the life of the *Peranakan* community in three different regions.



Figure 3: Phuket Baba Nyonya couple (Retrieved November 22, 2020 from <https://thethaiger.com/thai-life/phuket-history-nyonyababa-link-phuket-penang>)

Peranakan batik, produced by Indonesian Chinese *Peranakan*, is full of the meaning of acculturation, melting pot, and cultural diversity that forms the identity of the Indonesian people. This research aims to explore the history of *Peranakan* batik and find the reason why *Peranakan* batik became a prominent choice among Chinese *Peranakans* in 3 different regions, namely Indonesia, Phuket Thailand, and the Malay peninsula (Penang and Singapore).

Methodology

For this study, the researcher applied the Historical research method. The primary data source of this research is taken from books, journals, and other digital sources as a literature review and completed with examples of the variety of motifs and visual styles of *Peranakan* batik, especially from Central Java, Indonesia.

Historical Research

- to study the history of batik *Peranakan* and Chinese *Peranakan* or the Nyonya-Baba community
- to examine the aesthetics of *Peranakan* batik and reason why it became the first choice of the Chinese *Peranakan* Nyonya.

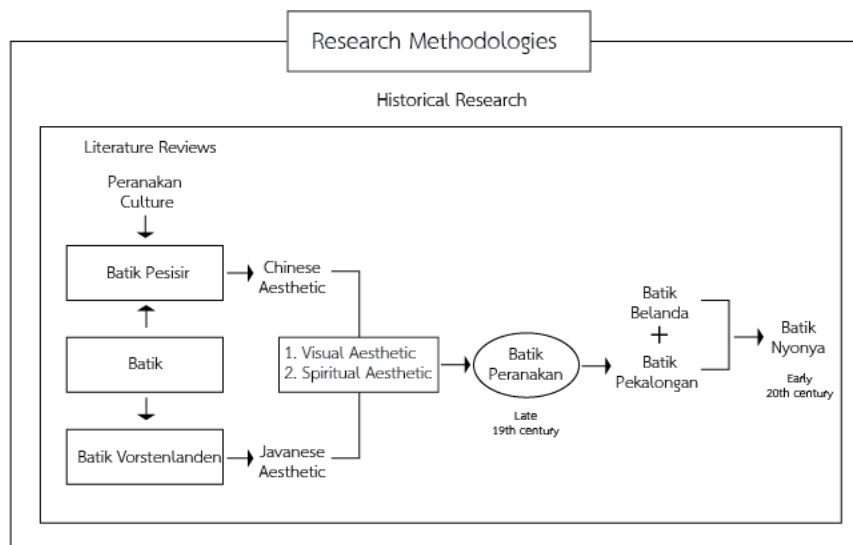


Figure 4: Diagram of The Research Methodology

Literature Reviews

Batik and Peranakan Batik

Batik was initially produced in Java, especially on the northern coast of Java and inland Java, especially in Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Since the Dutch occupation, batik experts have divided batik into two categories in terms of production location, namely *Vorstenlanden* batik and *Pesisir* batik (coastal batik). *Vorstenlanden* batik is a batik produced in Surakarta and Yogyakarta when during the Dutch colonial period were sultanates or principalities (*Vorstenlanden* in Dutch). All batik produced outside these two cities is called *Pesisir* batik. Court/*Kraton* people and batik entrepreneurs, who live outside the court but within these two cities, generally produced *Vorstenlanden* Batik. Meanwhile, batik entrepreneurs along the north coast of Java produced *Pesisir* batik. One example of *Pesisir* batik is *Peranakan* batik produced mostly by Chinese *Peranakan*.

The classification of batik into these two groups is mainly based on various motifs and colors (Djoemena, 1990: 8). In general, the batik characteristics of the two groups are as follows:



1. Solo and Yogyakarta batik (Vorstenlanden batik)		Vorstenlanden batik, Left: Parang Sekar Pisang, Yogyakarta. Middle: Yogyakarta. Right: Parang Rusak Seling Uceng. Source: Batik The impact of Time and Environment by H. Santosa Doellah, 2002.
<p>a. Symbolic, abstrak, and geometric motifs reflecting a Hindu-Jawa cultural background.</p> <p>b. Colors: Sogan (rich brown color), indigo (blue), black, white, cream.</p>		
2. Coastal Area batik (Pesisir batik)		Peranakan batik, Left: Buketan motif Kudus batik. Middle: Pekalongan batik by Oey Soe Tjoen. Right: Tiga Negeri Batik. Source: Danar Hadi Batik Solo Museum Collection.
<p>a. Motifs: naturalistic, reflecting foreign influences.</p> <p>b. Colors: a variety of colors.</p>		

