

## THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF BATIK SAWAT PENGANTIN CIREBON BY H. MASINA

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**Abstract:** Cirebon is one of the regions in West Java which persistently maintains its batik tradition. One of the remarkable batik in Cirebon is batik Sawat Pengantin, a batik collection by H. Masina, a batik maker who lives in Trusmi Cirebon. There is no similar approach on scientific research on ornaments on the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin Cirebon by H. Masina. A systematic mapping should thus be made to investigate the aesthetic elements of the batik collection, including its shape, color, composition, and ornament naming. Besides, research on those elements should also be conducted to analyze the symbolic relationship between the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina and the Cirebon cultures. This research uses the descriptive-qualitative method with an aesthetic and cultural approach. Techniques used in data collection are observation, interview, library study, and documentation. This research is emphasizing two prominent aspects of batik Sawat Pengantin i.e. visual aesthetics and culture. The research outcome is a descriptive text elaborating on the symbolic meaning of ornaments on the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina.

**Keywords:** Ornaments, Batik Sawat Pengantin, Cirebon Batik, Symbolic

### INTRODUCTION

Batik is one of the Indonesian heritages. Ornaments of batik from Indonesia are inextricably influenced by the local condition from where batik is originated. This local influence gives batik a special local identity by its region. West Java is one of the provinces where the community nurtures batik tradition. We can find multiple batik centers in several cities in West Java, one of which is Cirebon. The ornaments of Cirebon batik have a strong connection to both cultural assimilation and ritual and religious traditions, giving them a strong symbolic meaning. The history of batik was started when Muara Jati Port became a stopover for Chinese, Arab, Persian, and Indian traders. When the multiple cultures encountered, there was created diversity, either in the form of assimilation or intercultural influences, in which the respective cultures were embedding influences on each other [1].

Cirebon batik is categorized into two which are batik pesisir and batik keraton. Batik pesisir is known for its oriental beauty influenced by the Chinese cultures, while the other one is well-known for its mystique elegance given by Hinduism and Islam [1]. Cirebon is one of the batik centers in Java with a long history inseparable from the role of the government which is the Cirebon Sultanate and the social environment where the Cirebon community lives [2]. The established batik center which exists to this day is in Trusmi, a village of 7 km distant from Cirebon.

Some areas in Cirebon, especially Trusmi, has diverse a variant of batik. There we can find a variant of batik with philosophical meanings called batik Sawat Pengantin [3]. According to a study conducted by interviewing Bambang Irianto, a humanist from Cirebon, Sawat

Pengantin is royal batik as the family of the Cirebon Sultanate wore it only on certain occasions, such as wedding ceremony on where the bride and bridegroom were having the privilege of wearing it. The majority of the Cirebon community is familiar with two ornaments of batik Sawat Pengantin which are the batik collection of Sultan Abdul Gani and a family batik collection in Trusmi, which is H. Masina.

Before this research, no literature discusses the meaning of aesthetic elements we can identify in the ornaments of batik Sawat Pengantin, either the collection by Sultan Abdul Gani or H. Masina, thoroughly. In relation to the fact, batik Sawat Pengantin bears multiple meanings in its respective ornaments. No aesthetic study of the batik is thus regretted. This research focuses on analyzing the symbolic meanings of the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina.

Based on the fact, the research problems are:

- a. What are the aesthetic elements in the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin Cirebon by H. Masina?
- b. What are the symbolic meanings of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin Cirebon by H. Masina?

In response to the research problems, this research aims to:

- a. Identify the aesthetic elements in the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin Cirebon by H. Masina.
- b. Analyze the symbolic meanings of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin Cirebon by H. Masina.

## METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method. The method is used to generate descriptive data. In this research, primary data are collected by means of observation on the research objects which are the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin Cirebon by H. Masina. To describe and corroborate the validation of research data, we also use documented sources. Besides, primary data are also collected using interviews with Bambang Irianto, a humanist from Cirebon. Interviews are arranged in a structural manner and focused on in-depth data. In such a manner, the interview thus becomes structural, allowing us to propose structural predetermined questions.

