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Understanding the Motif Meaning of *Dermayon Batik* as Women's Expression

ABSTRACT: Indonesian traditional culture has many kind of forms and types of craft. The culture proves the existence of the same creative expression with the newness. The craftsmen of batik consist of workers, both men and women in a group or family. This article describes the creativity developed by Paoman villager in Indramayu Regency, West Java, Indonesia, to the "Dermayon Batik" (batik style of Indramayu). In this case, women are more dominant in processing to create the batik, especially the technique to make handmade batik (traditional). Hence, what is called with the "Dermayon Batik" is identical to the women's work, it is because their visualization has become identity of the feminity. Motif of Indramayu's Batik, which coastal character in generally, not only describes nature, social, and culture of fisherman, but also reflects the mood of the women. Women are clearly express their mood in spots, lines, shapes, and aesthetic structurals in motif of "Dermayon Batik". The aesthetic expression, which dynamic and meaningful culture, is a reflection of the women related to the genre of the motif. In expressing this "Dermayon Batik", it is used cultural studies, aesthetic, and semiotic-interpretative approach. However, a manifestation of the women's creativity in "Dermayon Batik" since a long time until now. Inheritance of "Dermayon Batik" in a family is traditional educational values, which now begin to threatened its survival. Finally, in the planning and implementation of art education, as creative education, is appropriate based on an understanding of cultural traditions (local) growing in the community.

KEY WORDS: Cultural study, femininity, expression, aesthetic, semiotic, "Dermayon Batik", women's work, coastal character, and art education.

INTRODUCTION

Neighbouring between Indramayu and Cirebon in West Java Province, there are two *batik* centers, those are Indramayu district (Paoman and Pabean Udik), and Sindang district (Penganjang, Terusan, and Babadan). They are closely each other. Among the *batik* centers, Paoman village is the famous one. *Batik* craft made of mori base material (cotton that can absorb dyes) and it made from natural materials (it has now been completed with chemical dyes). In terms of materials (media), generally, traditional *batik* has relatively the same in every region, including craft centers in all the coast of Java. The difference lies in

the aesthetic element of motif or ornament. It describes the diversity both in line, form, color, and composition. Each motif expresses the different style each other. Based on data from the National Crafts Council of Indramayu Regency, there are about 143 motifs of *batik* in Indramayu. A number of Indramayu's *batik* (which is often called *Dermayon* motif) was already registered in the Indonesian Ministry of Law and Justice (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007:4).

During this time, people know the type and quality of *Dermayon Batik* through tourism, internet, and books. Their recognition and appreciation limited to the information about

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the type and motif only for consumption, but they do not understand the process and the cultural background of the people who created it. This is due to the writing of the books about *batik*, or result of the study which only examines *arti-facts* (craft), do not touch the *socio-fact* aspects (social behavior) and *menti-fact* (idea) creator. In other words, the writing does not use cultural approach that discuss *batik* comprehensively, both artifacts and cultural life of the craftsmen community.

The craftsmen of *batik* consist of workers, both men and women, in a group or family. Women are more dominant in processing to create *batik*, especially the technique to make handmade *batik* (traditional). From its development, *Dermayon Batik* has 200-300 years old been studied and developed by the women (wives of fishermen), who introduced by early Chinese traders in the northern coastal area (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

Women are as crafts product maker who have important role in processing to create *batik*, especially in Indramayu. Doing *batik* for women is a job that requires patience and carefulness. That activities should be done carefully to get the points, lines, shapes, and soft motifs. The softness motif of *batik* is related to the attitudes, emotional, and psychomotor character of the creators. *Batik's* painter¹ are required to have a feminine (smooth and soft), because it is a demand to make *batik*.

Technically and specifically, many signs can be proven in *batik* themes that tend to impress the feminine (which is generally owned by women), such as motif of flower (flowers) and vegetation. This term clarifies the relationship between women and motif of *batik* they made; in other word, the theme of motif is an expression and women's way of life to the environment of their geo-culture. The signs of the complexity of motif, the regulated structure forms and stereotyping, the composition of shapes and colors as well

are visual signs which should be investigated well.

Beside the women, doing *batik* work is done by men, they should prepare *mori*, dye the fabric-painted with the wax (wax for *batik*) with chemical dye base material for *batik*, and clean the wax from the cloth after processing of dyeing. Men does not need refinement and patience in doing *batik*, because they did it faster and more powerful.

Research and writing about Indramayu's *batik* have done well before, but to study and understand the life of the craftsmen of *batik*, especially women have not been done. Therefore, this research is to understand: (1) the women's expression through the study of aesthetics and the meaning of motif of *Dermayon batik*; and (2) the meaning of motif of *Dermayon batik* through the study of semiotics.

This paper is a first step of analysis study to the *arti-facts* (objects) of *batik* craft, that is aesthetic analysis with semiotic interpretive method. This research is expected to have an analytical description to the art of *batik* craft and offers a contribution of theoretical discipline of Aesthetic Craft and Nusantara's Ornament.

This analysis focused on the motif of *batik* made by craftswomen in Paoman Village of Indramayu Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia. In analyzing the motif need a comprehensive research, because it is not only to describe the visual structure of motif, but also explore the value and meaning of cultural expression of women as *batik* craftswomen. Understanding the meanings expressed through line, color, and motif of *Dermayon Batik*, it is examined from the perspective of aesthetics and the construction of femininity. The following problem will be answered through the culture research: "How the aesthetic value and motif meaning of *Dermayon Batik* as women's expression with interpretive semiotic approach?"

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study analyzes the culture of artifacts or objects "handmade *batik*". Handmade *batik* is as traditional craft made by societies, especially Paoman Villager in Indramayu,

¹The term of "*batik's* painter" is used because the *mori* cloth painted with lines, dots, and shapes by writing *canting* containing/wax. *Canting* is made of copper, it is immersed in the liquid wax (while heated on a griddle), then *canting* is blew in its hole, and gently stroked the fabric. This process is done repeatedly.

