

REDEFINING BANYUMAS LOCAL VALUES: SYMBOLISMS IN BATIK MOTIFS

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find the types of signs using Peircean semiotic theory namely icon, index, and symbol in Banyumas batik motifs. The researchers were going to describe the Banyumas local values depicted in each of the batik motifs. Moreover, Banyumas local values were reflected from the explained batik motifs. This research was a descriptive qualitative research by applying embedded-case study. The research was limited on Banyumas batik motifs which contained natural symbols; they were Jahe Rajang, Lumbon, Babon Angrem, Peksi Gowok, and Serayuan. There were two types of data to be analyzed, namely primary and secondary data. There were two key informants that the researchers met and interviewed to obtain more reliable data. To gain the primary data, the researchers conducted some series of interview with the first informant, a Banyumas batik artisan who was very dedicated to maintain the existence of batik tulis (hand-painted batik). Meanwhile, to gain the secondary data, the researchers visited a Banyumas culture activist. The results show that Banyumas batik motifs are made with certain purposes and meanings. Each of the motifs analyzed in this research carries important signs. It reflects the values and beliefs adhered by the local people. Through these motifs and the appreciation of batik, Banyumas local value like Cablaka (straightforward, honest, and genuine) reflects the index as one type of sign.

Keywords: local values, Banyumas local values, symbolism, batik motif, semiotics

INTRODUCTION

The research on batik and semiotics is not a new thing. There has been some research on both aspects. Batik as Indonesian cultural heritage also exists in other parts of Indonesia such as Kalimantan, Papua, Sumatera, and so on. Tyas (2013) has conducted semiotic research on Samarinda batik focusing on the Peircean types of sign. The research reveals two batik motifs that represent the characteristics of Samarinda, namely Ikan Pesut (plain water dolphin) and Saroong (Samarinda special cloth) motifs. The former depicts the motto of Samarinda, that is Samarinda Kota Tepian.

Moreover, the picture of the grey dolphin reflects both positive and negative traits of the city including elegance, modesty, high quality, stability, eternity, wisdom, and doubtfulness. In addition, dolphin also shows Samarinda as a city that is close to nature, and it contains a meaningful message always to keep the city naturally friendly. Meanwhile, the Saroong represents the original cloth of Samarinda which is known worldwide. Despite the similarity to the previous research, this research investigates different types of sign reflected in Banyumas batik motifs.

It will lead the researchers to the finding on Banyumas local values.

Other research on batik has also been conducted by Saddhono et al. (2014). They focus more on the philosophical meaning of batik and kimono motifs. The researchers reveal that batik motifs contain particular intention related to life perspective and belief on the old days. Meanwhile, kimono motifs deal with age, status, wealth, and other aspects. Kimono Batik (Kimba) may appear as a strategic collaborative cultural product in the global creative industry by using kimono pattern with batik motif. It keeps both philosophical meanings of the original products. Four-season kimba can be a model of how developing a global product is. High-valued cultural products of two different cultures are creolized in respect to the cultural identity where the original products belong to.

Then, semiotics refers to the study of signs as stated by Eco in Chandler (2007). Semiotics deals with everything that can be taken as a sign. In a semiotic sense, the signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. It refers to the physical form which represents an object, feeling, event, and others. Semiotics helps people in studying how meanings are made and how reality is

represented. It becomes important in an academic field since in human life, the sign serves many functions. It allows people to recognize and identify patterns. Then, it can be the plan for taking actions acts as a model of particular phenomena (Sebeok, 2001).

Moreover, semiotics functions to signal the existence of species; communicate messages within the species and be the model of incoming information from the external world. In conclusion, semiotics deals with the signs used to deliver the idea, information, and command which enable people to develop their perception toward what is heard, seen, felt, and smelled (Natashia, 2015). In analyzing the sign, there are two leading scholars' perspectives on semiotics theory. They are a Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce.