Furthermore, we also use secondary data collected through literature studies, particularly on books, journals, online newspapers, online daily news, and other validated sources. Complementing the data, we also collect supporting documentation by rigorously observing documents provided in Keraton Kasepuhan (Kasepuhan Palace). Document observation is an indirect observation as we observe documents of the documents written or pictured by those who have hands-on experiences of the relevant events or documents in the form of pictures and ancient manuscripts, if any. Other documents we can consider are those reported to and written by others.

In terms of data analysis methods, we refer to Miles and Huberman's analysis methods which are a) collecting data, b) reducing data, c) presenting data, and d) drawing conclusions. At the data collection stage, we collect both primary and secondary data. Subsequently, at the data reduction stage, we sort the data. Regarding the relevant data, we can proceed to the analysis, while the irrelevant ones are excluded. At the data presentation stage, the research data are presented using a statistical table, allowing us to analyze the constituting elements easily. We then draw the conclusions based on the findings.

## DISCUSSION

Traditions preserved by the Cirebon community, in general, were originated from precepts brought by Sunan Gunung Jati. These precepts, known as petatah-petitih, contain broad and complex meanings. That petatah-petitih is claustrophobic by the values of devotion and beliefs, discipline, prudence, civility, manners, and social life. It, in general, gives useful meanings to not only Sunan Gunung Jati's descendants but also to the community [4]. These precepts are deeply embedded in both life and cultural aspects of the Cirebon community and symbolically manifested. The symbolic manifestations are divided into two which are cosmic and Islamic symbols.

The first symbols, cosmic symbols, are embodied in the form of a yellow silk umbrella decorated by the head of the dragon. The umbrella symbolizes the king's patronage to his people. Moreover, the second symbol, derived from Islamic precepts, is divided into four levels which are syariat, tarekat, hakekat, and marifat. The first level, syariat, is symbolized by puppets as the embodiment of human beings and dalang as God. The second, third, and four levels, which are tarekat, hakekat, and marifat are symbolized by barong, masks, and ronggeng respectively. The four symbols constitute cultural art performances shown by the Cirebon community [4]. The Cirebon community uses art performances as media which deliver lofty messages through generations. Symbols delivered through culture are evidently well-delivered and the Cirebon community can thus implement them with a thorough understanding, awareness, and solemnity and preserve them by generations.

One of the Cirebon artifacts valuable in a cultural sense is batik. Some distinctive ornaments we can find on Cirebon batik are [2]: 1) Batik Sawat Pengantin; 2) Batik Megamendung; 3) Batik Peksi Naga Liman/Singa Barong; 4) Batik Taman Arum Sunyarag; 5) Batik Puteri Cina; and 6) Batik Bangbiron. Of the six batik ornaments, we focus on the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina.

### **Primary and Complementary Ornaments of the Collection of Batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina**

Batik Sawat Pengantin is one of the royal batik as it was worn by the royals on a special occasion which was a wedding ceremony [3]. H. Masina is one of the batiks designers living in Trusmi where the royals and the common community order batik Sawat Pengantin. Due to the two types of community, H. Masina designs different ornaments drawn on batik Sawat Pengantin. Despite the difference, the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina bears a resemblance in which most of them are white and they have ornaments drawn on the edge of the fabric. You can observe the details of some ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina in the following figures.

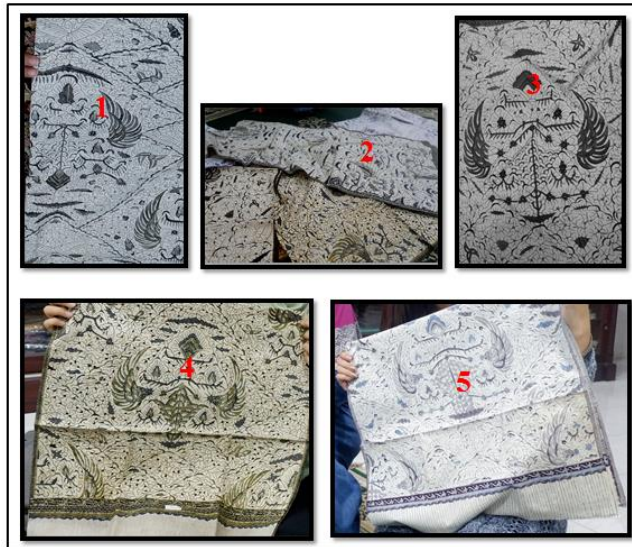


Figure 1. Several ornaments on the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

