

# THE ROLE OF ARTISANS IN THE BATIK DESIGNS DEVELOPMENT AS A TRADITIONAL TEXTILE IN INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the background and role of artisans in the development and visualization of batik designs. This background is related to batik design development's cause factors. The role that becomes a research question is the batik artisan involvement in Girilayu, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. That involvement includes perceptions and participation in adding to the batik designs variety as traditional textiles; that attached to people's lives as a complement to traditional ceremonies and clothing needs. Data collection was carried out by literature review, interview, field observation and interactive methods analysis. The result shows that batik artisans' role motivation as an internal factor contributes to the Girilayu's batik designs development in Karanganyar. External factors that affect, among others, culture, the interaction between a community of crafters in the Girilayu region, beliefs, customs, geographical location, and natural conditions that directly affect the visualization of batik motifs. Design in that case acts as a mediator of the society's mindset and reality in producing product visualization. The role of batik artisans in design development is to produce contemporary motifs inspired by social trends and issues. Batik Girilayu's development designs are influenced by batik artisan ability to elaborate on experiences, insights, sensitivity, functional, contextual expertise and natural conditions that directly influence batik motifs visualization.

**Keywords:** artisans, batik, design development, roles, traditional textiles.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

A traditional textile from Indonesia that has an exploratory appeal is batik. The development of batik designs is an interesting topic to research because there are assimilative and acculturative elements. Each batik area has its uniqueness and characteristics, both in decoration and in color. Design development equation lies in process and technique; while the differences are in the pattern, motif, color selection and function of the batik cloth. It adjusts the social life order and the natural environment. It is one indicator of the cultural dynamics of society. Some changes show creativity to adapt to society's condition. For example, Coastal Batik is influenced by social and environmental conditions [1]. Batik artisans in coastal area in which the inhabitants mostly earn from fisheries sector and live in fisheries environment (coastal area) tend to develop marine-themed motifs as well as bright color symmetrical patterns the character of the open society [2]. On the other hand, Inland Batik is influenced by the social and environmental conditions of the kingdom with a series of binding rules and norms. This directs the character

of the Inland Batik motif to symmetrical pattern that reflects regularity, a motif with the theme of agrarian life or peasant society, and the choice of earth color that describes modesty [3]. The selection of earthy colors is in harmony with the social and cultural life of the Surakarta and Yogyakarta palaces which have a slow rhythm [4].

Batik from the island of Java is known to be smooth in the manufacturing process, has varied motifs and beautiful colors. Surakarta is one of the locations for the development of batik among batik centers in Central Java. The two palaces resulting from the division of territories stated in the Giyanti Agreement in 1755 and the Salatiga Agreement in 1757 are the Surakarta Palace and the Mangkunagaran Palace. The two places brought cultural influences, including the batik tradition in their respective territories, which is currently known as the Ex-Karesidenan Surakarta [5]. Mangkunagaran is a small kingdom at the level of a district full of regional autonomy to manage government, economy, politics and culture during rulers KGPA Mangkunagara I to VII. The batik tradition spreads in Klaten (Bayat), Sukoharjo

(Bekonang), Sragen (Kliwonan), Wonogiri (Tirtomoyo) and Karanganyar (Girilayu). The batik designs that come from these four regions are considered contemporary. The resulting of contemporary batik design development is a composition of classic motifs from the palace and new creations of artisans [6]. An interesting area of batik is Girilayu which is located in Karanganyar Regency. Batik Girilayu originated from the batik activities of Astana Mangadeg's and Astana Girilayu's Keymaster. Astana Mangadeg and Astana Girilayu are namely the tombs of KGPAA Mangkunagara I – VIII, their relatives and also families, except for KGPAA Mangkunagara VI in Astana Utara, Nayu, Surakarta. Both of the tombs are located on the highest hill of Girilayu and surrounded by dense forest. KGPAA stands for Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Adipati Arya. The title is equivalent to the prince and has power under the king. Girilayu is currently in the administrative village form and became a part of the Karanganyar District nowadays.

