



Unraveling Religious Symbolism in Tokwi Lasem Batik Motifs: Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis of the Representation of Meaning and Cultural Identity

Doddy Iskandar Cakranegara,^{1*} Asep Saeful Muhtadi,² Abdul Syukur,³
Dody S. Truna⁴

¹Universitas Islam Bandung, Indonesia

^{2,3,4}UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author, Email: doddy.iskandar.cn@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study investigates the representation of religious symbols embedded within the Tokwi Lasem batik motifs, utilizing the semiotic framework of Charles Sanders Peirce. Originating from the Chinese Peranakan community in Lasem, Central Java, these batik motifs carry profound spiritual significance, particularly symbols rooted in Taoist belief systems, such as the Three Star Gods (Fu Lu Shou), the Eight Immortals (Ba Xian), dragons, phoenixes, and Mandarin characters. Employing a qualitative method, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with artisans, cultural experts, and curators, as well as a literature review. The findings demonstrate that the motifs serve not merely as decorative art but as sacred signs functioning within Peirce's triadic model of semiosis—comprising representamen, object, and interpretant. These signs embody a dynamic interplay of religious meaning and cultural memory, forming a visual language that bridges the sacred and the everyday. The motifs reflect a deep-seated syncretism between Chinese Taoist cosmology and Javanese local traditions, articulating identity, reverence, and continuity of belief. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on religious semiotics and material culture, while also emphasizing the interpretive richness of traditional batik as a medium of spiritual communication. Practically, the research advocates for the recognition of batik as a living heritage, fostering cultural resilience, interethnic understanding, and localized approaches to heritage education and preservation.

Keywords: acculturation; cultural Identity; material culture; religious symbolism; visual communication.

Introduction

Batik is not just a typical Indonesian cloth without meaning; a piece of batik cloth certainly has a meaning that can be interpreted. Batik is considered rich in techniques, symbols, philosophy and culture related to people's lives. The batik that we know so far is a manifestation of art and culture that is sensory, philosophical and spiritual at the same time (Supriono, 2024). Batik is an ancestral heritage deeply rooted in the culture of the Indonesian nation. With the beauty of various patterns, natural color quality, and attractive motifs, traditional batik cloth is very popular and accepted by local and international communities. Not only just an artistic visual art, in some types of batik in Indonesia, batik is often part of a medium for religious expression. Batik is used as a means of expressing religious narratives, in which it is full of expressions of the use of religious symbols that are inseparable from the

theological and historical roots that accompany it, this type of batik becomes a symbol of ritual and belief used by the wearer as a mirror of religious expression.

Religious expressions present in batik symbolize a creed of confession of belief. Among the many batik motifs in Indonesia, one notable example is the Tokwi Lasem batik motif. Lasem batik is a batik that was born from Lasem, Rembang Regency, Central Java Province. This batik is a coastal Chinese-Javanese acculturation batik. The various motifs present in Lasem batik are full of Chinese influence which cannot be separated from the influence of the ancestral religion of the Lasem Chinese community.

The motifs etched on a piece of batik cloth always have hidden meanings; in them there are signs and meanings that are communicated explicitly or implicitly (Sobur, 2006). Mircea Eliade believes that all human activities are always related to symbols, even symbols become a special way of recognizing religious things. Symbols give meaning to ideas or values and understandings (Saliba, 1976). Symbols are signs of transcendent reality, providing a clear view of the existence of the sacred (Saliba, 1976).

What is meant by motif here is the image framework that embodies batik as a whole. According to its elements, batik motifs are divided into two parts, namely: 1) ornaments, also called main motifs, and 2) isen, also called filler motifs can be dots, lines, dots and lines, and so on (Lestari, 2012).

As revealed by Hasanudin, the motifs and colors of batik from each region show distinctive characteristics. Batik produced from areas along the north coast of Java is known as coastal batik, while batik from the interior as Vorstenlanden batik, including those from Surakarta and Yogyakarta, is also known as keratin batik (Islami & Lestari, 2013).

In its development and historical journey, the variety of batik patterns and colors is inseparable from various foreign influences. One of the foreign cultural influences that has an influence on batik is Chinese culture, especially on batik which is called coastal batik. It is called coastal because the cities that produce this batik cloth such as Cirebon, Pekalongan, Batang, Lasem, Semarang and Tuban are located on the north coast of Java. The Chinese who came to Java first and mostly lived in these coastal cities and there has been a process of acculturation with local culture. Different from batik from the interior of Java, or also called "vorstenlanden" batik such as Solo (Surakarta) and Yogyakarta batik (Islami & Lestari, 2013). Coastal batik is more cheerful, daring to use color combinations, diverse motifs, there are flora, fauna, mythology and even gods and goddesses as decorative motifs.

Specifically, Tokwi Lasem batik has a distinctive pattern, in which it is not uncommon to find elements of ancestral religious symbols printed as motifs, in addition to also having visualizations of Mandarin-lettered text symbols called sinography. Not only that, in the typical Tokwi Lasem motif, there are often symbols of Chinese gods and goddesses, especially those rooted in Taoist beliefs. This batik has a primary influence on the symbolization of Taoist teachings as their ancestral religion. These symbols are certainly interpreted personally by each adherent of the religion or collectively according to their respective traditions and cultures (Taufik, 2021).

In addition to being a creation of Lasem Chinese Peranakan Batik art, it is present as a part of the completeness of religious expression in the Lasem Chinese Peranakan family, this batik is often used as a complementary part of the Prayer Altar. The Chinese Peranakan community in Lasem has strong historical roots in the influence of religious symbols used as an identity in the typical Lasem Tokwi batik, researchers are interested in examining the meaning of religious symbols in Lasem Tokwi Batik which of course cannot be separated from the meaning of rituals and the historical roots of the ancestral religion of the Lasem Chinese community.

Since the 19th century, the marketing of Lasem batik has penetrated the entire island of Java, Sumatra, the Malacca Peninsula (including Singapore and Malaysia), Bali, Sulawesi, East Asia (Japan), Suriname and Europe. The influence of the spread of Lasem batik at that time can still be seen in the areas of Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa and West Sumatra. In Bali, Lasem batik cloth with the Lok Can motif is worn as a shawl or belt in various religious ceremonies (Dwi Ratna et al., 2015). In Lombok and Sumbawa, Lasem batik is used as a scarf for men. While women in West Sumatra use Lasem batik as a shawl. Specifically, the Tokwi Lasem motif is widely used in religious ritual ceremonies in various regions, some are used as a complement to the altar table and some are used as clothing in a variety of sinography.

Cultural acculturation since hundreds of years ago and continues to develop until now, is increasingly felt along with the opening of opportunities for ethnic Chinese people to express their culture. This is what caused the emergence of batik creations with decorative motifs originating from Chinese culture. The term Chinese batik is a type of batik made by Chinese or peranakan people who

initially displayed patterns with decorative motifs of Chinese mythical animals, such as dragons, siangs, phoenixes (hong birds), turtles, kilin (lion-headed dogs), and Chinese gods and goddesses.