Ornaments of batik come with two categories of aesthetic elements which are: a) the primary ornament, b) the complementary ornament, and c) isen. The primary ornaments are shapes drawn repeatedly and patterned [2]. These ornaments are substantial and hence salient. Besides, batik also has complementary ornaments. They have a decorative function [2] and are smaller and more modest in shape. Between the primary and complementary ornaments is isen. Isen, in the form of either a filling painting or filling ornament, decoratively fills the blank space in the primary and complementary ornaments respectively [2]. Isen is commonly in the form of dots or lines.

In general, batik Sawat Pengantin is ornamented with a dark brown bird's wings on an ivory background color. This batik is made using either printing or drawing techniques. The bird's wings symbolize the upper world [3]. Some ornaments, which are a hayat tree surrounded by flames, birds, lar/garuda bird, and meru, are repeatedly drawn on batik Sawat Pengantin. The flame ornament is repeatedly drawn in a style of stages, above the meru ornament as its peak. Besides, the hayat tree ornament surrounded by other ornaments symbolizes harmonious vertical and horizontal cosmic relationships.

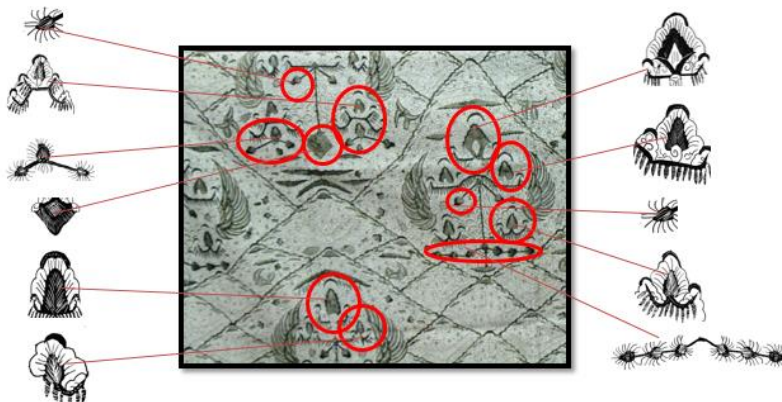


Figure 2. The hayat tree ornament of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

The lines which are strong and dark in color yet fine in shape (smooth lines) form geometric rhomboid ornaments. These ornaments depict a shady tree triangular (due to its peak) and its roots.

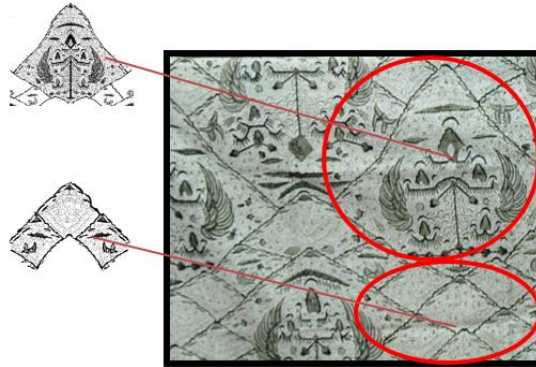


Figure 3. The *meru* ornament of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

The *meru* ornament is formed by clear yet thin and detailed lines. The *meru* is symmetrical and comes with a peak (rhombus).

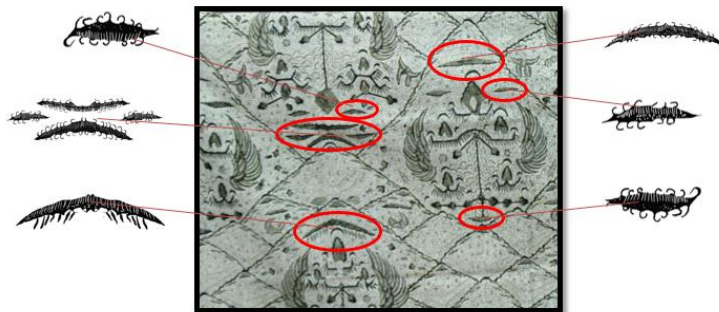


Figure 4. The flame ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

The flame ornaments are formed by consistent thick lines decorated by fine lines which together illustrate a blazing fire. The shape is rigid and symmetrical. No *isen-isen* is identified in these ornaments.