The development of motif designs began in 1960 when the Girilayu people had a desire to produce and wear batik with local cultural characteristics. The motif designs developed are inspired by geographical, social, phenomena, trends and consumer tastes [7]. Examples of the development of contemporary batik motif designs are Manggis and Duren Matesih, which are stylized and adapted from the shapes of Mangosteen and Durian fruits which are the leading horticultural products from Matesih, especially Girilayu. Currently being developed are icons of excellent tourism potencies such as the Tri Dharma Monument and the Tri Dharma Gate located in the tomb complex of King Mangkunagaran I, namely KGPAA Mangkunagara I or Pangeran Sember Nyawa (Prince of the Soul Catcher) because he has ability and strategy to subdue his enemies [8]. The batik design icon of the potential for pilgrimage tourism is a source of inspiration based on consumer demand for batik souvenirs with Girilayu's motifs typically. Batik artisans in Girilayu have a perceptive and participatory role in the batik motif design development. Based on the latest data collected from the batik artisans association in Girilayu, namely the Giri Arum community in 2021, there are 12 groups in Girilayu namely Sido Mukti, Mekar Sari, Giri Wastrapura, Vocational, Kube Kirani, Kube Sekar, Truntum Kuncoro, Wahyu Asih, Mekar Jaya, Puta Kembar, Tresno Dharmo and Wahyu Sari. All those groups contribute to the batik design development in Girilayu with motif exploration, combination and innovation from design into the visualization process. Batik motif designs emerged and experienced development because of community ideas. Batik artisans act as executors of public perceptions.

The form of the artisans' role is to participate by visualizing ideas in the form of batik motif designs. Research, on the artisans' role in batik design development as traditional textiles, aims to complement the results of previous studies that missed the social and economic sphere in its discussion. Those are the main components that support culture sustainability and batik tradition as part of the life and livelihood of the Girilayu communities. The selection of Girilayu as the research location was based on the contradictory character of the region as a batik producing area with contemporary motif designs but was strongly influenced by the classical palace style of batik which tends to be full of rules. The results of previous studies have focused on aesthetic factors in the decorative motifs of batik and have not specifically discussed the artisan involvement in design development by involving aesthetic elements. The role of artisan as the first layer of motif design visualizers uses a consideration of complex factors.

## 2 METHOD

This qualitative research is based on the formulation to reveal problems contextually and to obtain a clear picture of the artisan perceptions and participation in the Batik Girilayu designs development. This qualitative research uses a single case study method to focuses on the target with one characteristic discussion. The intended targets are places and communities that have characteristics role and know the development of Batik Girilayu designs. The study was carried out by observation, literature exploration, and interviews in order to obtain complete data regarding the role of Batik Girilayu designs by the community. The single case study for this research was chosen because the research target in the form of a group of Batik Girilayu artisan has similarities in terms of character pattern and design motifs development. So, that one location was determined namely the batik artisan group or the community [9]. Girilayu was chosen as the research location with consideration of facts and strengthened by data as the largest batik center in Karanganyar, which is still running its business activities from the beginning of Batik Girilayu until now.

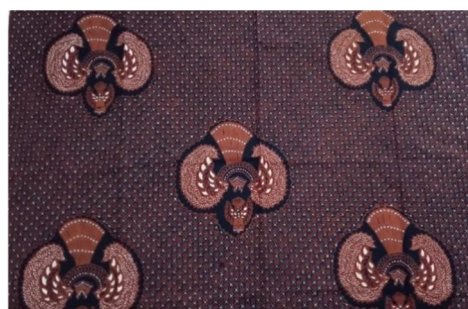
The research subjects are batik craftsman and the public who can provide explanations and understand about the Girilayu Batik design. The community includes community leaders, experts, consumers and academics. The concentration of interview data was obtained from resource persons of batik craftsman in Girilayu who have the main role to be fully involved in the batik process and participate in executing perceptions, ideas, materials, aesthetics and functions.