The influence of Chinese culture on life in the Indonesian archipelago has been felt since the 13th century and has continued to grow until Chinese people began making batik in the early 19th century. The Chinese influence at that time influenced the patterns and variety of batik motifs which gave birth to a blend of oriental and Indonesian batik artwork. Cultural acculturation since hundreds of years ago and continuing to develop until now, is increasingly felt as opportunities for ethnic Chinese people to express their culture are increasingly opened (Rohmah, 2022).

Batik art is very important in life, because batik cloth has been closely woven into the circle of people's cultural life. In addition to the strong symbolic elements in batik art, another significant aspect is the intricate process of creating it. The process requires precision and mastery of material and process technology. From a cultural aspect, batik is a high-level art. Batik is not just cloth written using wax (liquid wax). The patterns in batik, he continued, have a philosophy that is very close to the culture of each community, as expressed by Hasanudin batik as a traditional Indonesian fine art in which there are many forms of decorative, symbolic, and dynamic decorative motifs (Machdalena et al., 2023). The motifs in batik contain signs. Signs are something that stands on something, using anything that can be used to mean something else (Berger, 2005).

In general, there are three types of problems reviewed in semiotic analysis, *First* the problem of meaning. How do people understand messages? What information is contained in the structure of a message? *Second*, the problem of action or knowledge of how to obtain something through speech. *Third*, the problem of coherence which describes how to form a pattern of speech that is reasonable and easy to understand, where this problem can also be applied in revealing the meaning of symbols in batik motifs (Sobur, 2001).

Seeing the uniqueness of the Tokwi Lasem Batik motif, the author is interested in examining the issue of religious symbols contained in the Tokwi Lasem Batik motif. This research was conducted using Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic approach. The nature of the signs contained in the Tokwi Lasem Batik motif also became the researcher's concern. Semiotics as a model of social science understands the world as a system of relationships that have a basic unit called a 'sign'. Thus, semiotics studies the nature of the existence of a sign. In a sign there is something hidden behind it and is not the sign itself (Sobur, 2001).

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis as the main framework. The focus of the study is directed at the representation of symbolic meaning in the Tokwi Lasem Batik motif, which is seen as a sign system full of religious meaning. In Peirce's semiotic theory, signs are studied through three main elements: representamen (physical form of the sign), object (referent of the sign), and interpretant (meaning by the subject). Peirce distinguishes three ways in which signs refer to their objects, namely icons (based on similarity), indexes (based on causal or existential relationships), and symbols (based on convention or social agreement). This triangle of meaning model is the foundation for interpreting religious symbols in the batik motifs studied (Peirce, 1991).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through visual documentation of Tokwi Lasem batik motifs, as well as in-depth interviews with batik makers, cultural figures, batik experts, curators, and batik users. Secondary data are in the form of books, scientific journals, dissertations, cultural articles, and other relevant literature.

Data collection techniques include: (1) in-depth interviews, conducted using a purposive sampling approach to informants who have knowledge and direct involvement in the Lasem batik world; (2) participatory observation at the batik center of Babagan Village, Lasem District, to directly observe the production process and form of Tokwi batik artifacts; and (3) literature studies to strengthen the theoretical framework and contextualization of symbolic meaning in batik. The research was carried out intensively from January 2020 to September 2024 in the Lasem area, Rembang Regency, Central Java.

This method allows researchers to explore the deep meaning behind batik motifs as an expression of local culture and religiosity. In the context of qualitative research, informants play a central role because they are not only conveyors of information, but also bridges of understanding of cultural practices that live in the daily lives of the Lasem community (Bado, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The Development of Batik in Lasem

Batik Tulis in Lasem has a rich history, particularly in relation to the presence of Chinese people in the Area. Historically, Lasem was known as a small kingdom under the rule of the Majapahit Kingdom. At that time, Lasem was led by a King named Bhre Lasem I or Rajasaduhitendudewi or Dewi Indu (1350-1375). The existence of batik was known for its use in the clothing of the nobles of the Majapahit Kingdom. The motifs and patterns in Lasem are also the same as the motifs and patterns worn by the Majapahit nobles, considering that their batik clothes were mostly taken from the Majapahit Kingdom. The motif of the batik cloth is also thought to be the same as the current Mataram Yogyakarta and Surakarta batik motifs (batik vorstenlanden), namely the gringsing and kawung motifs in soja and blue (Liem & Thee, 1995).

On the other hand, the history of Lasem batik cannot be separated from the figure of a princess from Champa named Na Li Ni. Na Li Ni was the wife of Admiral Cheng Ho's (Zheng He) ship captain, named Bi Nang Un, who together with Cheng Ho landed on Regol Beach, Lasem, in 1413. In *The Chronicle of Lasem* written by Mpu Santibadra in 1401 Saka or 1479 AD, Na Li Ni and Bi Nang Un who then lived in Kemandung taught Lasem women to make batik in Banjarmathi Park (Lucky, 2016).

In its development, it turns out that the Chinese people have become more integrated with local culture rather than with society Europe, in this case the Dutch. However, the Chinese also did not fade their native culture. The mixing between Javanese and Chinese people occurred through a process that was not short. The interaction between the Chinese and the natives lasted for a long time and covered various aspects, including one of which produced the typical Laseman batik motif. Lasem's batik production has a distinctive pattern with a red color that is said to be imitable by batik makers from other regions. Another uniqueness of Lasem Batik lies in its pattern which is a combination of Chinese cultural influences, the presence of Lasem Batik is a source of pride for the residents of this fishing town (Dailey, 2019).

Related to the motive and style, Lasem hand-drawn batik is greatly influenced by Chinese culture, Central Java (Alone And yogyakarta), as well as the influence of the tastes of the North Coast of Java. Some examples of batik motifs that were disseminated by people Chinese is a dragon motif (or *lion* from Chinese *long*) and swastika motifs (*I'm not*), the 'Chinese' cloud motif is easily recognized by the parallel edges given a graded color (mega mendung motif, 'cloudy cloud') or the 'garden' motif (tamansari), with plants on a bright base color and filled with wadatan drawn upwards. These motifs are now well known to both craftsmen and lovers of Javanese batik and have even become commonplace, earning them a reputation as the most famous. Cultural influence Chinese also reflected in the bird-shaped motifs *Phoenix* which is a characteristic of culture Chinese. Another uniqueness is related to Chinese cultural beliefs and legends (Dwi Ratna et al., 2015).

Chinese batik is a type of batik made by Chinese or peranakan people who initially displayed patterns with decorative motifs of Chinese mythical animals, such as dragons, yin, phoenixes (hong birds). One of all of that is the birth of Lasem Batik which has a distinctive motif or decorative motif (Laksitarini & Purnomo, 2021). The Chinese influence at that time influenced the patterns and variety of batik motifs which gave birth to a blend of oriental and Nusantara batik artworks that had sacred religious meanings.