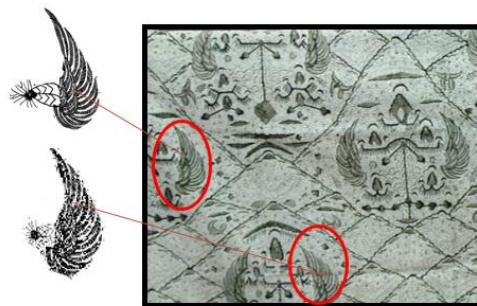


Figure 5. The *sawat* (wing) ornament of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

The *sawat* ornament comprises side lines clear and thick. In the center of the respective wing blades are water droplets. There are no connecting lines in the inner side of the wings. These wings are strong and gallant in the impression. The *sawat* is spread and points up.

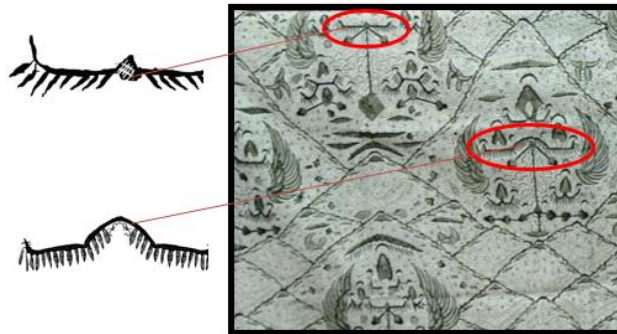


Figure 6. The building ornament of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

The building ornament is geometrical and symmetrical in shape and consists of thick long decorative lines. No *isen-isen* is identified in this ornament. This ornament constitutes a roof.

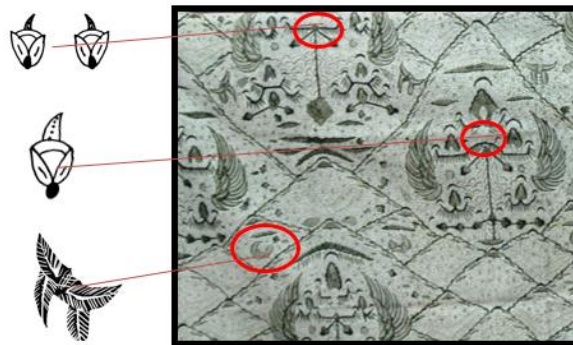





Figure 7. The flora ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina



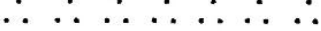


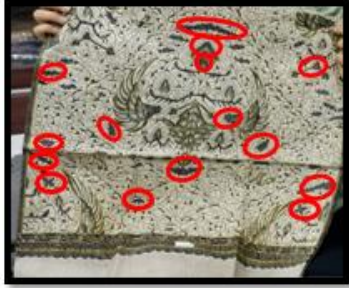

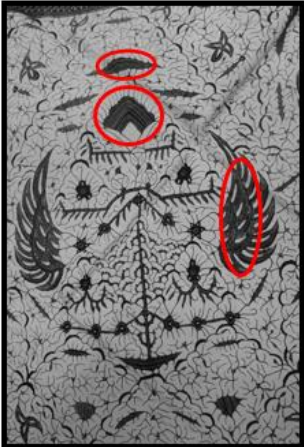
The flora ornaments commonly in the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina are orchid buds and a variant of leaves. Orchid buds are drawn in pairs with three petals in each.