Figure 5: Indonesian Batik Characteristics

When the Islamic Mataram Kingdom (before divided into Surakarta and Yogyakarta by Giyanti Agreement) controlled the north coast of Java, all employees and their families were required to wear batiks with Mataraman motifs. Batik entrepreneurs in the coastal areas saw this as a business opportunity. They produced batiks with a combination of Mataraman (*Vorstenlanden*) and *pesisir* motifs, namely *Pasir Kawung*, *Pring-pringan* (bamboo motif), *Lung-lungan* (plant tendrils), and *Gunung Ringgit*.

The characteristic of *Peranakan* batik is having a combination of *pesisir* and *Vorstenlanden* patterns, such as the *buketan*/bouquet style, *hong* (phoenix) motifs, roses, tulips, peonies, butterflies, and animals (Chinese, Dutch and Javanese motifs) which are popular on the north coast of Java. Because of the uniqueness, beauty, and manufacturing process that takes quite a long time, many *Peranakan* batiks such as Tiga Negeri batik, Pekalongan batik, and Nyonya batik were considered premium and expensive merchandise. These batiks were a choice for Malay women, Chinese, Peranakan, Dutch, Arabs, or local aristocrats.

Chinese Peranakan

As mentioned before that *Peranakan* batik predominately was developed by the Chinese *Peranakan* batik entrepreneurs. Chinese *Peranakan* or Baba and Nyonya are the people of mixed births during the 15th-19th centuries as a result of a century-long history of transculturation and interracial marriage between the immigrating Chinese people and the local people in Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia, the Penang, and Malacca States in Malaysia, Singapore, and the southern part of Thailand in Phuket province. In Indonesia, the Peranakan, who adopted local language, dress, and customs, established themselves in the cities, especially on the North Coast of Java. Chinese migrants came as single males because, during the Ming dynasty, women were forbidden to leave China. Therefore, they often married local girls (Duggan, 2001: 90). The Baba and Nyonya culture or Chinese *Peranakan* culture are characterized by its unique hybridization between the Chinese culture brought from China and the local culture in the Southeast Asian countries where the Chinese people settled and the influence of cultures from the European countries during colonization. For example, the Chinese believe in the restrictions of ancestors' respect and respect for God. The young Nyonya usually wears a batik sarong (a tubular cloth worn around the waist) and is popular with ladies in Southeast Asian countries (Muneenam, Suwannattachote, & Mustikasari, (2017: 252).



Figure 6: Nyonyas from Penang, Malaysia wearing Pekalongan batik (Source: The Nyonya Kebaya: A Century of Strait Chinese Costume by Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, 2004)



Figure 7: Phuket Peranakan wearing batik (Retrieved November 22, 2020 from <https://www.phuket.net/articles/2019/06/phuket-baba-wedding>)

Most Chinese *Peranakans* in Indonesia, Penang, and Phuket came from affluent families and were well educated; hence they were also fluent in other languages. For example, *Peranakan* in Indonesia was fluent in Dutch, while in Penang, they were fluent in English as well as in Phuket. Therefore they could work closely with the colonial government and gained high social status in their community.

The Nyonya-Baba elite of Phuket strengthened their relationships with the Penang Nyonya-Baba community through marriage alliances. Well-bred Nyonya from Penang was highly sought after as daughters-in-law by wealthy families in Phuket. Marriage was a way of creating more wealth amongst the wealthy; therefore, the rich usually married within their ranks (Singh, 2011). *Peranakans* in Phuket also achieved their heyday when the tin mining business flourished. Tan Ma Siang, a Phuket-born *Peranakan*, fostered good relations with the elite in Penang by conducting strategic marriages among Phuket and Penang elites. Tan Ma Siang's son, Tan Joo Ee was also known as Chyn Sathan Phitak, married Lucy Goh Seok Choo, a Nyonya from Penang, in 1928 (Nasution as cited in Knapp, 2010: 142). This evidence shows the strong relationship between *Peranakan* families in the Malay Peninsula and Phuket at that time, where batik *Peranakan* became the choice for dowry and gifts because of its beauty, prestige, and high prices.