West Java, Indonesia which is not just isolated object. Craft of *batik* is an integral part of the cultural system, so that the meaning contained in the signs of the artifact is systemic and contextual, with the implicit meaning of culture as a whole. It will be the object of thought or discursive subject in this study, which is based on the sign as the main concept.

The sign as a concept has a long history, it began in the writings of Ancient Greece (Masinambow *et al.*, 2001:2). Those who are now influential are the experts who wrote in the 19th century, and their influence was in the 20th century. The sign which is now developed become part of the knowledge (science), namely semiotics and semiology. The term of "semiology" is an European tradition started by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), while "semiotics" is as an American tradition started by Charles Peirce (1839-1914). Both figures got a good response, which is then continued by Louis Hjelmslev (1899-1965) as the successor to Ferdinand de Saussure. While Charles Peirce is as successor to Charles Morris (1901-1979). There are also another figures who developed this semiotic theory, they are Roland Barthers (1915-1980) and Umberto Eco (1932).

Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce have the differences in the orientation of thinking. Ferdinand de Saussure develops his thought in linguistic, whereas Charles Peirce in philosophy. The nature and essence of the sign in relation to the whole of reality, as an epistemological problem, is the focus of Charles Peirce thought. He develop his thought to the relationship of each sign as forming elements of meaning (cited in Piliang, 2003).

The following principles are the thought of Ferdinand de Saussure: (1) *structural principle*, it considers the relations of sign as structural relations, the sign as a unity; (2) *the principle of unity*, a sign can not be separated between the concrete markers and abstract signifier; (3) *conventional principle*, it considers structural relations between markers and signifier depend on to the social agreement or convention; (4) *synchronic principle*, it considers the study of sign as the permanent system in a constant time, constant

or do not change or synchronic study, and focus on the structural relationships; (5) *the principle of representation*, the sign represents a reality as a reference or its references; and (6) *the principle of continuity*, socially, the sign system and its function in relation of continuity of time refers to the system or structure that never changes, it is evolutionary because of the social change itself (cited in Piliang, 2003:47-49).

Semiotics has developed by its function in various of science, either as a model or paradigm. In the art and design, semiotics used as a paradigm in reading or interpreting, and creating of the work. Yasraf Amir Piliang suggests his reason clearly about the use of semiotics in design, as follows:

[...] there is a tendency in the design discourse to see objects of design as language phenomenon, in which there is a sign, the message, the rule (code which stir), and people involved as a language subject: audience, reader, and user (Piliang, 2003:255).

Based on that opinion, it is clear that the work of art, craft, and design considered as research object that has function, technology, production, economy, and also the message (information) of communication. It means that the work of art has become a medium of communication. Image or motif of *batik* is as design work as well. Motif of traditional *batik* (handmade *batik*) created by society as a group of traditional culture in an evolutionary region.

The ideas presented on various motifs of *batik*, for each motif has a name or theme. Each theme has subject matter as a reflection of society to the social life, the natural environment, and their transcendent. Furthermore, when examining the meaning of the signs of this motif will be gained the values of the philosophical life. The idea system of traditional society in creating *batik* craft based of their view of the world and their environment.² Symbolic information kept in the ornamental motif with different styles of each regions and ethnic.

²See, for further information, S.P. Gustami (2007). This book analytically expressed about the basic ideas of creation as synchronic and diachronic since the old Indonesia era to a new civilization.

Many researchers interpret the signs on this motif as a source of information which studied synchronic and diachronic. In this case, it will analyze visual signs in the visual and aesthetic motif of *Dermayon Batik* (*batik* style of Indramayu), in which the work of craftswomen in Paoman Village of Indramayu Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia. Therefore, theoretical foundation is necessary as ethical framework related to the gender (female).

The concept of femininity (meek) and masculinity (strong, powerful) is a reflection of the character of human being grew from their environment. Someone who has more feminity-called "feminine", instead someone who has masculinity-called "masculine". The differences of character between the feminine and masculine effect on the results of their work. Culturally, if she is a feminine, she will get the soft work as their ability. Instead, masculine will get the hard work. Relating to the industrial world, it devides the work based on the character in which the female will give soft work, while male for powerful work.

The implication seemed to the specialization of their place to work. Hard nuance place is not suitable for the feminine and the soft one is not suitable for the gentle. In this case, the potential for someone is to be ignored when the job is not suitable of their character (biological). In fact, in the global era and the current economic, the job option is no longer possible to choose based on this understanding, and it would be more appropriately selected according to the potential of the individual, either a woman or a man.

Basically, the problem caused by the issue of gender equality is not just a matter of half people in different biological, but it is a matter of the whole people. The problem is that half of them (men) who do not care about gender and the other half (women) have social attributes that many of them do not support in achieving gender equality. Though many people oppose it, without any efforts to look at gender equality from the women's perspective, there is the hidden subordination for the women, on the other way, stereotypical imagery distinguishes person's ability to act

based on biological differences.

This assumption can be seen from the results of research on women's work which always has the same conclusion, as expressed by Aida Vitayala S. Hubeis, that women work longer than men (from sunrise to the sunset); women contribute one-third of the world's income, but they only sampled one-tenth of world income, because women are paid less for the same work as men (Hubeis, 2010:113).

The presence of crafts, especially women do this *batik*, related to their daily needs. The products are needed by society continuously, so that making *batik* becomes a tradition. Java is a fact of the existence of craft in Indonesia, it has three important matters: mythology, ritual, and symbol (Gustami, 2007:303). They are integrated to reflect spirit, the soul, and the soul of the nation's culture, imply the achievement of aesthetic quality of Indonesian's crafts by its history. It shows that the traditional of Indonesian art has a high quality, monumental, and a historical; and the ability of past craftsmen in creating the art as well.