The primary focus of Saussure's theory is the language as a system of a sign. The theory relies on the two-dimensional system, the consensus or conventional system, the networking relationship between signs system and the arbitrary system (Yakin & Totu, 2014). While in Chandler (2007), Saussure argues that signs are interpreted as a part of the formal, generalized, and abstract system. His conception of meaning is structural and relational, rather than referential. Saussurean model is known as a dyadic model which focuses on linguistic signs; a signifier and signified. The signifier is defined as the physical form of the sign that refers to something which can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted. Sounds, letters, and gestures are the illustration of signifier concept by Saussure. Then, signified is interpreted as the more abstract thing which deals with the concept of the sign. The sign is the whole association of the signifier with the signified. The relationship between them is referred to signification. Moreover, the connection between them is arbitrary. It can be seen in Figure 1 and 2.

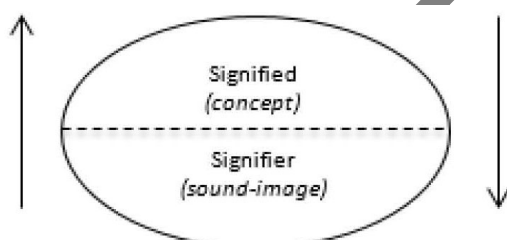


Figure 1 Saussure's Dyadic Meaning (Source: Chandler, 2007)

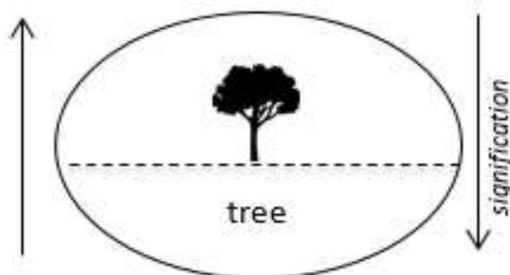


Figure 2 Concept and Sound Pattern (Source: Chandler, 2007)

In Figure 1 and Figure 2, the signified is the concept of the shady tree which brings the tranquility and other benefits to the people around, and the signifier is the word of the tree. Furthermore, Saussure defines signifier as the sound pattern or linguistic sign while the signified is a

mental image representing the concept in people's mind. Thus, the concept of signified and signifier represents the thought and sound.

The meaning of a sign is not in its relationship to other signs within the language system, but it is in the social context of its use. Saussure's interpretation is influenced by his theory about the distinction between *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* refers to the system of rules and convention which is independent. Meanwhile, *parole* is the use in a particular instance. Saussure focuses on *langue* than *parole*. Then, Saussure emphasizes that study of the sign should be divided into synchronic (at a given point in time) and diachronic (the investigation of how signs change in form and meaning over time) (Sebeok, 2001).

Another model is a triadic model formulated by Charles Sanders Peirce. It consists of three aspects of sign. There are representamen, interpretant, and object. Representamen refers to the form which the sign takes. Interpretant deals with the sense made of the sign. Then, the object is something beyond the sign to which it refers. Therefore, the sign is a unity of what is represented (the object), how it is represented (the representamen), and how it is interpreted (the interpretant). Peirce's theory of triadic meaning or also known as the triangle of meaning is illustrated in Figure 3.

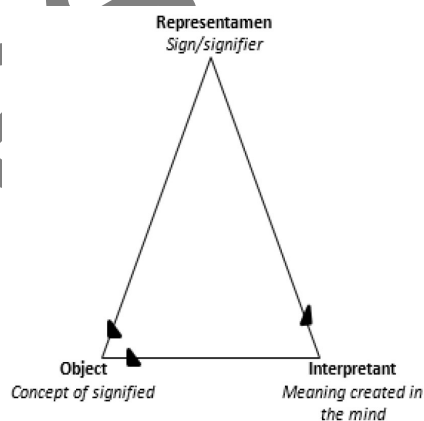





Figure 3: Pierce's Triadic Meaning (Source: Chandler, 2007)

Pierce offers three modes of relationship between sign vehicles and what is signified; those are icon, index, and symbol. These modes are also known as types of meaning. In general, the icon is a sign which resembles for what they stand as. The index is a sign that indicates a fact or condition, and symbol is a sign that bears an arbitrary relationship to what they stand for (Suhor, 1992). In addition, based on Chandler (2007) and Merrel (2001), an icon refers to the sign that correlates with its object by its similarity or resemblance. Portrait or photograph is a good illustration of the icon which represents the original item. Photograph of cat directly represents the cat itself.

The index is a sign that interrelates with semiotics object through some actual, physical, or imagined a causal connection. This refers to a mode in which the signifier is directly connected in some way to the signified. This can be interpreted as the indicators of a fact or condition. Cause and effect relationship also characterize index. For example, the natural sign like smoke is an index of the existence of fire. Thunder is an index indicating the rain, and footprints are also categorized as an index since it indicates the coming of someone.