One of the many Laseman motifs is Tokwi Lasem. Tokwi is one of the typical Laseman motifs, Tokwi batik is also known as altar cloth batik which is a religious symbol decoration. Tokwi batik is used by the Chinese peranakan of Lasem to decorate altars on various occasions of family life cycle ceremonies, namely birthdays, weddings, deaths and traditional Chinese ceremonies such as daily prayers and Chinese New Year. This batik has a standard motif, namely the Three Gods (*Fu Lu Shou*) sanxing, Eight Gods baxian, dragon, phoenix, lion, kilin, bat, butterfly, geometric motifs, flora, other fauna, fruits that usually appear as the center of the motif and edge motifs in combination and repeatedly. Batik Tokwi also seems to want to appear different, the use of local elements makes Tokwi from the north coast of Java different from the original Tokwi of the ancestral land. Adaptation of colors and motifs also occurs with the emergence of sogan colors, brick red, marine animal motifs, local flora and fauna motifs that blend with traditional Chinese motifs (Iswara, 2011).

Tokwi Lasem Batik is strongly influenced by the culture and religious traditions of the ancestors of the Chinese peranakan Lasem people such as their beliefs and legends. For example, considering the sacred symbols of the gods Sanxing and Baxian which are representations of Taoism, besides that there

are dragons and phoenixes that come from Chinese mythology which are considered gods. This is the reality of religious expression in Tokwi Laseman which is considered sacred in relation to religiosity where this batik is often used in religious ritual events. Including Sam Seng, in Taoist teachings Sam Seng is known as an offering to the gods (Rohman et al., 2025).

Tokwi is also known as batik altar cloth which is a religious symbol decoration. Tokwi batik is used by Chinese peranakan to complement the altar on various occasions of family life cycle ceremonies, namely birthdays, weddings, deaths and traditional Chinese ceremonies such as daily prayers and Chinese New Year. It has a standard motif, namely the Three Gods (Fu Lu Shou), Eight Gods, dragons, phoenixes, lions, kilin, bats, butterflies, geometric motifs, flora, other fauna, fruits that usually appear as the center of the motif and edge motifs in combination and repeatedly. Tokwi batik also seems to want to appear different, the use of local elements makes Tokwi from the north coast of Java different from the original Tokwi from the ancestral land. Adaptation of colors and motifs also occurs with the emergence of sogan colors, brick red, marine animal motifs, local flora and fauna motifs that combine with standard Chinese traditional motifs (Iswara, 2011).

There are several motifs that can be found in Tokwi cloth. The main motif that is the center of Tokwi usually depicts three gods (san xing three stars) Fu Lu Shou, God of Fortune, God of Prosperity, God of Longevity on the main part of Tokwi cloth. Another motif is the Dragon which is usually used as a symbol of the empire also means majesty, strength, vigilance, and goodness. The Hong bird motif is often used as a symbol of beauty, beauty, peace and prosperity. The Dragon and Hong bird motifs often appear together as a symbol of the harmony of Yin and Yang, majesty and beauty, strength and beauty, both of which are often symbols of happiness in wedding ceremonies. Usually Tokwi also has the Eight Gods motif on the top of the Tokwi cross-section. This is interpreted as there is an upper world inhabited by the gods and an underworld filled with various creatures, flora and fauna (Lucky, 2016).

Fu Lu Shou is worshiped as a symbol of human desire to gain happiness, prosperity and longevity. Fu Lu Shou ornaments are very often found in homes and temples, both paintings or reliefs on walls or statues. This is also included as an ornament of prayer. Chinese people highly uphold the tradition of hope. So it is fitting that we as Chinese people have ornaments that symbolize our hopes. Fu Lu Shou is also a concept of Luck (Fu), Wealth (Lu), and Longevity (Shou). This Taoist concept is thought to have originated from the Ming Dynasty, and is personified by the Fu Star, Lu Star, and Shou Star. This term is commonly used in Chinese culture to indicate the three characteristics of a good (perfect) life. Taoism highly values the present life so that its practitioners (as well as Chinese society whose culture is heavily influenced by Taoism) desire to have a long life and achieve immortality like the gods (Lucky, 2016).

Meanwhile, the eight gods or in Mandarin called Ba Xian also come from Taoist mythology, and are among the famous gods and goddesses in Chinese classical stories. They are a symbol of good luck for Chinese people. Each god represents 8 states of life: youth, old age, poverty, wealth, commoners, nobility, men and women. The eight gods are: Zhong Li Quan, Li Tie Guai, Lü Dong Bin, Zhang Guo Lao, He Xian Gu, Lan Cai He, Han Xiang Zi, Cao Guo Jiu. The Eight Immortals are one of the favorite themes of Chinese artists. They also appear a lot in Chinese literature (Zhang, 2023).

In Taoism, Tao is known in the human world through gods and people who are considered half-gods who incarnate in a person throughout time. These gods are worshiped and asked for help (Yanjun et al., 2020). Unlike other religions, Taoists believe in the existence of the Almighty as the core or source of everything, "Tao" in ritual practice, they prefer to honor and worship their ancestors, because they consider their ancestors to be the ones who always and are able to protect them. In addition, Taoists believe that only their ancestors can directly convey their wishes, prayers and complaints to the Almighty (Rohman et al., 2025).

The presence of the visual body of sinography and visuals of Taoist gods and goddesses in Tokwi Laseman implies religious meaning, especially for the Chinese peranakan ethnic group of Lasem. In Taoism, there are many gods. The function of these gods is believed to be able to provide protection and also help solve human problems in the real world (according to human needs). As expressed by Kwan Hwie Liong in an interview on November 17, 2023:

“What is in the tokwi signifies the spiritual meaning of the Peranakan Chinese, they consider sacred the beliefs they believe in. The spiritual symbols in the tokwi can be visualizations of what is considered to be the gods and goddesses worshipped by the Peranakan Chinese in Lasem”,

Therefore, Taoist followers make offerings to the gods, as a form of gratitude for their protection, and to commemorate the services of certain people. From the understanding of Taoism, various types of Tokwi emerged as symbols of safety, wealth, and others. Tokwi in Taoism functions as a tribute to ancestors; tribute to wise, wise people, and those who have contributed to the people; tribute to the gods as an expression of gratitude. The typical Laseman Tokwi is also often colored with sinography texts. Sinography is a stylization of Chinese letters/Mandarin calligraphy, which are usually in the form of wise words or pearls of Chinese wisdom (Admin, 2017). In the typical Lasem Tokwi, the typical motifs originating from Chinese culture are mixed with local motifs originating from latohan, serit, trutum or broken stone which are local ornaments typical of Laseman.

According to (Eliade, 1991), each symbol can refer to one of four main concepts in religious experience, namely hierophany, cryptophany, mana, and theophany, all of which are rooted in the understanding of sacred things as the core of the religious paradigm. In the context of Batik Tokwi Lasem, the use of religious symbols considered sacred by the local Chinese community places this batik in the category of hierophany—a manifestation of the sacred in symbolic form (Pals, 1996).

The sacred objects in the Tokwi Batik motif, such as the representation of the gods Sanxing and Baxian, make this batik not just an aesthetic artifact, but also full of religious meaning. Tokwi is often used in altars of worship, strengthening the notion that this batik carries a symbolic function that is closely related to religious practices and processions.

As emphasized by (Susanto, 1987), symbols have hierophanic meanings in the structure of rituals, myths, and sacred objects—such as certain humans who are viewed as sacred icons, cosmological symbols, animals, plants, places, and other elements that have distinctive morphology in the belief system of a filial community. Thus, Batik Tokwi can be understood as part of a sacred expression that contains religious, cultural, and symbolic values that live in the cosmology of the Lasem community.