Harmony is idealism of life's awareness to keep the balance of micro-and macro-cosmos, when intimate human relationships, social environment, and the universe are maintained well. The growing of life's awareness in creating the art of craft have the influences from the outside through the process Hinduization, Islamization, and Westernization that the civilization as a unit of social and culture has a horizon that never been constant (Lombard, 1998; and Gustami, 2007).

Creating the art of craft begins from the fulfillment of life needs, urgent needs, such as house, cloth and body make up, ritual, home furnishings, tools, food processing, transportations, communication, organization, etc. Among the many necessities of life, the need of fabric (cloth) is very important to cover the body. Fabrics made and developed by communities in every region (ethnic) with relatively different character. Each region has its own uniqueness. The art of *batik* craft, which becomes the pride of Indonesian people, is as one of the nation's identity. It is reflected symbols and meanings of the creators and supporters of community life,

including the reflection of the belief system, livelihood, socio-cultural life, harmonizing the nature, and the soul of the characteristics of its creators.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

About the Description of Dermayon Batik. *Dermayon* (Indramayu style) motif is dynamic, rhythmic, and eclectic. The dynamic will appear on the line leading to all directions. Motif's lines is not patterned by certain rules, so it becomes memorable expressive. The rhythmic is an impression of cadence or the repeating harmony of the lines snaking, twisting, and another to fill the void. Its impression is also expressed through the representation of curved shapes and pointed, which is complemented by solid and regular dots.

Describing motif of *batik* has references of shape of nature or cited object, although it has been in a process of styling (deformation, stylization) in a flat ornamental techniques. The shape of nature as a reference of styling ornamental is flora (flowers, plants, trees, leaves) and fauna (birds, poultry). The shape of object is also referred, such as *Guilder* (Dutch colonial currency), the carriage, nets, and boats. There are also several motifs based on historical themed or past events that are also packaged in the ornamental motif, such as war and negotiations.

The other themes are natural events, wind, waves, and so on. Various themes (subject matter) and ornamental mark on this motif closely related to the experiences and environment of people's life in Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia. Description of this motif can be regarded as expressions of societies' culture and deep visual reflection on their life. The expression of appearance which is expressed proceeds from time to time as an expression of social (not individual).

Based on the reports of Dekranasdakab (*Dewan Kerajinan Nasional Daerah Kabupaten* or National Crafts Council for Regional) Indramayu in 2007, there were 143 (one hundred and forty-three) motifs that has been registered at the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights to obtain a copyright. Those are 50 motifs which have received the

new certificate. Indramayu has 80 business unit of *batik* producers, which scattered in Paoman, Penganjang, Canal, and Pagirikan villages. Among the four centers of *batik* village, only Paoman is more widely known (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

About Analysis the Motif Meaning of Dermayon Batik. The analysis of the construction of femininity in the motif of *Dermayon Batik* (*batik* style of Indramayu) is a preliminary study to understand the end-product or the work of women in making *batik* cloth in Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia. The analyzed data of *batik* refers to the report of Dekranasdakab (*Dewan Kerajinan Nasional Daerah Kabupaten* or National Crafts Council for Regional) Indramayu in 2007. The other references is a form of literature of field research from various relevant sources.

The women's study not only examine the product of their behavior, but also understand the behavior of their social life, both in their institutional environment of *batik* business or in the environment of their domestic life as a housewife. The people have appreciated the *batik* craft as a valuable product. It has now become a national product of the Indonesian identity in the global arena. UNESCO (United Nations for Education, Social, and Cultural Organization) has also recognized the *batik* as an Indonesian products. It means, the world recognizes the copyright of *batik* as our nation's wealth.

Pride and greatness of *batik* in the context of global and national culture only oriented to the products, behind the love of *batik* products which have high economic and cultural value are actually the women who has produced it. The appointment of national *batik* to the international scene will certainly add value to the progress (political economy) against economic actors (marketing). The actors are entrepreneurs, exporters, traders, brokers, or broker of *batik* products. Government is also as regulators of economic and industry motivator, and a strong supporter in developing this *batik*.

But, this progress does not contribute directly to the progress and welfare of producer, those are the women who have been their own craftswomen. *Batik* has been

