



Batik Sarong Terengganu is featured with a Climbing Floral Design as a Motif

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Abstract

This study identifies the uniqueness of climbing floral themes used on Terengganu batik sarongs. Digital image compilation and motif tracing on batik sarong were used to examine the floral climber characters. The relevant literature was mapped onto batik sarong motifs linked to floral elements' function and role. The examination revealed that climbing flower designs were used at the *apit kain* (framing border) and the *tepi kain* (upper and lower edge parts). Various types of tropical flowers were developed as inspiration by the batik makers and represent the batik sarong Terengganu identity.

Keywords: Batik Sarong, Climbing Character, Floral Design, Terengganu

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1.0 Introduction

This study is a part of an ongoing visual research study on determining the climbing floral quality used as a design motif on batik sarong arrangements. We understand that the nature of the climbing flower means that it is always with us in any condition. The batik designer translates the heart of the climbing flower as functional in the appropriate batik sarong, especially at the *apit kain* (framing border) and *tepi kain* (lower and upper edge). The form and character are unique; therefore, the design motifs represent the physical beauty of the Terengganu batik sarongs. Several examples of traditional batik sarongs from Terengganu were examined and compared using digital image compilation and motif tracing. These processes were carried out to classify the motifs and map them to associated literature within the example of a batik sarong. Then, the idea and relationships of each design were established between motifs and function, which specifically meant the meaning of climbing floral elements. Upon observing the discovery, the climbing floral part motifs were used on the *apit kain* (framing border) and *tepi kain* (upper and lower edge). This study is one of the significant outcomes of the design features that form from the batik sarongs Terengganu with their identity. It shares the tropical environment that inspired the motifs' batik inspiration.

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2.0 Literature Review

The review of related literature was defined from the recent and previous compilation that links with the motif character within the batik sarong design. Batik sarong is a two-meter-long piece of cloth dyed using the batik method into a cylindrical shape from the wearer's waist to the heel. Batik sarong is a type of traditional textile industry, which still produce in the states of Terengganu and Kelantan on the East Coast of Malaysia. Abd Wahab (2022) stated that the textile industry in Terengganu involves the production of the batik industry, in which the batik was experimented with the specific process of silk cloth and cotton cloth, while the other type of textile production also deals with woven techniques for sarong clothing. The batik industry is growing and developing among Malaysian textile entrepreneurs. In Terengganu, the production of batik sarong is led by the Malay community, and the use of traditional batik sarong has become multi-functional in the daily lives of the Malays. Apart from the Malay community, a few other races use the batik sarong for clothing or other functions in Malaysia (Noor, 2014). The function of the batik sarong is not the same as in the past. Indeed, Razali (2022) also discovered that in the past, women always used the batik sarong, no matter where they went, and it was allowed as proper apparel for special occasions rather than just for wearing at home only.

The values of batik in other countries heavily influence traditional batik motif design in Malaysia. The batik sarong clothing culture and the batik technique are introduced from Java, highlighting their different pattern designs. Each pattern output possesses philological significance for the religions, practices, and ideas professed by its creators. The pattern's significant values have to do with the function used. Compared to the batik sarongs in Malaysia, the batik sarong in Java is explicitly utilized in ceremonies and customs and is popular in their nation (Legino & Forrest, 2012). The batik motif design in Malaysia uses and inspires the beauty of nature as the main theme in designing and creating decorating motif designs for batik. There is also the use of motifs from fauna, but motifs generated have generally been abstract and significantly distinct from Javanese batik (Razak & Ramizah, 1999; Legino et al., 2016). Several other character plant motif designs have been created in batik sarong cloth. Creeping plants, a bouquet, and a flower are some of the plant characteristics, and remarkably, this study concentrated on climbing plants. There are two other classifications of climbing plants: those with hooks and those with rootlets (Abd Razak et al., 2019; Darwin, 1875). In a recent study that also explored the variation of climbing plant species, where Hatterman et al. (2022) stated that "climbing plants are well known for their highly flexible older stems and their reliance on host trees for support" (p. 2). It is clearly explained that climbing plants refer to their characters with a long stem that grows along the ground or climbs support using tendrils or claspers.