The Meaning of Religious Symbols in Batik Motifs Tokwi Lasem

Tokwi Lasem batik motif. The issue of icons, indexes, and symbols is the primary discussion point that will be explored in this chapter. The procedure to be carried out in this study will utilise qualitative research, employing surgical tools and a semiotic analysis approach, as outlined by Charles Sanders Peirce.

The object analyzed is Batik Tokwi Lasem from an area located on the northern coast of Central Java. *Key informant*, as the key to get the answer to this research question is done by interview, observation and literature study as a reinforcement of field data. The end of the framework will produce an answer to the research asked in the research question.

The sources or informants presented in this study were eight people, namely: Sigit Wicaksono, Maria Cecilia Merry Christanti, Rudi Siswanto and Santoso Hartono who are cultural figures, craftsmen and batik observers who also live in Lasem City, then Prof. Dr. Yusuf Affendi, M.A., an academic professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design (FSRD) Bandung Institute of Technology with a special interest in batik craft art, Kwan Hwiee Liong, a batik observer, Director of the Indonesian Pluralism Institute, and Deni Pujianto and Fajar Dewa, curators at the Pekalongan National Batik Museum.

Talking about batik as clothing, clothing as a cultural artifact cannot but bring us to the study of semiotics, in this case object semiotics. Object semiotics examines the communicative potential of cultural artifacts and natural objects. The paradigm of object semiosis is the “language of commodities” (*the language of commodities*), each artifact contains a meaning that is arranged in the signs that compose it. However, when talking about batik motifs, semiotics can reach there to find the symbolic meaning in batik motifs, the semiosis process can reach the meaning.

Peirce saw the sign (*representation*) as an inseparable part of the reference object and the subject's understanding of the sign (*interpreter*). 'Signs', according to Peirce's view are “...*something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity*”. It appears in Peirce's definition that the role of the 'subject' (*somebody*) as an inseparable part of the sign, which is the basis for the semiotics of communication. Signs will always refer to something else, which Peirce calls an object (*denoted*). Referring means representing or replacing. A new sign can function if it is interpreted in the mind of the sign recipient through *interpreter*. This means that a new sign can function as a sign if it can be captured and understanding occurs thanks to *ground*, namely knowledge about the sign system in a society. The relationship between the three elements proposed by Peirce is known as the semiotic

triangle (Tinarbuko, 2009). Then, Peirce sees the sign (representation) as an inseparable part of its reference object and the subject's understanding of the sign (interpretant)” (Sobur, 2017). Piliang said that semiotics is not a science that has certainty, singularity, and objectivity like that, but is built by 'knowledge' that is more open to various interpretations” (Tinarbuko, 2009). A sign as a basic element in semiotics and communication is everything that contains meaning. Its existence has two elements, namely the marker (form) and the sign (meaning).

The following is a visual depiction that the researcher raised in the form of research that became the object of this research is Batik Tokwi Lasem. The researcher wants to find out how the meaning of religious symbols in the Batik Tokwi Lasem motif is by looking at the icon code, index, and symbols in the Batik Tokwi Lasem motif. The following is a picture of 11 Batik Tokwi Lasem motifs in question:

Table 8

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>1. Tokwi Lasem Sekarkencana 1</p> |  <p>2. Tokwi Lasem Sekarkencana 2</p> |
|  <p>3. Tokwi Lasem Sekarjagad 3</p> |  <p>4. Tokwi Lasem Sekar Kencana 4</p> |
|  <p>5. Tokwi Lasem Eight Gods (<i>Baxian</i>)</p> |  <p>6. Tokwi Lasem Thirty Eight Gods (<i>Sanxing-Baxian</i>)</p> |


| | |
|---|---|
|  <p>7. Tokwi Lasem Three Gods (<i>Sanxing</i>)</p> |  <p>8. Tokwi Lasem Three Gods (<i>Sanxing</i>)</p> |
|  <p>9. Tokwi Lasem Eight Gods (<i>Baxian</i>)</p> |  <p>10. Tokwi Lasem Eight Gods (<i>Baxian</i>)</p> |
|  <p>11. Tokwi Lasem Thirty Eight Gods (<i>Sanxing-Baxian</i>)</p> | |

Hand-drawn batik will never be made the same twice, because hand-drawn batik is a handicraft. Batik Tokwi Lasem is hand-drawn batik, so one design is only one, no matter how similar, there must be differences, because that is the character of handmade works (*hand made*). But all Batik Tokwi Lasem almost have the same character, motifs and colors are combined into various designs. The designs are discussed one by one, using visual and religious codes as tools to identify the problems that the author aims to address in conducting this research.

According to Peirce, a sign is something that represents something. The first "something" is a representation, something that can be captured by human cognition, then that something is transformed into something that is worthy of being a sign, namely an object (Peirce, 1991). But humans will interpret the sign according to their background, the interpretant.

Interpretation of Icons, Indexes and Symbols in the Tokwi Lasem Sekarkencana Batik Motif 1.