Table 1:
Motifs of *Batik* with Local Names in Indramayu's Culture

Motif I	Motif II	Motif III	Motif IV
<i>Kembang Suket</i> (Grass Flower)	<i>Merak Berunding</i> (Peacock Confers)	<i>Sawat Pentil Kusta</i> (Exchanges Nipple Leprosy)	<i>Puyong</i> (<i>Puyong</i>)
<i>Kembang Pete</i> (<i>Pete</i> Flower)	<i>Manuk Drawes</i> (<i>Drawes</i> Bird)	<i>Obar-abir</i> (Burnt Offerings)	<i>Sawat Riweh</i> (Exchanges Disorderly)
<i>Manuk Bengkuk</i> (Crooked Bird)	<i>Merak Ngibing</i> (Peacock Dances)	<i>Sawat Biskuit</i> (Conveyor Biscuits)	<i>Srikit</i> (<i>Srikit</i>)
<i>Manuk Lokcan</i> (<i>Lokcan</i> Bird)	<i>Pacar Cina</i> (Chinese Fiancee)	<i>Rama</i> (Father)	<i>Sisik</i> (Fish Scales)
<i>Kereta Kencana</i> (Gold Train)	<i>Perang Teja</i> (<i>Teja's</i> War)	<i>Rajeg Wesi</i> (Iron Fence)	<i>Jae Srempang Kandang</i> (Ginger Coils the Stall)
<i>Swastika/Sidomukti</i> (Dark Symmetrical Pattern)	<i>Sejuring</i> (<i>Sejuring</i>)	<i>Teluki</i> (Gulf)	<i>Sunggingan Manuk</i> (Painting's Bird)
<i>Kembang Kol</i> (Cautiflower)	<i>Kembang Betah</i> (Like Flower)	<i>Kembang Gunda</i> (Marble Flower)	<i>Jati Rombeng</i> (Tattered Teak Leaf)
<i>Sawat Penganten</i> (Slingweds)	<i>Iwak Petek</i> (<i>Petek</i> Fish)	<i>Ganggeng</i> (Algae)	<i>Kawung</i> (Sugar Palm Leaf)
<i>Tiga Negeri</i> (Three Countries)	<i>Kapal Kandas</i> (Ship Ran Aground)	<i>Daun Liris</i> (Decorated Parallel Lines)	<i>Jae Srerempang</i> (Bunch Ginger)
<i>Banji Tepak</i> (Latticework Niches)	<i>Taratai</i> (Lotus)	<i>Sawat Riwog</i> (<i>Riwog</i> Exchanges)	<i>Bokor Semar</i> (<i>Semar's</i> Copper)
<i>Kembang Kapas</i> (Cotton Flower)	<i>Golden</i> (Golden)	<i>Buketan</i> (Bouquet)	<i>Banji</i> (Lattice Work)
<i>Maskotan</i> (Mascot)	<i>Kliwed</i> (Hanger)	<i>Lengkong</i> (Valley)	<i>Perang Soder</i> (War of Shawl)
<i>Kembang Karang</i> (Coral Flower)	<i>Batik Urang Platok</i> (<i>Batik of</i> Platok Shrimp)	<i>Bulu Merak</i> (Peacock Feather)	<i>Juana</i> (<i>Juana</i>)
<i>Jeruk Muin</i> (<i>Muin's</i> Citrus)	<i>Jendral Pesta</i> (General's Party)	<i>Matahari</i> (Sun)	<i>Tangga Istana</i> (Palace Ladder)
<i>Kayu Gorda</i> (Wood of <i>Gorda</i>)	<i>Kembang Pacing</i> (<i>Pacing's</i> Flower)	<i>Hujan Gerimis</i> (Drizzle)	<i>Cemara</i> (Casuarina Tree)
<i>Kembang Tanjung</i> (Fragrant Flower)	<i>Melati Segagang</i> (A Stem of Jasmine)	<i>Manuk Ling-Ling</i> (<i>Ling-Ling</i> Bird)	<i>Sawat Gunting</i> (Scissors)
<i>Ganggeng Mina</i> (<i>Mina's</i> Algae)	<i>Kembang Pare</i> (Bitter Melon Flower)	<i>Perang Teja</i> (War of <i>Teja</i>)	<i>Tapak Kebo</i> (Sole of Buffalo Foot)
<i>Kembang Jekeng</i> (<i>Jekeng's</i> Flower)	<i>Kerang-kerangan</i> (Like Cockle Shells)	<i>Sekar Niem</i> (<i>Niem</i> Flower)	<i>Kacapiring</i> (Gardenia)
<i>Sasirangan</i> (Cross-Cruciferous)	<i>Liris Sente</i> (Decorated Parallel Lines)	<i>Srempang Bambu</i> (Bamboo Enthusiastic)	<i>Gelatik Mas</i> (Golden Java Finch)
<i>Bunga Setaman</i> (Flowers in the Park)	<i>Saangan</i> (Illusion)	<i>Bulu Ayam</i> (Quill)	<i>Gentong Kosong</i> (Blank Earthenware Bowl)
<i>Liong</i> (Dragon)	<i>Kapal Karem</i> (Shipwreck)	<i>Siled</i> (Silhouette)	<i>Sawat Layangan</i> (Kites)
<i>Banji Kiok</i> (<i>Kiok</i> Latticework)	<i>Banji Kunci Penyru</i> (Latticework of Turtle Key)	<i>Angin-angin Rante</i> (Chain Winds)	<i>Kembang Teratai</i> (Lotus Flower)
<i>Merak Kipas</i> (Fan's Peacock)	<i>Banji Gulden</i> (Latticework of <i>Gulden</i>)	<i>Burung Sriti Kecil</i> (<i>Sriti's</i> Small Bird)	<i>Kawung Sogok</i> (Sugar Palm Leaf Stabs)
<i>Burung Funiks</i> (<i>Funiks</i> Bird)	<i>Banji Tulen</i> (Pure Latticework)	<i>Tambal Sewu Dahlia</i> (<i>Dahlia's</i> Thousand Patch-work)	<i>Sawat Tapak Kebo</i> (Sole of Buffalo Foot's Exchange)
<i>Karang Anggrek</i> (Coral Reef of Orchid)	<i>Blenggi Gapura</i> (<i>Blenggi's</i> Gate)	<i>Blorong</i> (Black and White Striped)	<i>Kentang</i> (Potato)
<i>Karang Laut Berantai</i> (Sea Coral Chains)	<i>Srikit Mendung</i> (Cloudy <i>Srikit</i>)	<i>Kembang Asem</i> (Tamarind Flower)	<i>Buketan Kombinasi</i> (Combined Bouquet)

Motif I	Motif II	Motif III	Motif IV
<i>Kapal Sanggat</i> (Run Aground Boat)	<i>Kembang Duwet</i> (Duwet Flower)	<i>Pintu Raja</i> (Gate of King)	<i>Ganggang Pentil</i> (Valve Algae)
<i>Banji Buket</i> (Bouquet Latticework)	<i>Pucuk Danas</i> (Pineapple Sprout)	<i>Tumpal Pasung</i> (Muzzle <i>Tumpal</i>)	<i>Tumpal Mainang</i> (Mother <i>Tumpal</i>)
<i>Tumpal Pasung Gerigi</i> (<i>Tumpal</i> of Muzzle Serration)	<i>Tumpal Pucuk</i> (Sprout <i>Tumpal</i>)	<i>Tumpal Dlorong</i> (<i>Tumpal Dlorong</i>)	<i>Banji Kunci Polos</i> (Plain Key Latticework)
<i>Puyong Ukel</i> (Dane <i>Puyong</i>)	<i>Tapak Dara</i> (Virgin Site)	-	-

Source: Dekranasdakab Indramayu (2007). This book explores the background of Indramayu's *batik*, process of *batik*, and reproduction drawings of *batik* motifs, including a caption (not the motif analysis). Data meaning and analysis are needed to enhance the book.

commodified by capitalist ideology. The women are just laborers or artisans, they are not artists or creator, the craftwomen are workers instructed by his employer to make *batik*. Employer's ideology became dominant to settle the *batik* craftsmen. Ideology provides the rules and moral demand with the secular religion is understood as the unity of faith between the world's conception and norms related actions (Costin, 1996). The authority class, who act as *batik* entrepreneurs, became the dominant. This was disclosed by social and economic scientists that the dominant ideas in society is the idea of the authority class (cf Weber, 1976; Hall, 1980; and Costin, 1996).

