

## Characteristic of Batik Tulis Gedhog of Kerek Subdistrict, Tuban Regency, East Java, As the Community's Batik

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**Abstract.** Textile, according to local people of Tuban Regency, Kerek Subdistrict, East Java, Indonesia is not merely an ordinary body cover, but an object contains of myth and spiritual values. The way people of Kerek appreciate the life cycle is by describing it through visualization on their traditional textile made by batik (a technique to make motifs on fabrics using color resistance called wax) technique. In terms of textile production technique as well as function, batik Kerek has unique characteristics. It shows as if batik Kerek has its own characteristic if it compares to other batik such as batik Keraton and batik Pesisir (coastal batik). Through design and craft discipline, as well as ethnography methods, this research will attempt to find basic characteristic of traditional batik Kerek.

Keywords: *Batik, Gedhog, Kerek Subdistrict, the Community's Batik*

### 1. Introduction

Indonesian traditional fabric is not merely an ordinary fabric; it is invented upon needs of ritual and belief. Jakob Sumardjo says that art in Indonesian ethnic cultural tradition remains serving religious functions. All artists in the ethnic cultural tradition works in accordance with its tribes' religious structure, as well as in the making of Indonesian traditional textile, such as weaving, batik making and dyeing, are started with spiritual values and self purification, and see human in the context of universe harmony. Therefore, it needs totality and a long period of time, days even months, in the making process. (Widiawati: 2013).

Those traditional values have degraded by several factors such as modernization that creates a perception in most of Indonesian people where they think rather than serves it as an adati fabric better develop the fabric according to the latest trend and apply it as current fashion product. It thereafter brings to a thought that traditional fabric for Kerek's community will also be influenced by several factors that possibly trigger a transformation. Therefore, revitalization is one of the way outs to enable a tradition to be more adaptive to a trend, in a strong spirit and identity of Kerek's traditional fabric. This can be performed by creating batik of Kerek that is

integrated among the potentials of the community, environment and nature, philosophical value and meaning, and common technique and process used to be used.

Kerek, the latest place in Java that is believed still continues making traditional fabric until now, is also facing cultural transformation. Starts from making thread then continue with weaving the thread to become fabric, the product output then does not made merely for industrial purpose but also for special needs such as social status, community's identity, and also a part of life cycle that describes birth, marriage and death. There are also several important things related to visual aesthetic, function and production process of Kerek traditional batik which indicates that batik of Kerek has different characteristic with Batik Keraton and Pesisir. So that, it is required to do a study to see how strong the characteristic attached to Kerek traditional batik.

## 2. Methods


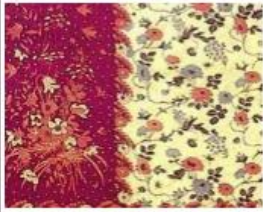

This research uses descriptive, qualitative methods through interdisciplinary approach. Data collection is performed through: 1) literature review as primary data; 2) Observation / field study (interview, audio, visual and audio visual recordings) with speaker who works in traditional textile and fabric to analyze the concept relationship of Sayut and Jarit fabrics in present concept with a raw concept that is filled with values through several surveys to some places and stay for days to directly know the sarong wearing in the said area.



## 3. Discussion

Batik Kerek has its own characteristic if it is compared to other batiks such as batik pesisir and batik keraton. As a source quote: "Batik pedesaan (farmer batik) is not the same as batik keraton (made around keraton) or those are made at production centers in coastal cities. It has irregular composition and often made on rough calico. The pattern follows traditional style, but its aesthetical display is not as soft as batik keraton. The agricultural surroundings become the inspirations. Its bias variation reflects a modest daily life. Its decoration motifs are often distorted with less attention to harmony on its design. However, farmer batik still has commercial value where in individual scale, this fabric is the family's investment that they can make money from it at anytime.. Batik Tuban, that is made at its neighboring cities, Kerek and Bejangung, has an almost primitive style compared to batik keraton and other batik from other northern coastal cities. Batik is made when women are not farming or harvesting. Woven cotton fabric is made of cotton that they plant themselves. They weave it inside their grass-roofed-modest-houses, and then they go on with batik making process. Color that they commonly use is indigo blue or noni red... Other areas to find farmer batik are Bantul - southern Yogyakarta, Wukisari near Imogiri, Matesih - southern Surakarta, and Tembayat - near Klaten - Central Java." (Iwan Tirta: 2009; 122).