The interview data were completed from outside informants from academics and cultural arts experts. The research locations were spread across seven Batik Girilayu groups, namely the Sido Mukti (Ngadirejo), Wahyu Sari (Seberan), Truntum Kuncoro (Seberan), Tresno Dharma (Wetan Kali), Mekar Sari (Madang), Mekar Jaya (Plombokan), and Vocational (Wetan Kali). These locations act as a place to observe batik activities related to the design process of visualizing ideas and concepts in Batik Girilayu. In this case, artisan and designers have a reciprocal relationship that affects the Batik Girilayu development designs by criticizing each other and providing input to product visualizing. Artisans and designers complement shortcomings based on each other's perspectives and experiences. Artisans have perspective and experience in product visualization, so they know the suitable process and technique description. Meanwhile, the designer has an imaginative point of view and the final result. The data used for the analysis process comes from the motives of Batik Girilayu products that are related and represent problems surrounding the development of the design, in the form of recorded images or camera documentation. Selection of batik motifs based on recommendations from informants. The image is used as a result of data collection which is then analyzed to obtain conclusions about the aspects that surround it. Data processing uses interactive model analysis techniques, including data collection components, data presentation, drawing conclusions (verification) and reduction [10]. Data reduction was carried out from the time of data collection related to the Batik Girilayu design. At the time the data collection took place, data reduction was carried out by focusing on the background, identifying, and determining the formulation of the problem consisting of the background of the emergence, the role of the community and the socio-cultural linkages surrounding Batik Girilayu design development [11]. Husserl's phenomenological approach is used to find out in-depth the intent of the Girilayu Batik design development activity, especially from the social and economic side [12]. This is reinforced by Mohajan's statement in his writing on qualitative research methods that the phenomenological approach is an effective method to explore social behavior in organizational development. This research focuses on efforts to develop batik designs by artisan groups in Girilayu [13]. In this study, the data presented in the form of results consisted of descriptions and findings in the form of descriptions and processes of batik in Girilayu.

### 3 ANALYSIS

#### 3.1 Background for design development

Batik Girilayu design development initially started with changes and updates in batik styles and motifs in 1980 by several batik artisan, after the construction of Astana Giribangun's tomb for the extended family of the 2<sup>nd</sup> President of Republic of Indonesia HM Soeharto and Mrs. Soeratinah (Mrs. Tien Soeharto). Craftsman made modifications by combining some characteristic features of the prohibition motifs according to the tastes and demands of the time, with priority for pilgrimage [14]. The work resulting from changes and renewal received appreciation and was accepted by the community [15]. Batik figures, entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, experts and artisans contribute to the development of batik designs. Girilayu batik after experiencing development becomes rich with character variations, due to the influence of Pekalongan, Laweyan (Saudagaran) and Madura [16]. Design development inspiration comes from everyday experiences, special events and the tastes of consumers (customers) who are mostly officials through repeated interactions with craftsmen [17]. An example of a batik motif with design development is Truntum Gurda which can be seen in Figure 1 and Truntum Sawunggaling high can be seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 1** The Truntum Gurda motif batik cloth, included in the category of developing classic motif designs by the Girilayu Batik craftsman, Mrs. Maryati, with natural dye of Soga tree wood with the Latin name *Peltophorum Pterocarpum*

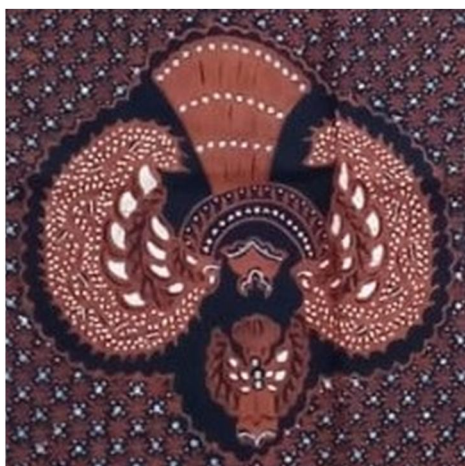


**Figure 2** Batik fabric with Truntum Sawunggaling motif by a Batik Girilayu craftsman, Mrs. Sri Wahyuni, included in the category of classic motif design development