Table 9

| No | Subject | Description |
|----|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Motif Batik Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 |  |
| 2 | The Interpretation | <p>This batik cloth is dominated by the color red with images of three Mandarin Chinese script letters, dragons, plants and flowers, while the base color of the cloth is red.</p> <p>On the piece of cloth above, you can see three Chinese synographic letters and a picture of a dragon.</p> <p>The main object on the piece of cloth above is, there are three Chinese sinography letters and one dragon, in the Batik Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif, the visualization of the three Chinese sinography letters and one dragon is the main ornament. While other ornaments are pictures of plants such as leaves, the plant in Lasem is called latohant, a type of seaweed which is a typical food in the Lasem area, Rembang Regency, Central Java. And another thing that is recorded in this motif is the picture of flowers, the flowers in this cloth motif are truntum flowers. Depicted on the piece of batik cloth with the Batik Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif, the basic color of the cloth used is red, with a dominant red ornament. Batik motifs with dragon image visualization are something typical of the northern coast of Java Island, especially in Lasem. In coastal cities on the north coast of Java Island, perhaps dragon visualization in batik motifs is difficult to find, especially with its distinctive red color plus additional sinography..</p> |
| 3 | Index Interpretation | <p>Batik Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif is an acculturation batik that is heavily influenced by Chinese and Javanese culture. Specifically in Batik Tokwi, the symbols of Chinese ancestral religion in sinography are the main characteristic.</p> <p>The existing Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif was born as a result of an acculturation process with Chinese culture that is based on Javanese religion and culture in Lasem, Rembang Regency, Central Java. Along the northern coast of Java Island, motifs such as dragons and sinography are very rarely found except in Lasem. In Cirebon, Indramayu, Pekalongan, Semarang, Jepara, Tuban, the acculturation nuances are different, not with Chinese culture. It will be much different again when compared to keraton batik, so it is almost certain that in keraton batik there will be no batik motifs with dragon and sinography ornaments. Besides the dragon and sinography, it is framed with other ornaments such as latohan, a type of seaweed typical of Lasem and often used as a food ingredient. Other ornaments are truntum flowers, and what stands out is the use of the color</p> |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| | | red. In Chinese nuances, this red color is a characteristic. This is where the Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif was born from the acculturation process. |
| 4 | Symbol Interpretation | <p>Fu (福) Lu (禄) Shou(寿) Naga Latohan Red and Blue Truntum Flowers The dominant color of the ornament is red The base color of the fabric is white</p> <p>Fu (福) Lu (禄) Shou(寿)</p> <p>There are three gods also called Fu Lu Shou Sanxing, Separately, they are Fu Xing, Lu Xing, and Shou Xing. These three gods have been popular for centuries in traditional Chinese culture that places great importance on happiness, prosperity, and longevity. Fu Lu Shou is worshipped as a symbol of human desire for happiness, prosperity, and longevity. Fu Lu Shou is very often found in homes and temples, both paintings or reliefs on walls or statues. This is also included as an ornament of silent prayer. Chinese people highly uphold the tradition of hope. Fu Lu Shou is also a concept of Luck (Fu), Wealth (Lu), and Longevity (Shou). This Taoist concept is thought to have originated in the Ming Dynasty, and is personified by the Fu Star, Lu Star, and Shou Star.</p> <p>Naga In Chinese tradition, the dragon is one of the sacred animals. The dragon is considered a symbol of exorcism, exorcising evil spirits. In the Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif, the dragon ornament is one of the main fillers or the main ornament besides the others. This dragon is also considered a symbol of good luck, happiness. “...The dragon is considered to be an exorcist, a banisher of evil spirits. Thus it is considered a symbol of good luck.” (dalam Hasanudin, 2001: 12).</p> <p>Latohan Latohan is a type of seaweed plant typical of the Lasem coast, Rembang Regency, Central Java. Latohan is commonly found on Lasem Beach and is considered a typical food of the Lasem coastal community. Latohan is widely consumed as a main food alternative for most coastal communities in Lasem. Latohan is often found in various Lasem Batik motifs, Latohan is interpreted as a symbol of prosperity including in the red dragon motif discussed here. "Latohan and serit are typical sea plants from the Lasem area, lifting latohan and serit onto batik cloth certainly has its own meaning besides being a decorative motif, it can also be considered a symbol of fertility, prosperity, the hope is that by using this latoh and serit motif it will invite good luck. Flora and fauna ornaments in coastal batik motifs are indeed very common". (Interview, Sigit Wicaksono, September 15, 2020)</p> <p>Truntum flower In the Lasem Batik motif, the truntum flower is one type of flower that is often present, including in the Laseman motif. The truntum flower ornament has a special meaning in Lasem Batik. The meaning contained in this truntum flower is to symbolize happiness.</p> |

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| | | <p>"Every decorative ornament on Lasem Batik certainly has a certain meaning as to why it is raised in a batik sheet. The meaning of flowers characterizes happiness, expected to invite happiness. The variety of batik patterns and colors are influenced by various foreign influences. Initially, batik had a limited variety of patterns and colors, and some patterns could only be worn by certain groups. However, coastal batik absorbed various foreign influences, such as bright colors such as red, blue popularized by the Chinese" (Interview, Sigit Wicaksono, September 15, 2020)</p> <p>The dominant color of the ornament is red Red is a typical color in Chinese culture. Red in Chinese cultural treasures is considered a lucky color. "The red color contained in the Lasem batik motif is a typical color brought by the original Chinese culture. In the palace batik motifs, both from Yogyakarta and from the Solo or Surakarta areas, the color red is rarely found. Yes... this is an acculturation color obtained from the blending of these two cultures... the color red is a symbol in Chinese culture, red is the color of luck." (interview, Maria Cecilia Merry Chirtanty, September 15, 2022)</p> |
|--|--|---|

Icon is a semiosis of qualisign, which is a sign that has not yet become a sign, or a sign that can be captured by human senses but has not gone through the process of thinking (Iliopoulos & Malafouris, 2021). The signs in Batik Tokwi Lasem Sekarkencana 1 include: this batik cloth is dominated by the color red with images of three Chinese letter sinographs Fu (福) Lu (禄) Shou (寿), dragons, latohan plants, and truntum flowers, while the dominant color is red.

After going through the thinking process, qualisign can be translated into an icon. Namely, the colors used in Batik Lasem: seen where there is a picture of three Chinese letters and a picture of a dragon. The main object on the piece of cloth above is, there are three Chinese letters Fu (福) Lu (禄) Shou (寿) and one dragon, in the Batik Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif, the picture or visualization of the three Chinese letters and the dragon is the main ornament. While other ornaments feature pictures of plants, such as leaves, the plant in Lasem is called latohan, a type of seaweed that is a typical food in the Lasem area, Rembang Regency, Central Java. And one more thing that is recorded in the red dragon batik motif is the picture of flowers, the flowers in this cloth motif are truntum flowers. Depicted on the piece of batik cloth with the red dragon motif, the basic color of the cloth used is red, with a dominance of red ornaments. The meaning of signs is always influenced by a person's cultural background. In culture, there is no right or wrong, everything is subjective and local. Like love which is symbolized by roses by Javanese people, but symbolized by cherry blossoms by Japanese people (Ogasawara, 2022). There is nothing wrong with either of them, that is Rheme. Both flowers of love exist in Lasem Batik, because the cultures of both have been acculturated.

The semiosis process is the process of interpreting the first sign according to Peirce, or called Firstness, namely Seeing as it is, positive, not referring to something else (Gorlée, 2022). Exactly like what is called denotative meaning by Barthes, which is the meaning created from the relationship between signs and external reality or as the written meaning of a sign. It can be said that denotative meaning is the most real meaning of a sign (Aditya & Deni, 2024). For example, flowers, as a sign that has denotative meaning, where when the audience sees a picture of a flower, what is in their minds is a picture of a flower in the real sense. Tinarbuko said, "Signs as a basic element in semiotics and communication are everything that contains meaning. Its existence has two elements, namely the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning). Signs that are used in visual communication design work mostly use icons, indexes, and symbols (Tinarbuko, 2009).

Like the semiosis process of icons, the index also first came from Sin sign, which is a sign that has been associated with experience. How a sign is causal or refers to reality. The existence of these signs is because it is based on the existence of a culture which eventually transformed into Dicent, which is a sign of actual existence, a factual sign, which is usually a proposition (Nöth, 2021) Natural

signs from Plato to Thomas A. Sebeok. That is the second stage of understanding or *secondness*. In line with Connotation which is the process of interpreting the significance of the stage to the world where this process occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the reader along with their cultural values, it is very subjective or at least intersubjective where feelings and emotions greatly influence the reader's interpretation of the signs they see (Wąsik, 2023).

Motif Batik Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 is one of the typical batik motifs of Lasem, Rembang Regency, Central Java. This motif is the result of a process of Chinese-Javanese acculturation with local culture in Lasem. Speaking Regarding Chinese culture, it is certainly inseparable from the symbolism of Fu (福) Lu (禄) Shou (寿) and also dragons such as in the lion dance which often decorates various events in Chinese tradition (Sullivan & Liu-Sullivan, 2021). This is where what is called an index can be seen. If an icon is a realistic image, then an index is not just what is captured by human senses, an index is a sign that has a physical, existential, or causal connection between the representer and its object.