It was before the independence of Indonesia (1945), the *batik* crafts women is as the women who had done the *batik* to fill their spare time, while waiting for their husband return to sea in more than three weeks. The activities of doing *batik* is as domestic work, and its production also to full fill their daily clothing. The knowledge of doing *batik* is also obtained when the northern coast of Indramayu's women introduce with the settlers or traders from China. Since it happened acculturation, knowledge exchange, and one of them learned the art of *batik* influence by the women as wives of fishermen in Indramayu.

The image expression of *batik* made by women in Indramayu express geo-culture environmental themes. Its drafting is florals (flower), birds, boats, trees, and important events in their life. The genres of coastal *batik* is different from the palace or castle genre. Genre of motif palace has theme of palace

symbols, flowers, objects palace, machete, which is a reflection of the hegemony of the king/*sultan* as the ideology of *batik*. Coastal *batik* describes fundamental differences, because the ideology of authority is dominant. Coastal *batik* expresses objects, plants, animals, and identical events to the local environment. There is no sign of kingdom hegemony (Dwiyanto *et al.*, 1997).

Coastal *batik*, especially in Indramayu, has developed in terms of technique and aesthetics. Its decorative motif is more varied than motif of palace *batik*. There is the women's freedom in creating this motif. Nowadays, the heir of Indramayu *batik* is the women who also doing *batik* every day. But, such freedom has changed, because their work is governed by the rules of the employer. *Batik* evolve but the compensation received by the craftswomen is not balanced by the gain of the entrepreneur or the government. Eventhough *batik* has been widespread, the craftswomen had no significant change in welfare aspects (economic).

If it observed from day to day, the craftswomen come to the employer's business. They get together in one room. Take a cloth, then prepare *batik* equipment, and sat facing the process of writing or drawing on cloth with wax as image patterns that have been ordered by the employer. In this group, there is no competition. There is no competition in their group. They do their own work hard. Writing or drawing on *batik* cloth with wax is not easy difficult, and requires soft hand in doing it.

In general, gender (sex) of the women



Picture 1:
The Woman is Doing *Batik*, the Process of Drawing Motif by Using *Canting*.

had smooth and soft psychomotor compared with men. Psychomotor character can be categorized as feminine. Feminine can also be owned by male gender. *Batik* culture in the beginning has been constructed by the female gender as craftswomen, especially they work “write with *canting*”.³

Sign “attitude sitting on a small stool/short” (traditional attitudes), while holding the cloth and write *canting* on the images (pictures 1 and 2) showed indications of diligent work. Media used is *canting*. Again, *canting* is dipped in hot wax, then written on the white cloth. This process needs a patience. *Canting* is different with a brush or instant painting tools. *Canting* should always be able to store heat, so that the wax remains in a liquid. Therefore, *canting* made of copper metal (Wulandari, 2011).

A group of women, who are doing *batik* in picture 1, is a feminist construction in cooperating. The meaning of togetherness seems to their work of doing *batik*. Among the craftswomen, they was not familiar with the work of the competition. They work from morning to evening with a target of completing the task of employer-order consumers

³*Canting* is small dipper used to apply wax in *batik* process. See, for further information, John M. Echols & Hassan Shadily (2003:104).



Picture 2:
A Woman is Doing *Batik*, the Process of Drawing Motif by Using *Canting*.

(Wulandari, 2011).

There is a cultural change at this time, the female constructed by hegemony of entrepreneurs. Freedom only women-owned when out of the room. Target piece of *batik* cloth is economic targets, it is not the need of expression in their spare time, as shown in picture 3. Understanding craftswomen’s lives needs an observation technique of participation in a relatively long time. Interpretation, which was developed in the analysis also, needs to be combined with ethnographic semiotics (Sektiadi, 2006). Some pictures as preliminary data that will be

developed in the implementation by empirical field study is to gain a deeper inductive data.

Men also play a role in the process of *batik*, but it is not their work who determines the quality of expression lines, shapes, dots, and *barik-barik* or grain like in wood, as shown in picture 4. The men's work is to help and support the process of dyeing and drying; and this takes in the process of doing *batik* in the company (business unit groups). Gender division of labor in the production of the craft seems to have been done long ago. This research has been carried out by Murdock & Provost in 1973 that the male dominate the jobs of metal, wood, stone, bone, horn, and nets; while women work in the field of mats, weaving, pottery, spinning, and *batik* (cited in Costin, 1996:122). Sexual division of labor is rooted in symbolic association between women and nature, and men with culture.⁴

The process of making handmade *batik* begins by processing mori, patterning fabric, giving wax (by using *canting*), dyeing, and drying. Craftsmen do the handmade *batik* step by step using certain procedure. The process of wax or making motif is done by women. Traditionally, doing handmade *batik* has been applied in gender roles of women in the process of doing *batik* that requires subtlety, complexity, and patience.

Historically, *batik* was introduced to women by immigrants from China. It can be seen of the subject or theme of feminine character image, such as flowers, birds, or other image which women like (Geertz, 1983). *Batik* which

⁴Many expressions of patriarchal cultures which form the gender roles in life. Such as in research report on craft and women toward a more balanced study in archeology by Sektiadi (2006).