According to the explanation, below is the elaboration through comparison between batik Kerek as farmer batik, with batik Keraton and Pesisiran.

**Table 1:** Characteristic of Batik *Tuban* towards Batik *Pesisir* and Batik *Keraton*

Element	Batik Keraton	Batik Pesisir	Batik Tuban
			
	<p>Essentially, batik <i>Keraton</i> is created only for royal family's apparel. Each detail and color has crucial philosophy and sacred meanings.</p> <p>Some of its motifs are limited to particular people. Philosophy meaning of this batik is influenced by most of people of Keraton's belief of cosmological concept.</p>	<p>Batik <i>pesisir</i> (coastal batik) has varies of colors and ornaments that are more dynamic with floral and animal motifs with bright colors. This batik evolves outside <i>keraton</i>, around northern coastal line outside Java such as: Cirebon, Indramayu, Lasem, Bakaran, Madura, and so on.</p> <p>Batik <i>pesisir</i> can be dynamically evolve because of foreign influences (such as China, India) we get from the international trading line at Java northern coastal line. The influence is reflected in the batik motif.</p>	<p>Batik Tuban is categorized as batik Pesisir, as it is located along the northern coastal line of Java. Its motifs are also influenced by foreign culture such as <i>lokcan</i> bird motif that comes from Chinese culture.</p>

<p><b>Meaning</b></p>	<p>Based on <i>Triloka</i> (three worlds) concept, parts of batik <i>keraton</i> motif such as <i>Semen</i>, <i>Sawat</i>, <i>Alas-alasan</i> are comprehended as a reality of Javanese cosmology. Whereas the world is divided into three hierarchical levels, that are: <i>Alam atas</i> (upper nature), <i>alam tengah</i> (middle nature), and <i>alam bawah</i> (sub nature). It is schematically figured as follows:</p>  <p>Batik is considered to have relationship with <i>triloka</i> concept, where batik <i>Semen</i> has motifs in common with other two batiks (<i>Sawat and Alas-alasan</i>), and vice versa. Batik <i>Semen</i> has a vertical <i>alam atas</i> (upper nature) relationship, while batik <i>Sawat</i> has a relationship with <i>alam tengah</i> (middle nature), and batik <i>Alas-alasan</i> has a relationship with <i>alam bawah</i> (sub nature).</p>	<p>Batik <i>Pesisir</i> does not have special philosophy meaning of its motif. The inspiration is taken from the elements that closely related with the daily life of the people, and also from some of foreign cultures.</p>	<p>Even categorized as batik <i>Pesisir</i>, in the motif creating process, batik <i>Tuban</i> has a philosophy meaning that closely related with cosmology and their belief. Among them, it is called the concept of the "Life Cycle".</p>  <p>The life cycle is reflected on their batik. For example, for people in eastern village will tend to make <i>putihan</i>. It is related with their life cycle where <i>putihan</i> means a born of a man, pure and innocent. Thus with people in western, southern and northern villages who represent life cycle with maturity and death.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>Batik <i>Keraton</i> is not a commercial batik. It is worn by the royal family for traditional and ceremonial purposes as well as a manifestation of their cosmology concept and belief they comprehend.</p>	<p>The main function of batik <i>Pesisir</i> is to be a trading commodity, considering at the given time, northern coastal line was the international trading line where there are many foreign traders from China, Gujarat, and Arabic. This batik is also worn by local people.</p> <p>Batik <i>Pesisir</i> evolves rapidly and becomes one of the important economic commodities.</p>	<p>Batik <i>Tuban</i> is an important element of the community's life. It is not merely for their daily clothing but also for trading commodity. The trading is merely for their internal community. They used to exchange thread with fabric or plain fabric with batik.</p> <p>Batik is also one of important components of various rituals and ceremonies.</p>