Then, the symbol is more complicated that it involves social convention in extracting the meaning. In interpreting symbol, signifier does not resemble the signified. The meaning is purely conventional; the relationship must be agreed and learned. Morse code, traffic lights, and national flag are some illustrations of the symbolic mode. The characteristics of those three modes are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 The Example of Three Modes of Relationship between Sign Vehicles and What is Signified of Pierce

ICON	INDEX	SYMBOL
Physically similar	Direct connection	Habit or norm
	Not arbitrary Can be inferred or observed	Human-made Arbitrary or conventional The meaning should be learned
		

The icon is the simplest mode since it merely shows the represented object directly or physically similar to the object. Printer icon as illustrated in Table 1 is an icon of printing function since it resembles printer physically. The word of print is not classified as the icon since it does not represent printer physically. The index is defined as a sensory feature of the particular object. The meaning contains in the index can be inferred and observed. A dark cloud is the index of the rain. People can predict the rain will come soon if there is a dark cloud indicating this natural phenomenon. This cause and effect relationship is the characteristics of the index.

The next type is a symbol which cannot be interpreted since the meaning is based on the convention. Symbol associates the object indirectly. Thus, the meaning should be learned and agreed. Diamond has the characteristics that represent eternity. It is solid, timeless, and highly enduring.

Batik is one of Indonesia's valuable heritages that represents its cultures, and the various motifs depict people's way of life. The origin of batik is not recorded. However, in A.D. 70, there was a finding of the similar manner of batik clothing design in Egypt (Elliott, 2013). The method was found seven hundred later in China. It is believed that the Indonesian batik motifs are influenced by Indian and Chinese motifs brought by the merchants. During its development in Indonesia especially in Java, batik gets influences from three major religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Those religions bring their characteristics. Buddhism and Hinduism bring interlocking and intersecting circular designs known as kawung. Meanwhile, Muslim prohibition against depicting human forms is about the change in the batik designs into new shapes like flat arabesques and calligraphy (Elliott, 2013).

In Indonesia, batik experiences a wider recognition as the condition of the people is gradually changing. A long time ago, people especially the youth assumed batik as an old-fashioned and traditional style. It was only used by certain people in certain occasions such as a wedding

party, traditional ceremony, and other formal occasions. Nowadays, batik is becoming more popular at every level of society. Many schools and formal institutions make batik as one of the uniforms on particular days. Along with the modification of batik style and design, today's teenagers also wear batik as one of their fashion items. Wearing batik is a way to preserve batik from its extinction.

Batik develops very well, especially in Java. However, in other regions, it also develops in certain ways depending on the local culture in which it grows. In Java, one of the regions that has batik as its local heritage is Banyumas, Central Java. It is located in the southern part, far away from the Keraton (palaces) of Yogyakarta and Surakarta that are said to be the centers of Javanese culture. Banyumas possesses its batik design which reflects the values adhered by the people. Banyumas batik began its production after the war in 1830 in Sokaraja, one of the districts in Banyumas. People in Banyumas weaved the fabrics and used the natural colors from plants and fruits. Then, it reached the popularity in 1965-1970.

Banyumas batik emphasizes symbolic motif rather than decorative as found in batik Pekalongan. One of the characteristics which differ Banyumas batik from others is the color. Banyumas batik uses the natural colors like white, black, brown, and yellowish white. In addition to the categorization as natural colors, those colors symbolize particular representation. For example, black represents the power, strong belief, and willingness. Brown refers to the color of the soil and represents some positive personality traits such as modesty and down to earth. Moreover, yellow symbolizes hope, bright future, and glory.

Another characteristic is the motif. As mentioned previously that Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam mostly influence the Javanese batik motif. Each of those early major religions brings their characteristics that can be seen through the basic motif designs. Ecological awareness of Banyumas people also brings about the development of batik motifs such as the use of floral and animal motifs. Some examples of Banyumas batik with floral motifs are Manggar, Kawung Cakra, Kawung Beton, Jae Rajang, Kopi Pecah, Ceplok Pala, Kanthil Ukel, Godong Tel, Kluwihan, and Lumbon. Whereas the examples of animal motifs can be seen in Lar Sawat, Urang Watang, Merak Ngigel, Peksi Gowok, Babon Angrem, Kidang Tlatas, Ayam Puger, Walang Kekek, and Ramatan motifs.