Figure 4



Visualization Fu Lu Shou motif Batik Tokwi Sekarkencana 1

Fu Lu Shou Sanxing (Three Stars Fu Lu Shou) is also known as the Sanxing God in Taoist concepts. The three are sometimes shown in one painting or carving, or carved in three different spaces. These three gods have been popular for centuries in traditional Chinese culture which places great importance on happiness, prosperity, and longevity. Fu Lu Shou is worshipped as a symbol of human desire for happiness, prosperity, and longevity (Zhao, 2024). This Taoist concept is thought to have originated in the Ming Dynasty, and is personified by the Fu Star, the Lu Star, and the Shou Star. This term is commonly used in Chinese culture to denote the three characteristics of a good life (Ju, 2022).

Long (dragon) in Chinese legend is a very sacred animal, even though in language English, dragons are called dragons, but dragons in western culture are different from traditional Chinese dragons (Yuan, 2015). Different from the background and meaning of both. The term dragon in western culture usually contains elements of evil, unlike dragons in Chinese culture which are glorified and sacred (Ingersoll, 1999). Dragons are considered as exorcists, exorcists of evil spirits. Thus it is considered a symbol of good luck. Acculturation in the motif of Batik Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 is a unique value in itself, Hasanudin said that the richness of decorative motifs which are then added to the form of decorative motifs that are a blend of Chinese and Indonesian cultures, is a very interesting variation because it combines cultures between nations (Islami & Lestari, 2013).

Figure 5



Visualization of the Dragon motif of Tokwi Sekarkencana Batik 1

The representation of Chinese-Javanese traditions in the Tokwi Lasem Sekarkencana 1 Batik motif is clearly visible, this is influenced by the nuances of cultural acculturation between local and Chinese cultures. Of course, this is what distinguishes it from palace batik. Sigit Wicaksono, in an interview as a resource person in this study, revealed the following:

“If Solo and Yogya batik developed from behind the palace walls, Lasem batik was born from folk culture. It reflects ethnic blending—there are Chinese influences, the Surakarta and Yogyakarta palaces. Dragon, hong, kilin, bamboo motifs mixed with kawung and parang. But it still has local characteristics, especially the chicken blood red color that is typical of Lasem, because the color comes from local water and cannot be imitated by other regions. That is where the strength of cultural acculturation in Lasem batik lies.” (Interview, Sigit Wicaksono, September 15, 2020)

In Teuw's view is that signs are an act of communication, in a sign there is something hidden behind it and it is not the sign itself. Of course, in the Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif, there are many symbolic meanings that can be revealed and has many meanings (Sobur, 2001). During an interview with the resource person in this research, namely a cultural figure and also a Lasem Batik craftsman Maria Cecilia Merry Chritanti expressed the following:

“Batik is not just a painting on cloth using a canting. Each motif has a meaning. For example, the dragon and phoenix (lok chan) in Lasem Batik are symbols of good luck and a ward off evil spirits. In Chinese culture, dragons are considered sacred—not demons like in Europe. Motifs like the barongsai are a form of rejection of evil. Lasem Batik holds deep philosophical values, not just artistic ones. For example, butterflies symbolize love and joy, kilin or dragons are happiness and wisdom, phoenixes symbolize achievement and eternity, bats are a symbol of longevity. The color red symbolizes eternal happiness. Even the Fu Lu Shou synography of Taoist gods often appears in Laseman tokwi. All of that makes Lasem Batik have a strong socio-philosophical meaning.” (Interview, Maria Cecilia Merry Chritanti, September 15, 2020)

On the other hand, regarding the nuances of acculturation, another source in this study, Prof. Dr. Yusuf Affendi, M.A., in his interview added that:

“The acculturation in Batik Tokwi Lasem is very interesting. There is a clear blend of Javanese and Chinese culture—there is Chinese, and Javanese is also strong. This is the result of a blend that has been going on for decades since Chinese merchants settled and traded on the coast of Java. From there, the typical motifs of Batik Lasem emerged. Bung Karno himself greatly admired coastal batik like this. Lasem is known as a batik city, especially hand-drawn batik, with typical coastal patterns, similar to Pekalongan, but still has its own uniqueness. Some popular motifs include Ceplok Latoh, Watu Pecah, Terang Bulan, Naga Kricak, and Sekar Jagat Es Teh. Batik Lasem is indeed different from palace batik such as Solo and Yogya—it is freer and more colorful. The same goes for Batik Madura which also has striking colors because of its natural dyes. But the point is, batik is always identical to Javanese culture, because in the past it was rooted in royal rules. Unfortunately, many young people today do not know the origins and philosophy of these batik motifs.” (Interview, Prof. Dr. Yusuf Affendi, 20 October 2020).

The influence of Chinese culture on life in the Indonesian archipelago has been felt since the 13th century and has continued to grow until Chinese people began making batik in the early 19th century (Steelyana, 2012). The Chinese influence at that time influenced the patterns and variety of batik motifs that gave birth to a blend of beautiful oriental and Indonesian batik artwork. Cultural acculturation since hundreds of years ago and continuing to grow until now, is increasingly felt along with the increasing opportunities for ethnic Chinese people to express their culture (Tandjung, 2017). So that in reality the representation of Chinese culture finally colors many coastal batik works,

especially in Lasem, Rembang Regency, Central Java.

The Chinese who at that time established settlements, especially in important ports on Java Island, such as Indramayu, Cirebon, Pekalongan, Lasem and Tuban, mingled with the native population (Elliott, 2013). Some of them even carried out cultural marriages, and gave birth to descendants called "peranakan". Uniquely, the Chinese ethnic group in the archipelago still brought with them the customs, religion and culture of their ancestral land by harmonizing it with the local culture. Many ethnic Chinese ended up dressing by following the way the local people dress. The women wore batik sarongs, while the men wore batik trousers (Sutherland, 1973).

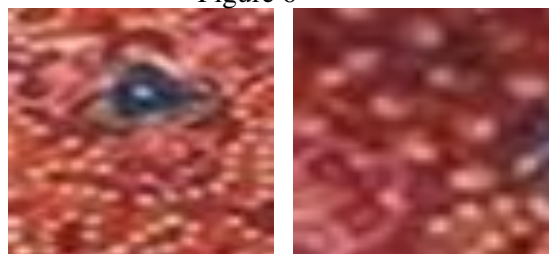
This is what caused the emergence of batik creations with decorative motifs originating from Chinese culture. Chinese batik is a type of batik made by Chinese or peranakan people who initially displayed patterns with decorative motifs of Chinese mythical animals, such as dragons, siang, phoenixes (hong birds), turtles, kilin (lion-headed dogs), and the god and goddess Kong Hu Chu. This also happened in Lasem, Rembang district, Central Java. Furthermore, Prof. Dr. Yusuf Affendi, M.A., in his interview revealed that:

"In 1413. Yes, it means that the Lasem Batik Motif has existed since long ago, right? But when Ceng Ho from China came to Indonesia at that time, it was through Lasem, then the story goes that his ship was stranded and then had a member of Ceng Ho's crew named Bi Nang Un from Campa who had a child named Bi Nang Na, where Bi Nang Na got a match from the Duke of Lasem-Majapahit and got married. Bi Nang Na from Campa brought many cultures from Campa, one of which was batik, embroidery, and other handicrafts. Then there was Ibu Kartini, who also brought batik art so the cultures were mixed. Well, this is where the acculturation of batik art between Chinese and local batik art occurred, so a new motif emerged with the name of the Lasem Batik motif. In its development, batik originating from Lasem City, Rembang Regency, Central Java Province is sometimes also called encim batik, where Encim is the term for Chinese peranakan women who are elderly. " (Interview, Prof. Dr. Yusuf Affendi, M.A, October 20, 2020)

A symbol is a sign whose meaning is obtained on the basis of social convention, a symbiosis of Legisign, namely a sign characterized by its conventional nature, then becomes a sign of rules or laws, norms contained in the sign (Ireland, 2023). The norms or laws that are formed because of it are called Arguments, namely signs that directly provide reasons for something. It can also be called a legal sign, or rule, a sign of reason, which is based on *leading principle* which states that the transition from certain premises to certain conclusions tends to be true in pragmatics, differences in understanding the meaning of a language symbol are not always the same for each group in the same society. The process of semiosis is called Peirce as thirtness, or third-level understanding (Peirce, 1991). Categories of mediation, habit, continuity, synthesis, communication synthesis (Semiosis), representation and signs. Like Batik Tokwi Lasem accepts new culture.

As a blend of local elements with elements from outside that are considered as Chinese culture, the latohan plant is present in Tokwi Lasem sekarkencana 1. Latohan as one of the dominant local elements colors the nuances of acculturation. Latohan is a typical plant of Lasem beach, Rembang Regency, Central Java, latohan is a type of seaweed that is often consumed by people in the Lasem area.

Figure 6



Visualization of Latohan in the Tokwi Sekarkencana Batik motif 1

In the various batik motifs present in Lasem, almost all of them are present as dominant complementary ornaments. Latohan is present as a local element that characterises this ornament as typical of the Lasem area and has an intrinsic meaning in it.

Figure 7



Visualization of the Truntum Flower in the Tokwi Lasem Sekarkencana Motif 1

Meanwhile, the truntum flower ornament is present in the Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif. It is not without meaning, the truntum flower is present in the Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif, symbolizing happiness. The truntum flower that is present in the visualization of the Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif is a top view, there are also some that are side views or bottom view visualizations. In Tokwi Sekarkencana 1, the truntum flower is present with red and blue visualizations. Sigit Wicaksono in an interview said:

“Every decorative ornament on Lasem batik certainly has a specific meaning as to why it is raised on a batik sheet. The meaning of flowers characterizes happiness, expected to invite happiness. The variety of batik patterns and colors are influenced by various foreign influences. Initially, batik had a limited variety of patterns and colors, and some patterns could only be worn by certain groups. However, coastal batik absorbed various foreign influences, such as bright colors such as red, blue popularized by the Chinese” (Interview, Sigit Wicaksono, September 15, 2020)

Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 As a typical Lasem motif that was born from the process of cultural acculturation with Chinese culture, it is certain that it contains a representation of Chinese culture. The dragon is a prominent motif in Tokwi Sekarkencana 1, representing a key aspect of Chinese culture. The ornaments present in the motif Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 not only a visual decoration, but something that must be interpreted more deeply. Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 This is also a condition of meaning, the meaning is not only limited to extrinsic meaning but there are various hidden meanings present in the visualization of this Red Dragon motif. In general, the meaning contained in this Red Dragon motif symbolizes happiness, luck, and prosperity.

That's its semiotic discussion of the Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif which is one of the typical batik motifs from Lasem. In the Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 batik motif, it turns out that there are many hidden meanings after being interpreted in layers from various reviews of the various ornaments that exist in general, the motif Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 This has the meaning of luck and happiness. The Tokwi Sekarkencana 1 motif contains many indications of the representation of the acculturation of Chinese and Javanese traditions.

Meanwhile, the truntum flower ornament is also present in the Tokwi Three-Eight Gods motif. Without meaning, the truntum flower present in this motif symbolises happiness. The influence of Chinese culture on life in the Indonesian archipelago has been felt since the 13th century and has continued to grow, particularly with the introduction of batik in the early 19th century. The Chinese influence at that time shaped the patterns and variety of batik motifs, giving rise to a blend of beautiful Oriental and Indonesian batik artwork. Cultural acculturation since hundreds of years ago and continues to grow until now, is increasingly felt along with the opening of opportunities for ethnic Chinese people to express their culture. So that in reality the representation of Chinese culture finally colors many coastal batik works, especially in Lasem, Rembang Regency, Central Java. The Chinese, who established settlements at that time, especially in important ports on Java Island, such as Indramayu, Cirebon, Pekalongan, Lasem, and Tuban, mingled with the native population. Some of them even carried out cultural marriages, and gave birth to descendants called "peranakan". Uniquely, the Chinese ethnic group in the archipelago still brought with them the customs, religion and culture of their ancestral land by adapting them to the local culture. Many ethnic Chinese ended up dressing by following the way the local population dressed. The women wore batik sarongs, while the men wore batik trousers.

A symbol is a sign whose meaning is obtained on the basis of social convention, a symbiosis of Legisign, namely a sign characterized by its conventional nature, then becomes a sign of rules or

laws, norms contained in the sign. The norms or laws formed because of it are called Arguments, namely signs that directly provide reasons for something. It can also be called a legal sign, or rule, a sign of reason, which is based on *leading principle* which states that the transition from certain premises to certain conclusions tends to be true in pragmatics, differences in understanding the meaning of a language symbol are not always the same for each group in the same society. The process of semiosis is called Peirce as *thirtness*, or third-level understanding. Categories of mediation, habit, continuity, synthesis, communication synthesis (Semiosis), representation and signs. Like Batik Tokwi Lasem accepts new cultures. In coastal batik, the blend of Chinese and local cultures is something that happens in Lasem, Rembang Regency, Central Java. Cultural acculturation in coastal batik art is a characteristic feature of batik originating from the coast.

Tokwi Lasem Three-Eight Gods As a typical Lasem motif that was born from the process of cultural acculturation with Chinese culture, it is certain that it contains representations of Chinese culture. Dragon and Phoenix are present in the motif. Eight Gods represent the representation of Chinese culture. The ornaments present in the motif. This not only a visual decoration, but something that must be interpreted more deeply. Tokwi Three-Eight Gods conditions of meaning, the meaning is not only limited to extrinsic meaning, but there are various hidden meanings present in the visualization of the motif. In general, the meaning contained in this motif symbolizes happiness, luck, and prosperity based on the concept of Taoism. Thus the discussion in semiosis of the Tokwi Tiga-Delapan Dewa Motif which is one of the typical batik motifs from Lasem. In this motif, it turns out that there are many hidden meanings after being interpreted in layers from various reviews of the various ornaments that exist, in general this motif has the meaning of luck and happiness. This motif contains many indications of the representation of the acculturation of Chinese and Javanese traditions that are inseparable from Taoism.