<b>Technicals</b>	It uses common technique. Only, at first, batik <i>Keraton</i> is made with only batik <i>tulis</i> (written batik) technique, where most of its details and motif is made based on <i>pakem</i> (strict rules). In coloring process also uses natural colors. It is related with the community’s belief that by making it this way, therefore the honor of each sheet of batik will be higher.	It uses common technique with <i>malam</i> (wax) and <i>canting</i> . They get the material imported, supplied by the weaving center or by producing themselves. Color and motif of batik <i>Pesisir</i> tend to be bright and dynamic, where it happens because there is no binding <i>pakem</i> , so that batik <i>Pesisir</i> can grow in various creations.	Batik <i>Tuban</i> has almost the same technique as other batik. The difference is in the entire process which is done independently, from processing fiber to become thread, thread to become fabric, plain fabric to become batik and then color it. All uses local materials and manpower.  They use <i>jantra</i> to yarn the thread manually, and <i>Gedhog</i> to weave it to become fabric.
<b>Structure and Composition</b>	Batik <i>Keraton</i> has strong <i>pakem</i> to guide on how to draw a motif. Batik <i>Keraton</i> tends to have pattern of recurring, mirroring and slope structures.	Batik <i>Pesisir</i> does not have binding <i>pakem</i> in making motif. It can be created in particular or random pattern.	It needs further study to know the pattern structure of batik <i>Tuban</i> precisely. At a glimpse, style of batik <i>Tuban</i> has its own character, different from batik <i>Keraton</i> and <i>Pesisir</i> .

Looking at to its functions, Kerek’s traditional fabric is used to fulfill needs such as: 1) Clothing that is wrapped (*jarit*) over the body part wanted to be covered. That is why until now people call it “*Jarit*” (*wrap*) fabric. Other function of traditional batik of Kerek is to support goods they carry everyday by encircle it from shoulder to around the waist (*sayut*), from there evolves a textile term “*Sayut*”; 2) A trading commodity they usually exchange with various daily need products; 3) A ritual means as an important component to do sacred ceremonies by local people; and 4) An indicator of social status.

Fabric is one of important properties of Kerek’s community. All this time, Kerek’s community who lives in a remote area used to make their own fabric to be used for their internal purposes. The fabric function as clothing, to Kerek’s community, is generally used as clothing raw material, either to be tailored to become cloth, *sayut* or *jarit*. *Jarit* and *sayut* have typical ways to wear it. It is common to see women wear *sayut* and *jarit* at the traditional market and the field. They call those wears as a costume for working on the field.

The use of *Sayut* and *Jarit* has specifically created typical identity of Kerek’s community. Through its inherited function, with the same patterns and followed by most of the community, it creates a settled tradition of wearing fabric to the community.





**Figure 1:** Kerek’s women wear Jarit and Sayut  
 Source: Heringa, “Ninik Towok’s Spinning Wheel”, 2010

Paying attention on how the existence of traditional sayut and jarit fabrics for Kerek’s community, especially in present concept, the behavior of the community towards sayut and jarit has displaced. There are many factors influence the displacement, such as the coming of Islamic culture to Java that gives a visual identity equation to the community. If previously Kerek’s community has an authentic identity in terms of clothing and point of view as well as ritual, therefore the coming of Islamic culture, that teaches to wear shar’i clothing, causes the originality of Kerek’s community gradually extinct and become bias.

The displacement will influence the way they treat and wear the fabrics. Especially for jarit, women are no longer let their upper body disclosed even with merely a kutang; because in Islam it is called aurat. Therefore, they are now used to wear tops to cover upper body.

Kerek’s traditional fabric is also used as adati fabric for traditional, marriage and death purposes as has been explained in sub chapter: Visual Meaning and Aesthetic of Kerek’s Traditional Fabric. In terms of trading commodity, this fabric has an important role for the community’s economic. Even though making batik fabric and weaving gedhog is not their primary occupation, where most of them are farming and working in the field, however they are still working on making batik and weaving whenever they do not go for farming and working in the field. Especially for Kerek’s community, batik tulis gedhog has a high commercial value. They still can exchange it with daily need products. Some of mortgages accept fabric as a loan guarantee. From cotton thread, gedhog polos woven fabric, until batik tulis (written batik) were means of exchange. Even though local community still treats it as a high-commercial-valued-fabric, but the fabric’s role as a means of exchange has no longer preserved. If it is compared with other areas, Kerek, Tuban regency is one of independent areas with its growing batik industry.

#### 4. Results

It needs comprehensive study to be able to show characteristic differences on traditional batik Kerek as the community's batik, compares to other batiks such as those that are categorized as batik Pesisir and batik Keraton. In addition, fabric culture and tradition in Kerek, which back then has settled, but now are terminated towards some concepts and values, cannot be considered as misleading circumstances towards traditional and cultural movements. In contrary, small movements have been able to create hope that make tradition and culture are more dynamic. Batik Kerek is striving to be dynamic by positioning itself towards community's demand and acceptance. It will still moving until batik Kerek won't merely develop as Kerek's internal property, but as something that is broader than that.

#### 6. References

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