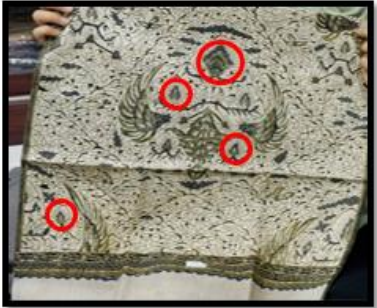






#### Isen-isen in the Ornaments of the Collection of Batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

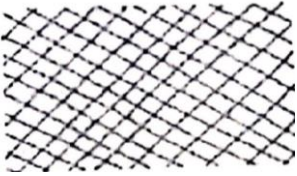

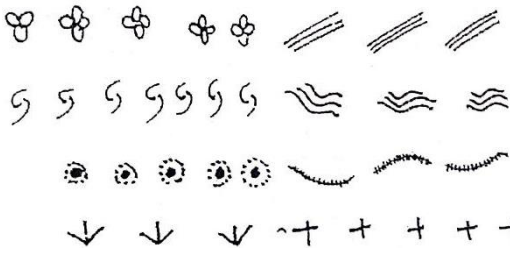

On the Cirebon batik, including batik Sawat Pengantin, certain ornaments, in the form of dots or lines, are drawn to fill the space between the primary and secondary ornaments (Susanto, 1973). These ornaments are *isen*. *Isen* in the form of dots is addressed as *tutul/cecek*, while *isen* in lines is *sawud*. Meanwhile, another shape of *isen*, scales, is known as *gresik*. *Isen-isen* of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina is indicated in Table 1.:

**Table 1. The Types of Isen-Isen of the Collection of Batik Sawat Pengantin By H. Masina**

No	Types of <i>Isen-isen</i>	Batik Ornament in Batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina
1	<p><i>Tutul rembet</i></p> <p>.....</p>	
2	<p><i>Tutul byok</i></p> <p>⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗</p>	
3	<p><i>Tutul papat</i></p> <p>⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮</p>	

<p>4</p>	<p><i>Tutul engkok</i></p> 	
<p>5</p>	<p><i>Tutul telu</i></p> 	
<p>6</p>	<p><i>Tutul tawur</i></p> 	
<p>7</p>	<p><i>Tutul sawud</i></p> 	

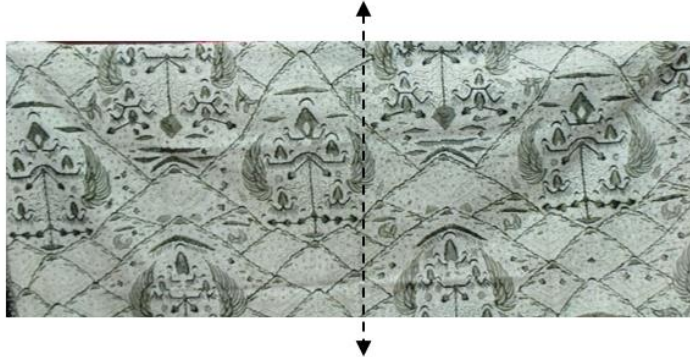
8	<p><i>Sawud gunung</i></p> 	
9	<p><i>Sawud pring</i></p> 	
10	<p><i>Sawud blarak</i></p> 	
11	<p><i>Sawud daun</i></p> 	

<p>12</p>	<p><i>Jala-jala</i></p> 	
<p>13</p>	<p><i>Angsang</i></p> 	

**The Aesthetic Principles in the Ornaments of the Collection of Batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina**

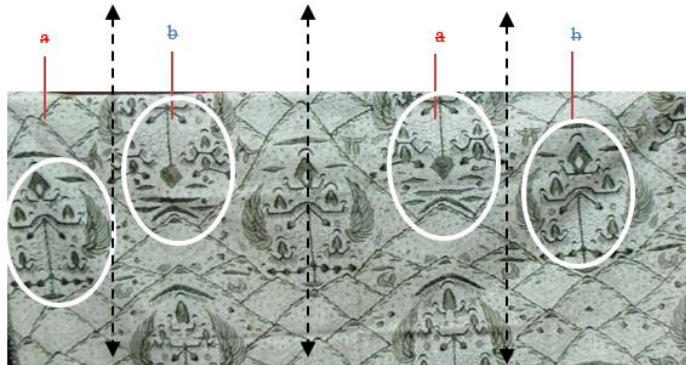
In deciding the aesthetic elements for an artwork, several principles applied are a) balance, b) rhythm, and c) harmony. The principles are also applicable in determining what aesthetic elements are drawn in batik as ornaments. Implemented in batik ornaments, the balance principle indicates a cosmic balance constituted by the Creator, the universe, and human beings. Balance is acquired from the composition of objects and colors. Balance in the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin Cirebon by H. Masina is manifested by the uniform

composition of ornaments drawn on cloth. This layout constitutes a symmetrical balance. The balance principle in batik Sawat Pengantin is presented in Figure 8.