Picture 3:
A Craftswoman is Drawing a Half of Cloth to Fill the Motif



Picture 4:
Dyeing and Drying, and Other Hard Work is Done by Men

is made by women is also for their clothing consumption. Floral motif is illustrated stereotypically and uses previous pattern. They just copy and use the pattern tradition of ornament of *Dermayon Batik* (*batik* style of Indramayu).

The interesting one of handmade *batik* is the work remains manual and it does not use the machine pattern. Representation of the image manually and auratic maintained

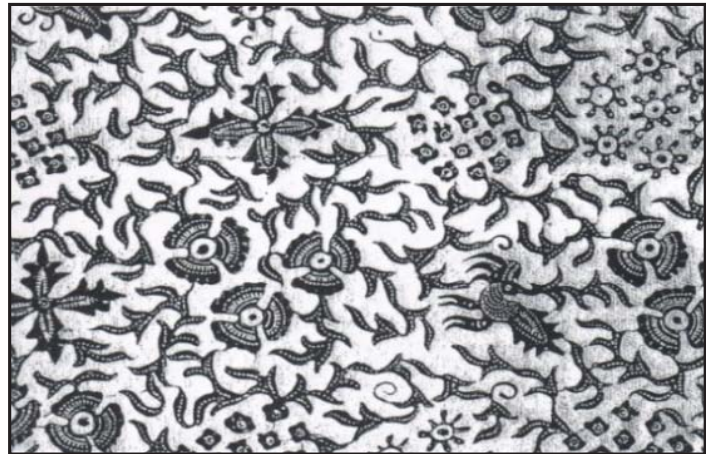
in such a *batik* cloth. A hand is the idea of craftsment in writing lines, shapes, and point. Line style with a manual pull feminine character (of unknown women) seem to weave in all directions with a dynamic rhythm. Authentic lines character are still clearly seen in motifs of *Dermayon Batik*. See the following example of reproduction motif, pictures 5 to 8.

Based on visual observations at the two pictures (5 and 6), there are psychological signs (emotion, feeling, ego, and superego) of women in Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia who love the beauty of the flower. This is an index of the feminine, because flower is identically as the female. Culturally, it does not only female love flower, men also love it.

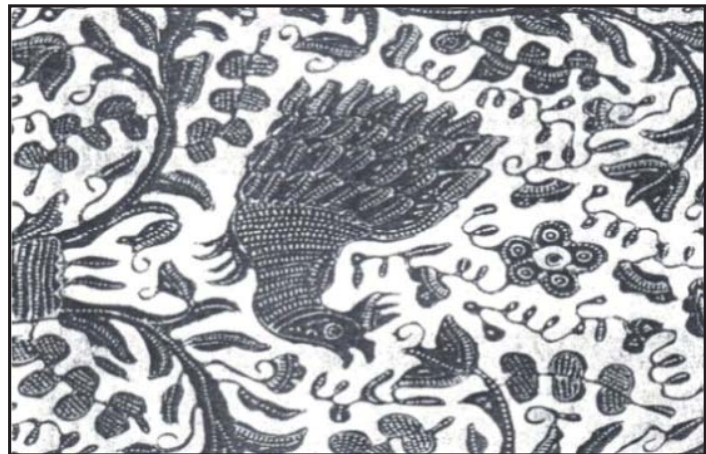
Femininity,⁵ in floral motif, signify its softness and beauty. The composition of the solid form fill the whole of fabric. There is repetitions form of stylized leaves, flowers which has a pattern of diagonal. The diagonal composition means motion or dynamics. In a variety of *batik* motives of *Dermayon* (Indramayu style) has many impressive dynamic composition, and hint at a sense of the value of freedom. Generally, coastal *batik* motifs tend to have a dynamic and variation (Dwiyanto *et al.*, 1997; and Wulandari, 2011).

Repetition form in the ornament has been a pattern to get a rhythm. The pattern of lines and shapes use curved lines (twisted). Character of curved and twisted lines are also feminine. Thematically, the expressive flower representation through media of lines, shapes, dots, and color related to the reality of the natural

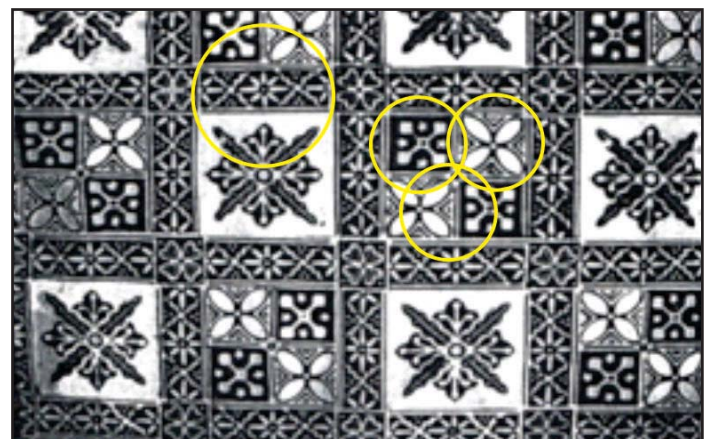
⁵The term of "femininity" means things related to the character-feminine. Feminine interpreted psychosomatic nature or character of a smooth, gentle, graceful, curved, rounded, emotional, expressive, sentimental, ornamental, beautiful, gorgeous, and the like. See, for further information, "Feminist Aesthetics" in *Wikipedia* (2011), available [online] also at: www.google.com [accessed in Bandung, Indonesia: August 17, 2014].



Picture 5:
Motif of Batik "Kembang Pete" (Pete Flower)



Picture 6:
Motif of Batik "Kembang Suket" (Grass Flower)



Picture 7:
Motif of Batik "Kembang Setaman" (Flowers in the Park)

environment (Danesi, 2009). Flowers, such as *kembang pete* (flower of three that produces beans with pungent odor in Java island), *kembang sawat* (flower of shoulder strap), and many more of flowers, are a reality around their daily life (cf Danesi, 2009; and Jackson, 2009).