Interestingly, these familiar characters of plants are also referred to as specific characters like creepers, climbers, ramblers, crawlers, clinging plants, ivy plants, vine plants, and other similar terms. Motifs in Malaysia are inspired by plants and nature, which have been processed to be more straightforward, uncomplicated, and practical, especially for use in the batik production industry. It differs from Javanese batik, which has speciality importance of its implicit design, and its application has a special meaning. In Indonesia, several floral motifs from climbing plants symbolize fertility. Rahmawati and Pratiwinindya (2020) stated that the meaning and the purpose of choosing the elephant foot yam (*Amorphophallus paeoniifolius*) or *suweg* (sting lily) flower, where this batik motif is related to the human and natural cycle, and similar as the flower grows and, where human develops and spreads goodness.

In contrast, the motif of the *buya subi* (referring to climbing flower), which combines with a rhombus patterned cloth head and a climbing flower-patterned cloth body section, Maddusila (2020) states this motif represents a man proposing to a woman and is a metaphor for unifying the family. In our local floral, the design of the motif was also found in the various common climbing flower motifs developed for batik design motifs. It includes the motifs of *bunga kaduk* (*Piper sarmentosum*), *bunga kangkong* (*Water spinach/Ipomoea aquatica*), *bunga labu* (Pumpkin), *bunga peria katak* (Bitter ground flower/*Momordica charantia*), *bunga petola* (*Luffa/Luffa*) and *bunga seri pagi* (Morning glory). This pattern is usually used on the *batik sarongs' apit kain* (framing border) section. The batik sarongs and woven sarongs also use motifs such as climbing flowers on the *apit kain* (framing border) (Legino, 2012). In Brunei, the Malay woven fabrics with climbing leaf motifs are depicted in patterns processed in one direction that are continuous with each other. It can be interpreted as returning to the original, which is in line with Islamic teachings, which require its followers to always refer to the fundamental pillars of religion (Awal & Wahsalfelah, 2013). The linked and repeating design is modified by creating the *awan larat* (the motif that forms from nature includes leaves, tendrils, flower buds, flowers and shoot) pattern, a motif such as creeping plants, or a single motif arranged in the shape of the destitute clouds. It is a metaphor for dancers' hands, life, and nature, reflecting Islamic philosophy (Hussin et al., 2012). The *awan larat* motif is used as decoration, while some translucent designs serve as vents. Sabri et al. (2021) said that *awan larat* motifs are formed of plant leaves in stylized shapes because Islam prohibited patterns based on depicting living things, such as man and animals.

3.0 Methodology

This study uses a visual research approach to study the climbing flower motifs on the batik sarong fabric. This study analyzes and identifies the types of climbing flowers produced by Terengganu batik makers that likely represent Terengganu's identity based on visual observation and tracking patterns. The data was gathered through field visits from different batik makers in Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia, involving batik sarong cloth production that only used the traditional batik block technique. The place was chosen because most people who make batik in Kuala Terengganu still make traditional batik sarongs. The cataloguing of the design was chosen to identify and analyze the floral climber character of the traditional batik sarong cloth. Through the analysis, the motif of the climbing flower was organized and recognized. Sources of motif analysis are based on design placement. The selected example of the batik sarongs was gathered and

captured using digital compilation, where the analysis of the motifs and reference to the related literature were mapped and linked with the function and meaning of selected floral elements to create a cohesive whole.

4.0 Result and Discussion

Figure 1 shows a segment of a batik sarong. A climbing flower motif is frequently used in the *apit kain* (framing border) and the *tepi kain* (upper and lower edges) of the sarong layout. In the other section, a single or bouquet of flowering plants native to Malaysia is used in the batik sarong layout (Legino et al., 2017).