**Figure 8. The balance principle in the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina**

Rhythm in visual arts is composed of structurally and regularly repetition of an element or elements. Dynamic rhythm in batik ornaments and lines results in uniqueness in it. Batik keraton inclines to use monotonous and regular rhythm. Batik Sawat Pengantin applies a regular repetition which later forms a batik pattern. The repetition is indicated by placing different ornaments in a parallel position.



**Figure 9. The rhythm principle in the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina**

Harmony pertains to visually aesthetic principles in batik in accordance with unique characteristics of batik, the harmonization of all visual elements we can see in a piece of batik cloth, and batik ornaments which constitute a harmony with the cohesion of ornaments, color, layout, size of the cloth, and function.

The harmony in batik Sawat Pengantin is well manifested in the synthesis of the batik ornaments, especially in the layout of visual constituting elements and in the harmony of the batik color and cloth. Besides, harmony in ornaments is indicated by the primary ornament layout (crossing up and down).



Figure 10. The harmony principle in the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

Furthermore, harmony in color is built upon by simple colors, such as the combination of black and ivory or black and white.

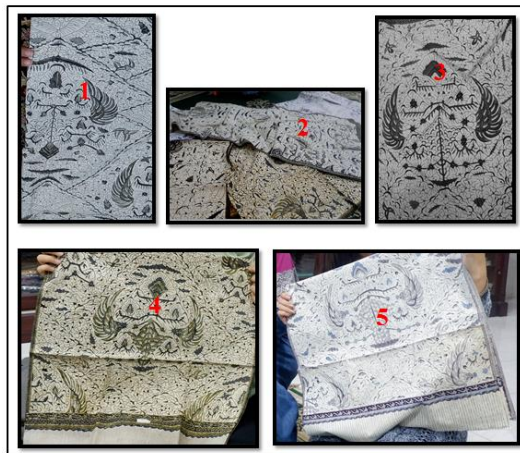


Figure 11. The color harmony principle in the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

### The Symbolic Meanings in the Collection of Batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

The symbolic meaning of a form does not necessarily rest on its beauty but on its philosophy. Relying on the Islamic precepts, Bambang Irianto, a humanist from Cirebon, defines the symbolic meaning of batik Sawat Pengantin.

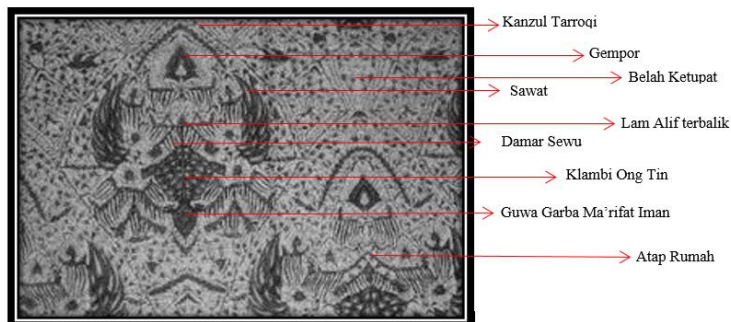


Figure 12. The symbolic meaning of the ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina

#### 1. Kanzul tarroqi

In the Arabic language, *kanz* means a repository or treasury, while *tarroqi* is stairs. In a combination, these words imply starting from zero and climbing up stair by stair to God. By God's willing, one can become noble and get a higher status. This is called *tannazul*. One should alert that nobleness and a higher status are dangerous so s/he should immediately revert to his/her initial state. They should surrender to God in accordance with the principles of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Reverting to an initial state means possessing nothing as all wealth and possessions are given back to God to where everything belongs. Human beings can then be back to zero again. This process is perpetual in our life. As knowledge is infinitive, we must show our compliance to God and when He grants His blessings, we must remain zero to earn more blessings or *kanz*. This meaning is symbolically depicted by the *hayat tree* ornament.