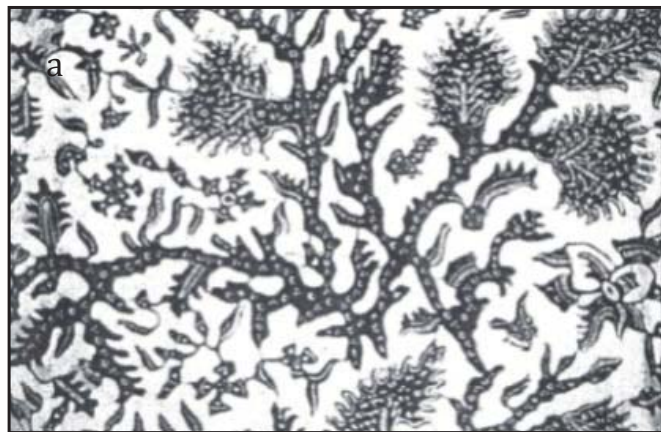
There is a self-awareness in reflecting the world of reality through the expression of these *batik* motifs. The time needed to complete a piece of *batik* cloth is relatively long, and it takes patience. With patience, the women led smoothness of lines and shapes motifs. Feminine character is dominant in the motif (Geertz, 1983; and Dwiyanto *et al.*, 1997).

Motif of “*Kembang Setaman*” (Flowers in the Park) is different with motif of “*Kembang Pete*” (*Pete Flower*), which have disorganized impression in the composition. Motif in the picture 7 (*Kembang Setaman*) shows the differences in the composition settings. There are regularities arranging shapes and repeating geometric pattern. “*Kembang Setaman*” means the beauty collection of flower, as in the flower garden. Femininity of this motif is as evidence of culture of domestic women who like to arrange (flowers), houses, clothes, and organize it into a good sight. Construction of gender in arranging flowers or decorate the garden with various flowers is as a point of interest of women (cf Danesi, 2009; and Jackson, 2009). Culture had made this situations in very long ago, the women work at home, take care of children, house, and everything, so that gardening is also a part of her business. It is also caused by the sense of beauty of women who has higher sense than men (Williams, 1981).

In motif of “*Kembang Setaman*”, it is filled with stylized motifs of leafy four flower with large and small pattern. This motif is laid out in four geometric space. Concepts and constructs value of four, it means the principal direction of the wind, and the relation of life to the vertical and horizontal directions. Vertical



a



b



c

Picture 8:
Motifs of Dermayon Batik

relationship means a relationship with the Almighty (Spiritual and Religious), and the horizontal relationship means a relationship with human beings and nature (social

matters). Rectangular sign means space for the living and the dead. At this motif, there are five variants stylized flower with four leaves (Wulandari, 2011).

Motif of flower is a sign of femininity, which often a symbol of the beauty of movement, body, supple, fragrant, colors, and other visual elements. Flower can also represent a sign of fertility, growth, and new life (which means blooming or growing). Since a long time, women became a symbol of fertility (e.g. Venus of Willendorf). It means, that a human born from the womb of the female (mother). Flower has a meaning of the mother (the woman). Here are some variants flower motifs (flowers) in *Dermayon Batik* (*batik* style of Indramayu), the dynamic and as the aesthetic femininity (cf Dwiyanto *et al.*, 1997; Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007; and Wulandari, 2011).

The third example images of *Dermayon Batik* (*batik* style of Indramayu) motif, in picture 8, basically is not different from the other flower motifs. Cauliflower is a flower from cabbage plants which widely grown and consumed by people in Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia. Stylized cauliflower is raised, and other motifs as a complement. Motif composition is not as dense as "*Kembang Karang*" (Coral Flower) or "*Kembang Pare*" (Bitter Melon Flower). There is a relatively empty space. White space of mory fabric is not filled with dots (*cocohan*). Repetition shape of cauliflower motif is in small flowers around the main motif.

Motif of "*Kembang Pare*" has dense composition. Stylized shapes tend to distort the lines and shapes which writhed to the left and right. Dynamic motion of "*Kembang Pare*" means growth and meaningful life. Impression of movement shape also indicate wind energy as part of nature and life. It is also of "*Kembang Karang*" which inform the women in Indramayu, who familiar with their life of marine and



Picture 9:
Motif of "*Bulu Ayam*" (Cock's Feathers)



Picture 10:
Motif of "*Bulu Merak*" (Peacock's Feathers)



Picture 11:
Motif of "*Manuk Bengkuk*" (Crooked Bird)

fishing. Fishing culture is a culture of Indramayu, because most of the people's livelihood in Indramayu is fisherman. The women (wives of fishermen) do not work as a fisherman, but they do as domestic work in the home and in business unit *batik* as batik craftswomen (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

In addition to floral designs, there is also a bird-themed motif, natural conditions, and natural objects. Here are some examples of the *Dermayon Batik* based on the bird-themed motif, in pictures 9 to 12.

In the motifs of cock and peacock feathers (pictures 9 and 10), there is dark background and light colored motifs. There is the differences with birds motif at pictures 11 and 12 which set in bright background and dark motives. The feathers with curve line and with full point (*isen-isen*) show the density and complexity in a composition. Dynamics of lines and shapes which smooth and soft is very clearly reflected in the motif. Harmonization carefully created between one shape and another shape, although in a different direction of the line, but it expresses the unity (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

The outskirts of fabric is equipped by peacock feather motif with decorative motifs of geometric repetitive. The motif of "*Manuk Bengkuk*" (Crooked Bird) is a wild bird around the forest and often fly up into people's homes. Bird described *bengkuk* or bent or crooked. The sign "bent or crooked" is the expression of feelings of colonial society. Indramayu society bent and had to bend down when faced invaders come to take taxes to their territory. Bent also connotes a feeling of fear, respect, or life-colonial oppression. This motives has politically issue, if it was studying by the myth and the past history of the Indramayu people (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