In the late 19th to early 20th century, the Cheong Fatt Zee family in Penang and the Tjong A Fie family in Medan were the most well-known *Peranakan* families in Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula. Cheong Fatt Zee came to Batavia in 1860 from China in search of work. Then he married a *Peranakan* woman who was the daughter of his employer, who then provided him sufficient funds to start his own business. Cheong Fatt Zee succeeded in developing his business and becoming a food supplier and other goods to the Dutch army and navy. Then from his profits and connections, he developed profitable plantations in Sumatra and expanded his

business ventures to the Strait of Malacca, based in Penang. Due to his business and good connection expertise, he was appointed the first Chinese Vice Consul in 1893 in Penang, which increased his prestige and enabled him to court wealthy overseas Chinese.

Cheong Fatt Zee was also the uncle of Tjong Yoan Hian and Tjong A Fie, who were also immigrants from China who later became successful businessmen. Tjong Yoan Hian was already a leader of Chinese society with the rank of lieutenant (*Lieutenant der Chineze*) when Tjong A Fie landed in Labuan Deli in 1880. In 1894 Tjong Yoan Hian was appointed Chinese Vice Consul in Penang, replacing Cheong Fatt Zee while being invited by China emperor to Beijing. Tjong A Fie became a successful entrepreneur in Labuan Deli.

Tjong A Fie married Lim Koei Yap as his third wife after his second wife passed away. Lim Koei Yap was a *Peranakan* Chinese descent from a Chinese with a Malay mother. Tjong A Fie family would later eventually become a prominent *Peranakan* family. Known as a trustworthy businessman and his generosity, the Chinese community in Medan requested the Dutch to appoint Tjong A Fie as *Wijkmeester* (District Head) for the Chinese people. The Dutch granted this request. In the end, Tjong A Fie was based in Medan and held an influential and respected position among the *Peranakans* both in Medan and the Malay peninsula (Penang).



Figure 8: Tjong A Fie family picture (Retrieved December 3, 2020 from <https://tjongafiemansion.org/about#bio>)

Cheong Fatt Zee and Tjong A Fie became role models among upper-middle *Peranakans* in Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula because of their high rank and close relations with wealthy overseas Chinese. Their families were known as the *Peranakan* family and often worn batik cloth for daily activities, especially for the Nyonya. When *Peranakan* batik became

favorable and fashionable, it was related to the taste of certain social classes, which would affect people's taste in the same social circle or another. Martini states that taste is an attribute that exists in humans that must be understood in relation to social class, subculture, and lifestyle because it results from struggles in art relations and a powerful strategy to monopolize art appreciation (as cited in Lukman, 2016: 29). A person's aesthetic choices, as long as a practice takes place in the social realm, for example, fashion choices, are influenced by various interests, at least symbolic interests. Society inserts symbolic items, especially those that are considered primacy attributes, in the differentiation strategy. The difference in taste as cultural capital is used to signify the differences between social classes. Bourdieu believes that tastes and social classes that come from the dispositions embedded in social agents will determine his or her aesthetic preferences (ibid. 2016: 30). The conclusion is that fashion choice within a social class is influenced by the aesthetic preferences of the role models of a particular social class.

Result and Discussion

Because of the marital ties between Chinese Peranakan families in different regions, fashion styles such as selecting the *kebaya* and sarong of the Nyonyas also had something in common. They chose to wear premium hand-drawn batik sarongs from Indonesia because it is easier to wear and show their social status. In the 1840s, the Belanda batik (Dutch batik) from Pekalongan, the batik masterpiece of Indo-European batik entrepreneurs, was on the rise; therefore, the *buketan*/bouquet and flower motifs became popular. Many Peranakan batik entrepreneurs adopted the Belanda batik visual style but adapted it to their tastes and expertise. For example, Eliza Van Zuylen's batik style influenced Oey Soe Tjoen by applying flower and *buketan* motifs into his batik designs. He developed them with batik techniques that gave a 3-dimensional effect. Until now, Oey Soe Tjoen's batik is very well known for its refinement. The difference is in using the *Peranakan* batik flower motif with the influences of Taoism and Confucianism, such as chrysanthemum flowers. In contrast, Indo-Europeans use flower types according to the season in their country, for example, lilies and roses. In the early 20th century, Pekalongan batik with Dutch-influenced was also known as Nyonya batik.



Figure 9: Peranakan batik, Dutch batik (Batik Belanda) and Nyonya batik.