Associated with the concept of Ninian Smart's religious experience, the existence of Batik Tokwi Lasem has a doctrinal dimension of Taoist teachings, mythologically Tokwi Lasem is closely related to the gods San Xing and Ba Xian, in ethical dimensions it contains moral principles in living life in filling age with blessings and good fortune, in sacred spiritual dimensions Tokwi Lasem is often present as a complement in the prayer procession of Chinese Peranakan Lasem at the prayer altar, in social dimensions Batik Tokwi Lasem is present as an identical characteristic of the Chinese Peranakan Lasem religious community with the color of Taoism, while in material dimensions Batik Tokwi Lasem is seen as a piece of cloth that is full of religious symbolism. The relation of the presence of sacred symbols of Taoist gods and goddesses in the Tokwi Lasem Batik motif adds to the sacredness and solemnity of Taoist prayers in front of the altar of prayer, which is considered holy, sacred and full of spiritual meaning regarding how the prayers are offered to the San Xing and Ba Xian gods and goddesses.

Table 10
Prayers in the Taoist tradition

| Types of Prayer | Prayer Text (Mandarin/Pinyin) | Translation |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Opening Prayer | <i>Tai Chi, Qi Yuan, Xuan Kong, Tao Yuan, I'm very smart, but I'm not good at it.</i> | Tai Chi, Source of Qi, Xuan Heaven, Source of Tao, I face, respecting the unseen source. |
| Prayer Honoring the Tao | <i>Tao Yuan, Qi Yuan, Xuan Kong, Tai Chi, I'm very smart, but I'm not good at it.</i> | Tao Yuan, Qi Source, Xuan Sky, Tai Chi, I face, respecting the unseen source. |
| Prayer to Honor Ancestors | <i>Zu xin, zu yi, zu qing, zu bao, I'm very smart, but I'm not good at it.</i> | A noble, wise, kind, devoted ancestor, I face, respecting the |

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| | | unseen source. |
| Prayer for Blessings | <i>Tao Yuan, Qi Yuan, Xuan Kong, Tai Chi, Qiu wo fu, qiu wo shou, qiu wo kang ning.</i> | Tao Yuan, Qi Source, Xuan Sky, Tai Chi, I ask for blessings, salvation, and strength. |
| Health & Safety Request | <i>(Fú lù shǒu, bǎo yǒu tiān xià, jiǔ zhòng shēng míng)</i> <i>(I love you, I'm so happy, I'm so happy)</i> | The Gods Fu, Lu, and Shou, protectors of heaven and earth, long life and good health. Peaceful world and sky. |
| Request for Happiness & Prosperity | <i>(The yuan guāng, the flute is cold, the wind blows)</i> <i>(The wind blows, the wind blows, the wind blows)</i> | The God of wealth and the Gods of Fu, Lu, Shou bless wealth and happiness. Blessing success and prosperity. |
| A Request for Enlightenment & Wisdom | <i>(Dào dé zhī huì, lǎo zǐ xiān shēng, jiǎo yù zhī huì)</i> <i>(Tiān xià zhī huì, fú lù shǒu, jiǎo yù zhī huì)</i> | Tao, Laozi, and Fu, Lu, Shou bless wisdom and enlightenment. |
| Protection Request | <i>(Bǎo yǒu tiān xià, fú lù shǒu, jiǔ zhòng shēng míng)</i> <i>(The first one is the one who comes to the restaurant, the last one is the one who comes to the restaurant, the last one is the one who comes to the restaurant)</i> | Dewa pelindung, Fu, Lu, Shou bless safety and a peaceful world. |
| Closing Prayer | <i>Tao Yuan, Qi Yuan, Xuan Kong, Tai Chi, I'm very smart, but I'm not good at it.</i> | Tao Yuan, Qi Source, Xuan Sky, Tai Chi, I face, respecting the unseen source. |

Source: Interview with Kwan Hwie Liong, November 16, 2023.

Although San Xing and Ba Xian come from folk religion traditions, the values they carry do not conflict with the teachings of the Tao Te Ching. In fact, the principles in the Taoist scriptures support a harmonious life, longevity, and avoiding greed. In the Tao Te Ching, there are a number of articles that philosophically intersect with the values lived by these gods (Hardy, 1998).

For example, Article 2 states: “*Because everyone knows the beautiful as beautiful, the ugly appears*” This sentence illustrates the principle of equality held by Ba Xian—the eight immortals came from different social backgrounds, indicating that in the Taoist view, there is no higher form or status; all are equal in the eyes of the Tao. Article 4 discusses the concept *Personas* the source of all life and the universe, asserting that everything, including the gods, is merely a manifestation of the great Taoist principle (Ching, 1989).

Article 8 states: “*The best people are like water.*” This depicts the Ba Xian way of life, free from rigid social norms, and able to adapt like water—gentle yet powerful (Westmaas, 2021). Furthermore, Article 9 states: “ *Holding and filling it too full, it won't last long.*” This message is in line with the view of Fu and Lu—that fortune and position should not be pursued excessively (Sigman, 1999). While Article 44 asks: “*Good name or life, which is more valuable?*” Implying that longevity (Shou) and wisdom have higher value than social status (Lu) or false reputation.

In the context of visual culture, these spiritual values are manifested in Lasem's Tokwi batik. The motifs are not merely aesthetic ornaments, but religious symbols that represent sacred values in the Taoist-Chinese religion. The San Xing and Ba Xian ornaments, symbols of respect for ancestors,

and blessings prayed for in prayers, are all immortalized in a piece of batik cloth that radiates spiritual depth. This batik is not only beautiful to look at, but also full of religious meaning and becomes a medium for spiritual experience.

This is in line with the concept *hierophany* as put forward by Mircea Eliade, namely the experience when the sacred or divine reveals itself in human reality—either through symbols, rituals, or cultural objects such as batik (Eliade, 1963). In this context, the sacredness of the symbols in Tokwi batik can be analyzed from various perspectives: from the craftsman as maker, the observer as interpreter, to the user as the actor who lives these values in everyday life. Thus, Tokwi batik is not only a visual cultural heritage, but also a living manifestation of Taoist spirituality in the Chinese-Indonesian tradition.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the Tokwi Lasem Batik motif contains a strong and complex representation of religious symbols, particularly Taoist symbols such as the Fu Lu Shou (Three Gods), Ba Xian (Eight Immortals), dragons, phoenixes, and Mandarin characters. Through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach, it was found that the signs in Tokwi Batik are not only present as visual elements but also represent the structure of religious meaning that exists within the cultural practices of the Peranakan Chinese community in Lasem. The icons, indexes, and symbols embedded in this batik become concrete forms of the semiotic process that mediates between the profane and sacred worlds, reflecting a deep relationship between aesthetics, spirituality, and cultural identity.

Batik Tokwi is not just a traditional cloth, but an artefact that marks the continuity of ancestral traditions and beliefs, and is a real manifestation of the peaceful and dynamic acculturation of Chinese and Javanese cultures. The contribution of this research lies in presenting a new perspective in understanding batik as a religious cultural text that can be analyzed semiotically, while enriching academic discourse on the relationship between craft art, spirituality, and cultural representation. In addition, this research offers practical implications for preserving cultural heritage, strengthening ethnic identity, and developing multicultural education grounded in local wisdom.

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