The last characteristic is the painting method. Banyumas batik is painted on both sides that resulted in totally the same patterns of both inner and outer sides. It reflects the philosophy of cablaka, originated from cara blaka. It means saying something straightforward. This symbolizes Banyumas people's personalities who always tell the truth or something the way it is. This painting method makes Banyumas batik more expensive than the other batik clothing which is painted only on one side.

Banyumas batik is rich in symbolic meaning. It contains moral values as well as cultural values. One of the motifs is Urang Watang. Urang means shrimp and watang means an old wood. Shrimp is an animal that lives in the sea, river, or lake. Shrimp periodically face skin changing. However, as it grows older, the skin changing rarely happens resulting in the hard, strong, and solid skin. As a consequence, shrimp like to be alone in a quiet place. The characteristics of Urang Watang represent a person's personality who is calmer and wiser when he grows older. In this period, they tend to improve themselves and become humbler and politer.

The researchers are interested in conducting semiotics research on Banyumas batik motifs, particularly on natural motifs. It reflects certain meaning dealing with the local values preserved by the people. The research aims to find the types of sign contained in Banyumas batik motifs using Peirce's theory of sign. The researchers are going to describe the Banyumas local values depicted in each of the batik motifs.

METHODS

This research is a descriptive qualitative research by applying embedded-case study. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach to explore and understand the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. This research is embedded because the researchers determine the problem and focus of the research before conducting the research as written in the problem statements. The researchers limit the research on Banyumas batik motifs which contain natural symbols.


There are two types of data to be analyzed, namely primary and secondary data. There are two key informants that the researchers meet and interview to obtain more reliable data. To gain the primary data, the researchers conduct some series of interview with the first informant, a Banyumas batik artisan who is very dedicated to maintain the existence of *batik tulis* (hand-painted batik). The name of the batik is Rusmini Darmono derived from the owners of the batik house. The information about the meaning of Jahé Rajang, Peksi Gowok, Babon Angrem, and Lumbon motifs is obtained from the first informant.

Meanwhile, to gain the secondary data, the researchers visit a Banyumas culture activist named Ahmad Thohari. He provides the researchers with the information about Banyumas local value and philosophy. The information gained from him is used to support the information obtained from the first key informant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Flora and fauna are the commonest traditional batik motifs found in Indonesia that is influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism cultures. There are four natural Banyumas batik motifs discussed in this research. There are Jahé Rajang, Lumbon, Babon Angrem, and Peksi Gowok. Those motifs are designed as the reflection of the message delivered by the artisan. In this research, each of them is analyzed using the Peircean theory of sign that covers icon, symbol, and index.

Table 2 Icon, Symbol, and Index of Jahé Rajang

ICON	INDEX	SYMBOL
	Usefulness	remedy, ritual, recipe


First, in Jahé Rajang that can be seen in Table 2, the icon of the motif is the whole thing printed on the fabric

which represents ginger (*jahé* in Javanese). The name of this motif is realized in the design. When people look at this clothing, they will see the picture of sliced ginger. This Banyumas batik motif indexes the usefulness of *jahé* for Javanese people. As said by many semioticists, the index is directly connected to the signified in some way. The index can be observed and is not arbitrary because it sometimes reflects the cause-effect relationship between the object and the concept thought by the observer.

Ginger indexes many benefits for a human being, and it is often associated with some function such as cooking and home remedy. Ginger is often used as a cooking ingredient to reduce the fishy smell of fish or meat. It is also used to reduce cough by making it into a warm beverage. In the past, ginger might be common in Javanese rituals such as a ritual to avoid misfortunes. A person is said to be beneficial if he/she can do something for other people as well as for the environment. A person should learn from ginger that can be used to cure cough. He/she has to try helping those who are in need.

The symbol is more complicated to be understood because it is related to the social convention. To extract the meaning, the researchers need an agreement. In Jahé Rajang batik motif, the ginger symbolizes Banyumas value that a person has to be beneficial for others. People can learn the value of life from ginger that has many benefits for the human being. Ginger symbolizes the positive values that should be adhered by Banyumas people. To reach that degree, a person needs to go through a process. Sometimes a person has to face obstacles to become maturer just like the ginger that needs a certain process to become a cooking ingredient. It might be processed differently to become a home remedy.