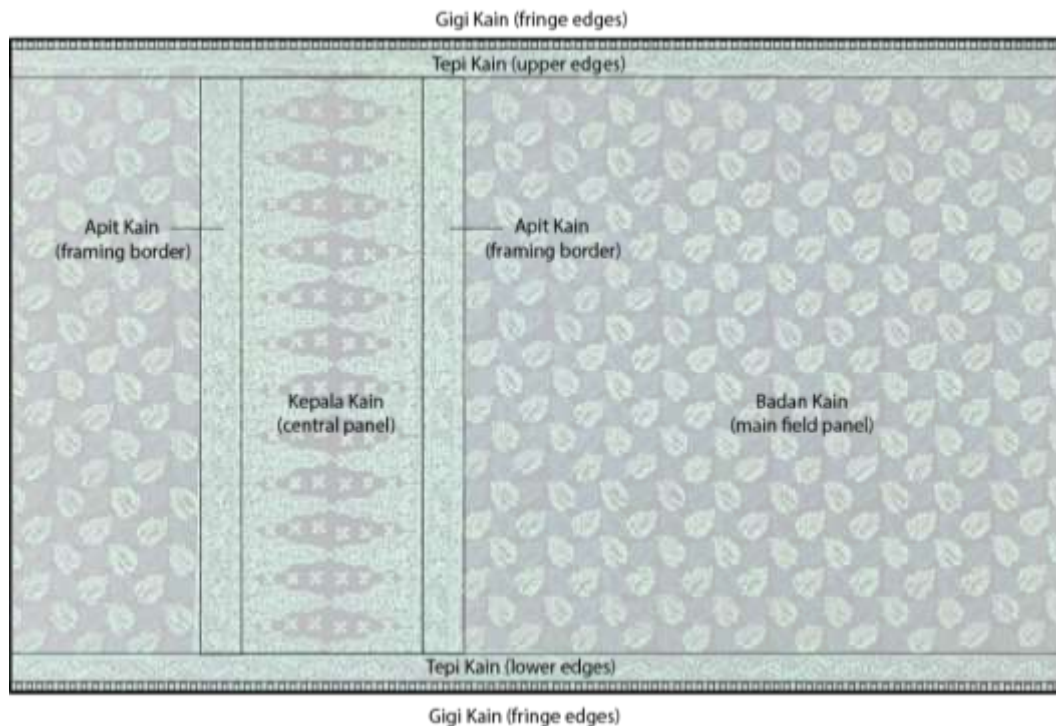


Fig. 1: The traditional layout of batik sarong Terengganu. (Source: Nikfarhana Zuhir, 2021)

The study found a difference in the pattern of the creeping plant motif in terms of the plant's direction or movement in the Terengganu batik sarong cloth. Based on the observations at the *apit kain* (framing border part), the flowers are typically placed in a climbing way, either upwards (ascending) or downwards (descending). As we can see, the movement of the climbing motif on the *apit kain* (framing border) section of the cloth is in a vertical and upwards direction, as if it is implemented from the fundamental nature of life, where the plant hangs and crawls upwards in response to finding the sunlight. On the other hand, at the *tepi kain* (lower and upper edges) of the fabric, the movement of the floral motif creeps in the left or right direction. While, the character of the climbing plant on the cloth body is arranged freely and randomly, just like how freely it crawls on the ground. The earliest study in Malay traditional motifs design, where Jamal (1994) stated that the visual effect of creeper and tendril motifs relays the movement of energy, receiving and returning, between one another and encompassing visual energy filling smaller spaces with visual vibration. Floral motifs depicting growth create the illusion of length, width, height, and depth in batik sarong design. In other words, the movement of the plant, which is creeping upwards, displays the harmony-producing impact. Harmony in a design is something seen in terms of aesthetics that reconciles the elements seen in two- or three-dimensional compositions, appearance, and structure. It is a state of something seen in terms of functionality. Malaysian society, with its peaceful and harmonious plural society, symbolizes well-being in life. Balance is also an essential factor in producing harmony.

On the other hand, referring to Shukor et al. (2009), motifs on sarongs carry a particular meaning, which is that the arrangement of climbing motifs on both sides of the *tepi kain* (lower and upper edges) of sarongs can be associated with the challenges, obstacles, and trials in human life. While the motif arranged on the *apit kain* (framing border) symbolizes the early life of teenagers, who are given limited freedom and need guidance. Based on the arrangement of the motifs on the batik sarong fabric in Malaysia, it has similar characteristics to the Indonesian batik sarong, especially the use of a climbing flower motif instead of a single flower on the *apit kain* (framing border) and the *tepi kain* (lower and upper edges) sections. Based on the observation process, in most batik sarongs made in Terengganu, the batik makers used the same floral motif on the *apit kain* (framing border) and the *tepi kain* (lower and upper edges) in the sarong layout. The motif's position on both framing borders (*apit kain*) is identical, as is their reflection. Apart from the placement of creeping plant design motifs, the types of climbing plants used in Kuala Terengganu sarong batik are also identified based on their physical characteristics. A climbing floral plant is often used for batik sarong in Kuala Terengganu, a natural plant that occurs and grows widely in Terengganu. Based

on the diagram below, Figure 2 depicts the characteristics of the water spinach plant, while Figure 3 displays the characteristics of the pumpkin plant as a motif.