(Source: Fabric of Enchantment by Rens Heringa and Herman C. Veldhuisen, 1996)

The batik favored by the Chinese *Peranakans* was predominantly expensive premium hand-drawn Peranakan batik with high artistic value. The batiks included in *Peranakan* batik are Pekalongan and Kudus batik, which later developed to be known as Nyonya batik, and Tiga Negeri batik. Each batik also has its characteristics which can be a consideration for the Nyonyas to choose. Pekalongan batik is dominated by blue color with colorful flower bouquets in a European-style visual style or Pekalongan batik with a Chinese Peranakan visual style. Tiga Negeri batik dominated with blood-red color with Chinese visual style, or Kudus batik with calm pastel color. With its rich motifs and visual styles, *Peranakan* batik proves that a multicultural culture has long been occurring in Indonesia, Phuket, and Penang.

According to Pujianto (2010: 109), there are two opinions from the batik aesthetic point of view: 1. The visual aesthetic is the beauty generated by the impression seen as a whole through the combination of lines, shapes, textures, and colors in batik. 2. The spiritual aesthetic is the beauty of batik, which is associated with understanding beliefs associated with the philosophy of life.

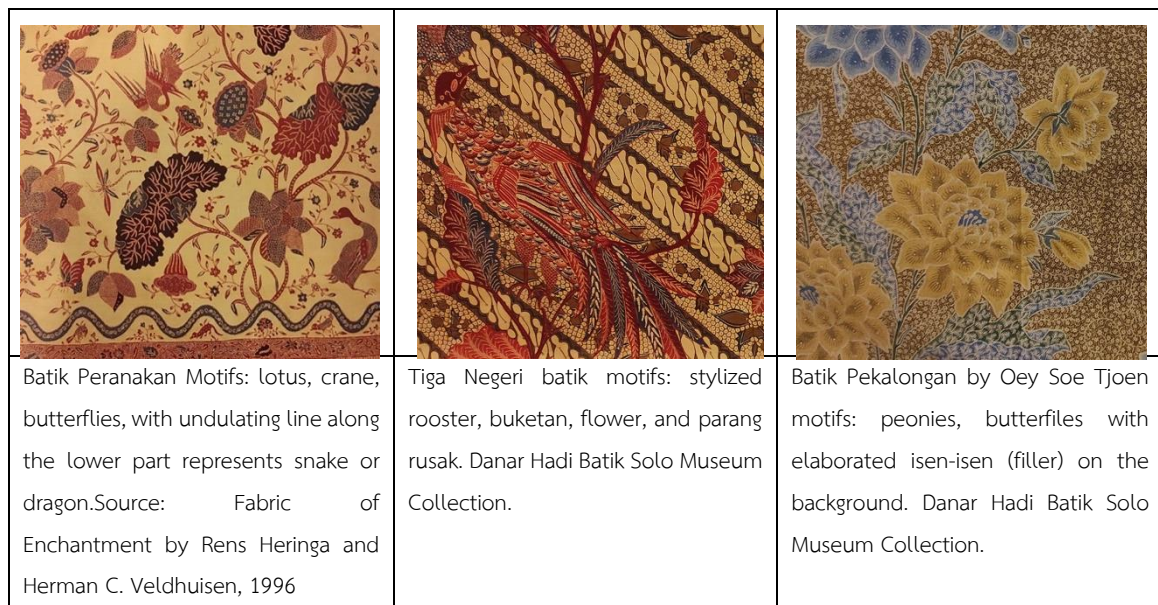


Figure 10: Colors and shapes of the flora fauna motifs in Peranakan batik.

The colors and shapes of the flora fauna motifs and visual styles represent the visual aesthetic of Peranakan batik. In 1910, the Dutch Nationality Law (*Wet op het Nederlandsch Onderdaanschap*) was issued under which the Peranakan Chinese were regarded as Dutch subjects (Suryadinata as cited in Lee, 2016: 180). With this law, the Peranakan mimicked the European dress code to express their "new" identity because they were legally allowed to wear what the Dutch were wearing, including the European style *buketan* batik sarongs and lace *kebaya* (ibid.). Dutch batik (Batik Belanda) influenced the visuals and colors of *Peranakan* batik and was then known as *Nyonya* batik style in the early 20th century. Heringa states that Peranakan Chinese adopted the *buketan* style in an effort to express their position as legally equal to the Dutch (1996: 66). *Buketan* has become a popular motif, but there has been a change in the choice of flowers, evidenced from Oey Soe Tjoen's *Pekalongan* batik. He replaced European flowers with peonies or chrysanthemums, or a combination of both. With the development of synthetic coloring, red color and its derivatives remain the primary choice because red symbolizes happiness and good luck in Chinese. Pastel colors became popular probably because of the color trend, inspired by the typical *Peranakan* ceramic colors and then favored by the young *Nyonyas*. The choice of *hong* bird (phoenix), crane, flowers, and butterfly motifs as adaptations from Chinese decorations, incorporated with the adaptation of motif *Parang* from Solo and Yogyakarta, could be found in *Peranakan* batiks such as the *Tiga Negeri* batik and *Nyonya* batik. The combination occurred because the *Court/Kraton* people were also role models among the Central Java and the Chinese Peranakans community.