Table 3 Icon, Symbol, and Index of Lumbon

ICON	INDEX	SYMBOL
	Adaptability and usefulness	Can grow in any place, even without special treatment. All parts are useful for daily needs.

Second, other than Jahé Rajang, another natural Banyumas batik that is derived from floral design is Lumbon as seen in Table 3. The iconic sign of this motif is seen through the design. The design of this motif resembles a local plant called *lumbu* or taro leaves. Two indexical signs can be seen in this motif; adaptability and usefulness. The *lumbu* is very adaptable and easy to find, and it can grow in any place and any situation. People can find it almost in every garden of Banyumas house. In addition, it does not even need special treatment to grow well. Sometimes, the owner does not even realize that the plant grows well in their gardens. Besides adaptability, it also shows usefulness since all parts of the plant are useful for human beings or animals. The leaves, trunk, and root can be processed into various kinds of food. Moreover, the plant is also often used to feed fish.

The plant of *lumbu* indirectly symbolizes positive traits of Banyumas people that can be seen in their daily lives. The symbol of this motif is also related to the index. Banyumas people are known to be down to earth, friendly,

and helpful. They can easily make friends with other people. They are also known to be down to earth. In Banyumas social life, everyone has equal status. No one has a higher position than the others. In the neighborhood, they also like to help each other without being asked. For example, they like to conduct communal work. They are also straightforward and tend to avoid fakeness because there is no social gap among the society.

However, *lumbu* also symbolizes the inferiority of Banyumas people. It is due to its distance from Yogyakarta and Surakarta Keraton (palaces) as the centers of Javanese culture. The distance causes the dialectical difference between Banyumas and Yogyakarta-Surakarta. Banyumas has its Javanese dialect that is called as *ngapak* by other Javanese native speakers. Because of this dialect, Banyumas people are often underestimated and considered inferior. This experience is indirectly related to the characteristics of *lumbu* as a local plant whose existence is often ignored. However, it does not reduce the usefulness of the plant.

It teaches us that a person has to be adaptable in any circumstances without expecting special treatments from the surrounding. It also teaches us that people have to give benefits to other people and the environment. People can learn from the plant that to be useful for others, sometimes people have to sacrifice themselves. However, it does not mean that people will lose the self-existence like *lumbu* that always exist in every situation.

Another traditional batik motif that has the similar local wisdom to Lumbon is a motif called Kawung. The name is based on the design that resembles a palm tree cut into pieces. Palm is called *aren* in the Indonesian Language. It is one of the useful plants that can easily be found in Indonesia. It reflects some positive personality traits that should be held by human beings. All parts of the tree can be used for various needs. The trunk and branches can be made into a broom and other household utensils. Meanwhile, the fruit can be made into food and sugar. It reflects the essence of human beings as social creatures that should be beneficial for others (Parmono, 2013).

Table 4 Icon, Symbol, and Index of Peksi Gowok

ICON	INDEX	SYMBOL
	The perfection of life and afterlife	A person's life is complete when she/he has fulfilled both physical and spiritual needs.

Third, for Peksi Gowok, animal batik motif is also full of philosophy and value adhered by Javanese people. In Banyumas itself, some animals are also believed to have symbolologies representing local beliefs. One of the examples is a bird in Table 4. The icon of this motif is seen in the design. It resembles the name of the motif, and people can obviously see it. In this batik motif, there are pictures of *peksi* (bird) and *gowok* (name of the fruit). Those pictures carry certain meaning. Javanese-Hinduism belief influences this motif.


Based on the theory used in this research, the index of this motif is the direct connection between bird (*peksi*) and the belief system of Banyumas people. The

bird represents the perfection of life and afterlife. *Peksi* is believed as the representation of life perfection. It is related to a Javanese saying that a man's life is considered complete when he has reached five basic needs. Those are a house, a wife, a horse, a weapon, and a bird. There is also the relation between *gowok* and Banyumas local value that is not found in other cultures. As for *gowok*, no direct connection can be made. Based on the information gained by the researchers, there are two possibilities for extracting the meaning of *gowok*. First, it is a name of local fruit found in Java and Kalimantan. Second, it is related to an old tradition held by a certain society in some parts of Banyumas.