Fig. 2: The water spinach flower motif characteristic.

The water spinach is a plant from the vegetable category. In Malay, water spinach (*Ipomoea Aquatica*), also known as *kangkung*, is a vegetable grown for food consumption (Suratman et al., 2000). The water spinach is a climbing plant that grows almost everywhere in Asia, particularly in damp areas. The shape of the water spinach leaf is elongated, smooth, and tapered at the tip, similar to an arrowhead. It can blossom, fruit, and seed during its growth phase. The water spinach flower has a "trumpet" shape, and the bloom crown leaves are white or crimson red. Referring to Daniel (2021), water spinach (*Ipomoea aquatica*), a family member, is an essential aquatic or semi-aquatic vegetable that grows naturally in summer and autumn in Asia and the southwestern Pacific Islands. Water spinach originated in tropical regions and is consumed as a leafy vegetable with a high tolerance to heat and wetness. Fibre, vitamins A, C, iron, and polyphenols like carotenoids and chlorophyll are all found in this plant.



Fig. 3: The pumpkin flower motif characteristic

The pumpkin (*Cucurbita moschata*) is a short-lived plant that requires only 80-90 days to mature. The flower's nature and character were used partly as a source for batik makers. Terengganu and other states are easy to find. The benefit of this plant is that it is the highest vitamin A, containing plant and a good provider of magnesium, potassium, and fibre for humans. Pumpkin shoots and seeds are also nutrient-dense (Anwar, 2020). The leaves are heart-shaped and broad, measuring 20-25 cm by 25-30 cm; the edges of the leaves are notched; the leaf surface is rough and has silvery spots; rough spots, a rough texture; and stalks up to 30 cm long. The character of the flower could differentiate between male and female flowers, and the single flower grows on the leaf axils. The male flowers have 16-18 pedicels, 5-13.5 cm long, short petals, and a crown divided into five with indentations up to one-third of the length of the height. The female flower has a thickened pedicle with a length of 3-8 cm and has a cylindrical ovary, short flower petals, and a flower crown of up to 7.5 cm; inside, there are three bud heads (Tarigan et al., 2018).

The climbing flower designs in Indonesian batik contain a distinct meaning than those in Malaysia, which is not particularly meaningful. Each pattern and motif choice is based on the batik's maker's idea, and there is no taboo. Natural objects inspired the concept for the motif in their surroundings that have aesthetic value or plants that provide benefits to themselves (Sepini et al., 2019). The Malays use nature as an emblem applied to the fabric's surface. As a result, anthropomorphism, or the mimicking of life, is an essential aspect of modern fabric art (Ismail, 2014). The delicate characteristics of life show the harmony between human life and its relationship with the natural world. It is thought that the nature of creeping plants with suckers or spiral stalks climbing the ascending surface or creeping on the ground that resembles a tender feature can be equated with Malay culture, which is gentle, courteous, and polite.

5.0 Conclusion

To sum up, this study mainly focuses on the recognizable climbing flower found on Terengganu batik sarong and makes no comparisons to other locations. The sort of plant chosen as the design motif by the batik creator is determined by physical qualities such as a leaf,

flower, and creeping stem shape. The plant species were chosen because the two climbing plants represented as motifs on the Terengganu batik sarong are plants commonly consumed by the people of Terengganu in Malaysia as nutritious foods. The type of plant demonstrates the significance of the plants chosen as motifs regarding the local community's benefits in their daily lives. Design principles like balance, movement, harmony, contrast, emphasis, diversity, and value are applied to every design created by a designer. A particular design principle guides each design. The theme of the creeping plant creates the illusion of movement. Rhythm or the illusion of movement can be created in composition using a repeating or layered compositional principle. Therefore, it is seen that the climbing flower motif is an essential element that is used, especially on the *apit kain* (framing border) and the *tepi kain* (lower and upper edges of the sarong). The design character and style, and interestingly the creeping flower motifs, are also used or combined with other elements in the other parts of the batik sarong layout. Further research is required to recognize and explore the other floral motif design characteristics in batik sarong or other types of sarongs to sustain the tradition as a significant heritage.

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