Vorstenlanden batik motifs contain Javanese philosophy influenced by the Javanese way of life, associated with the Lower Realm, the Middle Realm, and the Upper Realm. The meaning of Lower Realm is a place where humans do bad things, the middle world is the present world, and the Upper World is where God or Deities reside. Visuals related to the Upper Realm are Garuda, butterflies, flames, and birds, while the tree of life, plants, Meru (mountains), and land animals are visuals for Middle Realm. Visuals that symbolize the Lower Realm are represented by boats, snakes (dragons), and other sea animals (Susanto as cited in Priyanto, 2010: 115). When summarized, this is advice for humans that in life, one has to do good deeds so that God can accept his or her actions while living in the world.

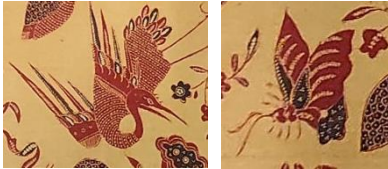


	Javanese Philosophy	Taoism & Confucianist (Chinese) Philosophy
	Visual Motifs	
Upper Realm	Garuda, butterflies, birds	Phoenix, crane, butterflies 
Middle Realm	Tree of Life, land animals	Flowers, land animals 
Lower Realm	Boats, snakes, sea creatures	Dragon, snakes 

Figure 11: Visual Motifs of Peranakan batik based on Chinese philosophy.

In terms of spiritual aesthetic, the Chinese *Peranakan* philosophy, which originating from Taoism and Confucianism, is also influenced by the Javanese way of life. The use of floral motifs on Peranakan batik has the same shape on wood carvings, porcelain, and embroidered objects from mainland China. For the Chinese, the peony, lotus, chrysanthemum, and prunus flower motifs represent the four seasons, while for the Chinese *Peranakans*, they represent the stages of life. From the same philosophical background comes the use of motifs of birds and mythical animals, such as the phoenix with its long tail feathers, which in China symbolizes

females. However, there are differences in Java; the phoenix bird is male while the dragon and snake represent females (Heringa, 1996: 66). For the Chinese, butterflies sipping nectar from the calyx of a flower symbolize females, when butterflies and blossoming flowers together in one picture symbolize long life and immaculate beauty. The crane is one of the many symbols of longevity, quite often shown together with a tortoise or a deer (Eberhard, 1986).

In many elaborated *Peranakan* batiks, especially on the border side, an undulating line was added along the lower part of the cloth. The undulating line symbolizes a snake or dragon, which, based on Javanese and Chinese symbolism, symbolizes rain and nourishing water as metaphors for abundance. This motif is widely used in batik cloth for dowry to express wishes of prosperity and many offspring (ibid. 1996: 62). In Indo-European batik, the batikers modified the border with traditional motifs full of symbolism into fashionable designs representing social status.

Conclusion

The high-priced and fine hand-drawn *Peranakan* Batik has become the choice of the Chinese *Peranakan* community because of the beauty of its motifs, visual style, the philosophical and aesthetic values that *Peranakan* batik represents. The intermarriage between prominent and well-respected Chinese *Peranakan* families made *Peranakan* batik a dowry and gift, making this type of batik increasingly popular among their social class. There are many choices of *Peranakan* batik; Pekalongan batik, influenced by Batik Belanda, which is later known as Nyonya batik, and Tiga Negeri batik, with colors and visual style that represent a combination of several specific motifs from various regions. All of which were favored by the Chinese Peranakans.

The colors in *Peranakan* batik also have meanings that derive from Javanese and Taoism/Confucianist philosophy. However, as the aesthetic view shifted to European style and was supported by the development of coloring techniques by using artificial dyes, the use of color becomes more diverse. Young Nyonyas choose Nyonya batik with colorful and brighter colors, while older married Chinese *Peranakan* women prefer darker and calmer colors. Finally, the function of batik in Chinese *Peranakans* also shows the social status of a person and family in their community. Based on the explanations above, the Chinese Peranakans favored the *Peranakan* batiks (Tiga Negeri batik, Pekalongan batik, Nyonya batik) because they represent their mixed cultural heritage which had symbolic and philosophical values that matched the Chinese Peranakans' views and way of life.

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