#### 2. Damar sewu

*Damar* is derived from *dalung wayang* or the symbol of light. In a shadow puppet play, a lamp is hung above the stage and shaken to give dramatic effects on the show. This is called *dalung wayang*. The flames, moving rapidly and dynamically, symbolize the light of God and the light of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. This light illuminates the world of a shadow puppet show. Regarding the universe, God is the *dalang*. He gives spirits to His puppets. This meaning is symbolized by the flame ornament.

#### 3. Guwa garba marifat iman

*Guwa garba* means the *gate*, *marifat* is understanding, while *iman* means senses. Passing through *guwa garba marifat iman*, we will enter the state of understanding senses and physical and spiritual aspects. This principle, if linked to the relationship between a husband and wife, demands both physical and spiritual connections between them. Furthermore, *guwa garba marifat iman* is deemed as the gate leading to the state of understanding. By this understanding, a husband and wife assimilate and develop a deeper understanding of God. They lead to the upper position or *damar sewu* and thus achieve enlightenment. Enlightenment can only be achieved by a mutual understanding. This meaning is symbolized by the building ornament.

#### 4. Rhombus

The rhombus is a four-sided shape. Rhombus, or *ketupat* or *laku papat* in the Javanese language, indicates a behavior sustained by four pillars which are *iman* (faith), *Islam*, *ihsan*, and *ikhlas* (sincerity). By *ihsan*, we see God with our intuition. *Ikhlas* indicates being present but unseen. *Ikhlas* intended here is *ikhlas rubung* or *ikhlas* in complying with *sharia*. This meaning is symbolized by the *meru* ornament.

#### 5. Spread Sawat

Spread wings illustrate a flying position. This position metaphorically signifies heading to God the Creator.

#### 6. Roof

A roof symbolizes a marriage life. As believed by Javanese people, a man reaches perfection when he manages to own a house, signifying his established financial condition. As the proverb "My home, my paradise", realizing a blessed marriage is by prioritizing the internal affairs instead of external ones. Besides, roof means the obligation for men to be leaders who protect the inhabitants from heat, rain, and harmful events. This meaning is symbolized by the roof ornament.

White, as the major color of the collection of batik *Sawat Pengantin* by H. Masina, symbolizes purity. All ornaments of the batik *Sawat Pengantin Cirebon* signifies a road to God. This also implies that the peak point of a marriage is in heaven or the immortal world instead

of the mortal one. Considering this precept, we must make a mistake when we regard sexuality as the blessing of marriage because it acts as the media linking humans to God.

## CONCLUSION

The ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin by H. Masina comprise the primary ornaments, such as hayat tree, meru, and sawat; the secondary ornaments which are flames, flora, building, and fauna; and isen-isen; such as dots/tutul (tutul rembet, tutul byok, tutul papat, tutul engkok, tutul telur, tutul tawur, and tutul sawud), lines/sawud (sawud gunung, sawud pring, sawud blarak, sawun daun, and sawud sisik), nets, and angsang. The colors mostly used are white and ivory. Geometric patterns are the most used pattern and arranged in a repeated manner. The ornaments of the collection of batik Sawat Pengantin are drawn or printed in fine/thin lines.

The ornaments, both primary and complimentary, and colors applied in batik Sawat Pengantin bear philosophical meanings which refer to the culture applicable in the community and Islamic precepts. Regarding the Islamic precepts, batik Sawat Pengantin symbolizes a marriage built upon sharia.

The precepts are symbolized by kanzul tarroqi or the flame ornament taking the form of meru and God and Prophet Muhammad PBUH depicted as damar sewu or the hayat tree ornament. Enlightenment in marriage is illustrated by guwa garba marifat iman or a reversed hayat tree. Loyalty is illustrated by the clothes of Princess Ong Tin. This illustration symbolizes Sunan Gung Jati's loyalty to his wife, Princess Ong Tin. The key of heaven is illustrated by the Arabic alphabets lam and alif symbolizing the expression laa ilaaha illallah. Manners are illustrated by a rhombus or belah ketupat or laku papat. Compliance with God is illustrated by spread wings which indicate a flying position. This illustration symbolizes heading to God. Finally, the roof ornament which signifies "my home, my paradise" symbolizes the principle that a husband and wife should make their house comfortable to live in after marrying. Furthermore, predominantly used colors, brown and ivory, symbolize the afterworld, implicitly reminding of our mortality.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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