The bird symbolizes a person's longing for nobleness in this life and afterlife. It is also often related to the determination to fulfill the material needs by going to work at days and returning home to fulfill the spiritual needs at noons. The symbolic sign of *gowok* can be analyzed through two arguments. *Gowok* is a kind of fruit that commonly grows in certain parts of Central Java and Kalimantan. For Javanese people, it represents modesty because the fruit is quite cheap and easy to find in traditional markets. It symbolizes Javanese people as modest people that do not like being in the spotlight.

Another symbol observed is *gowok*. It is a name of an old taboo tradition held by some Banyumas people. The tradition is called *gowokan* that comes from a philosophy that a man is the leader of his family, and before getting married he should be well-prepared for that role. In order to prepare a man for marriage life, the groom to be is trained by a mature woman at the age of 23-30 years old on how to be ready for doing his role as a husband, especially in sexual activity. The training lasts for several days. During those days, the man lives together with the trainer (Septiningsih, 2012). The tradition does not exist anymore due to some factors such as religion, norms, and social ethics. Bird and *gowok* symbolize an ideal life of a Banyumas man. A man's life is complete when he has already reached material and spiritual achievements.

Table 5 Icon, Index, and Symbol of Babon Angrem

ICON	INDEX	SYMBOL
	Mother's protection to her children	A mother will always protect her children in any situation, since their childhood until their adulthood.

Fourth, Babon Angrem is one of Banyumas batik motifs with animal design as seen in Table 5. Unlike Peksi Gowok that reflects a man's life, Babon Angrem is a motif representing Banyumas women. The name of this motif is derived from the design that shows a hen incubating its offsprings. *Babon* is the Javanese term of hen, and *angrem* is the Javanese term for incubating or brood.

The indexical sign of this motif is the protection because there is a direct connection between the design of a hen opening its wings with the concept of Javanese parents. In Javanese culture, a mother is identical with protection, caring, and affection for her children. Babon Angrem is usually very protective to its offsprings. It will not let anything harm its offsprings so it will go wherever

the offsprings go. It reflects the Javanese parenting concept. The parents, especially mothers, play an important role in guiding the children with love, affection, and patience.

The symbol that can be analyzed from this motif is a hen with open wings. It symbolizes the roles played by Javanese women in their family. Women in Javanese culture play important roles that somehow cannot be applied to other cultures. In Javanese culture, a mother takes care of her children since their infancy until adulthood. A mother will always protect her children no matter what happens and no matter how old they are. It is different from western culture in which a child can live apart from his/her parents when she/he is at the mature age. Moreover, the signs contained in those batik motifs show us that batik motifs are designed with certain purpose and intention. It is to maintain certain values adhered by certain society.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, the researchers conclude that Banyumas batik motifs are made with certain purposes and meanings. Each of the motifs analyzed in this research carries important signs. It reflects the values and beliefs adhered by the local people. Jahé Rajang, Lumbon, Babon Angrem, and Peksi Gowok are examples of Banyumas batik motifs containing local values adhered by the people whose existence must be maintained. Jahé Rajang tells us that human beings have to be beneficial for others and to reach that degree, they have to go through certain process just like the ginger itself that needs the process to be more useful. Lumbon motif teaches people to be adaptable in the situation. It also tells people to be sincere in giving benefits to their surrounding because sincerity is the key to a peaceful heart. Peksi Gowok shows people the balance of worldly life and the afterlife. The former is about the accomplishment of material needs, and the latter is the fulfillment of spiritual needs. On the other hand, Babon Angrem reflects teaching for Banyumas women to be ideal figures of a mother for their children.

Batik is not merely part of fashion items. It is a cultural identity that has to be preserved especially by the youth. The researchers expect that this research can give a contribution to the development of batik research and industry in the future. This research may be inspiring for those who are interested in batik to create other motifs that reflect other unexplored Banyumas local values. In addition, those analyzed batik motifs in this research are very likely to be renewable into different media for the future research. For example, it can be carved on gold bars and used as a landmark and advertisement media. The more motifs created are, the more available ideas for researchers to explore are. It will be very good for the development of the research atmosphere in Indonesia.

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