The motif of "*Manuk Ling-Ling*" (*Ling-Ling* Bird), that live in China,



Picture 12:
Motif of *Manuk Ling-Ling* (*Ling-Ling* Bird)



Picture 13:
Motif of *Guilders* Currency



Picture 14:
Motif of "*Kapal Karem*" (Foundering Ship)

illustrates the influence of Chinese culture in the past. Chinese traders who stop in the northern port of Java, especially Indramayu and Cirebon, are people who contributed to the development and acculturation of art and culture of northern coastal Java. Iconographic of *Ling-Ling* is not identity of Indramayu, but the craftswomen interpret and visualize it through the ornamental motif. *Ling Ling* representation creatively and adaptively processed by craftsmen of *batik* and it become a bird motif of *Ling-Ling Dermayon Batik* (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

Another motif which fills the space between the main motif is filled by twist decorating motif (pre-historic tradition). Solid composition and complexity on *batik* motifs is a prominent feature of *Dermayon Batik* motif. The other motif of *Dermayon Batik*, which is not less interesting, is the motive themed objects or historical events, such as *Guilders* motif (the Dutch currency) and motif of “*Kapal Karem*” (Foundering Ship), as showed in pictures 13 and 14.

Guilders motif is the only motif that became an icon of the past when the Dutch colonial era. Dutch currency in earlier times is very valuable and coveted of all people as a medium of exchange and to fulfill their need. Past messages in *Guilders* motif is an expression of those women who are having difficulty to get *Guilders*. So, *batik* is not only a clothing fabric, but also the media of collective communication in the past (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

In the process of the creation of this motif, there are emotional intelligence of craftswomen in processing *Guilders* icon into ornaments (which appears in the composition). Currency is described as round with ornamental motifs of flora. Currency motif put in row intervals with motifs of flowers and birds. The horizontal and vertical patterns become the basis of the arrangement of the composition. Dark background can express the motif of *Guilders* and other companion motif. Redundant of motif is in the form of equality in difference. This can be interpreted philosophically, there is emotion in the community powerlessness pressure on the colonial in past time (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

Besides the beauty of the flowers and birds, people in Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia also create *batik* as a form of expression of their sadness, which is a motif of “*Kapal Karem*” (Foundering Ship). Based on preliminary data, *kapal karem* (foundering ship) is a tragic reality that is often experienced by their husbands as a fishermen. The ship to catch fish sometimes does not come back, because of the weather/storm had drowned it. In the motif of “*Kapal Karem*”, it does not accurately immitate the kind of the ship, but it reform decoratively and imaginatively (Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007).

The idea of making “*Kapal Karem*” motif is expressed in the form of motifs which are big, through big waves with the lines and jagged oval shapes. The decorative sign for people in Indramayu is not merely perform aesthetic motives, but also an image and a message (information) about the reality of their life. The variety of lines and shapes in a very strong dynamic composition reflects the femininity of the craftswomen (*cf* Dwiyanto *et al.*, 1997; Dekranasdakab Indramayu, 2007; Gustami, 2007; Storey, 2007; and Hubeis, 2010).

CONCLUSION ⁶

The motif of *Dermayon Batik* (*batik* style of Indramayu) has an aesthetic character of feminine as an expression of women in Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia. The femininity of *Dermayon Batik* can be observed through the floral and birds motifs with decorative, expressive, illustrative, smooth lines, soft, supple, and dense ornamental composition. The depiction idea of flora and fauna motifs related to the people’s living in Indramayu. There is a great concern and attention to the environment of Indramayu’s society. A passion to their environment is evidenced through her creative attitude in processing stylized form of plants and animals. The depiction of life representation of coastal/fishing is very dominant in influencing the

⁶I would like to thanks to my promoter team: Prof. Dr. Dadang Suganda, Prof. Dr. Setiawan Sabana, and Dr. Reiza D. Dienaputra, who supervised and guided me in writing the Doctoral Dissretation at the Faculty of Humanities UNPAD (Padjadjaran University). However, all contents and interpretations related to this article are rested solely to my academically own responsibility.

formation of *Dermayon Batik* motif.

Creativity and expression of women's socio-political environment has also appeared on several themes (subjects) motif. However, the influence of social and political history only describe the flash of the past, such as motifs of *Guilders Currency*, "*Manuk Bengkuk*" (Bent Bird), "*Tangga Istana*" (the Step of Palace Stairs), "*Perang Teja*" (*Teja War*), etc. If in the past times, many men struggle with their gun against and repel invaders, then women in Indramayu expressed through emotional strength to write *batik* with the themes of "*Perang Teja*" (*Teja War*) and "*Perang Soder*" (Shawl War). The depiction of the mood when the drizzling rain and extrem heat of the sun also become the theme of *batik* motif, for example motifs of "*Hujan Gerimis*" (Drizzling Rain) and "*Matahari*" (Sun).

As the craftswomen of *batik*, Indramayu's women have worked hard and diligently, especially in maintaining the tradition of *Dermayon Batik* motifs. Therefore, *Dermayon Batik* has its own identity, both in terms of dynamic composition, style of dark and light background, and lines and shapes that are not owned by the other regions. *Dermayon Batik* has simple color, but it is rich in lines ornament, shapes, and *barik-barik* (like graining in wood). The aesthetic femininity of *batik* is the collective expression of women in Indramayu who culturally evolve from time to time, through the period of the colonial era to the present, *batik* became national pride.

In the end, is there any alignments all agencies, individuals, and society to the craftswomen who have fought in their life for the sake of the national culture? Motif of *Dermayon Batik* that dynamic, it does not only has meaningful philosophical and historical, but also has decorative illustrative, because it is to express the daily realistic of genre. This is a manifestation of the women's creativity in *batik*, since a long time until now. Inheritance of *batik* in a family is traditional educational values which now begin to threatened its survival. In the planning and implementation of arts education, as creative education, is appropriate based on an understanding of cultural traditions (local) growing in the community.

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Women and Batik in Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia

(Source: www.google.com, 17/8/2014)

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