Sawunggaling is a folk legend of the East Java region. The influence of East Java on the development of Batik Girilayu designs comes from the tastes of batik consumers from the Surabaya area. Sawunggaling for the Javanese is another representation of Garuda which means heroism [18]. The Truntum Gurda batik motif is a combination of classic Truntum batik motifs with Gurda ornaments. The classic Truntum motif consists of geometric ornaments as a result of the stylization of the stars scattered in the sky, which can be seen in Figure 3. Batik cloth with the Truntum motif is a garment used in the traditional life cycle of Javanese people in Indonesia, namely wedding ceremonies. The Truntum motif batik cloth is used by the parents of the bride and groom. This usage has a philosophical meaning as a prayer for the bride and groom to get along with the joys and sorrows in living a household life, from the origin of the word *tumaruntum* in Javanese to grow a sense of affection [19].



**Figure 3** The classic Truntum Batik motif created by the second consort of Paku Buwono III, Kanjeng Ratu Beruk, inspired by the beauty of the stars in the night sky. The motive is an embodiment of the empress's love and longing for the king who is wandering



**Figure 4** Gurda ornament inspired by the wing shape of the mythological bird character of the Javanese people, Garuda or Garudeya



**Figure 5** The Jatayu ornament on the copper batik canting cap inspired by the Jatayu bird character from the Ramayana story as a symbol of loyalty and knighthood

The Gurda ornament on the Truntum Gurda batik motif is a stylization of the mythological bird wing of the Javanese people, namely Garuda, which can be seen in Figure 4. The Garuda bird for the Javanese community is a symbol of strength. The mention of Garuda in several ancient manuscripts, namely *Garudeya* and *Garudamukha*, is a character from the Mahabharata story as the vehicle of Lord Vishnu and King Airlangga as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The Garuda symbol is also found on the reliefs of temples scattered in Central and East Java. Garuda is a decorative element and a metaphor for supreme power so that it is used as a symbol of the Republic of Indonesia namely Garuda Pancasila [20]. Kidal Temple, located in Kidal Village, Tumpang District, Malang Regency, is a building decorated with reliefs and a Garuda statue. Relief and the statue of Garuda in Kidal Temple according to the results of the analysis are the forms used to visualize the symbol of the Republic of Indonesia, based on the position of the beak and grip of the cloth that resembles a ribbon that says *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* on the Garuda Pancasila [21]. The character of bird mythology in Javanese society besides Garuda is Jatayu, which is also often described as a batik motif. Jatayu in the Ramayana story is Garuda's nephew. He is a witness to the whereabouts of Sinta's location when Ravana kidnapped her. Jatayu in the Ramayana story is described as a character who sided with goodness [22]. The illustration of ornament with inspiration from Jatayu character can be seen in Figure 5.



**Figure 6** The lush mountain nature at the foot of the Lawu Mountains supports the Girilayu people with their livelihoods as farmers. Vegetable and fruit products in Girilayu supply the food needs of the people of Karanganyar Regency and its surroundings



**Figure 7** The view of the mustard garden that stretches out in Girilayu has inspired the development of batik motif designs

Themes or topics used as inspiration and ideas for the development of Batik Girilayu designs are phenomena of the community and the natural conditions of Girilayu in the form of hills, mountains, forests, agricultural land and plantations. Girilayu in Javanese comes from the word *giri* which means mountain and *layu* which means death or the end. Etymologically, it has a negative connotation with the mountain of death, because the village was chosen by the leader of Mangkunagaran Palace i.e. KGPAA Mangkunagara I as the final resting place for himself, his family and his descendants. However, the meaning of the name Girilayu is inversely proportional to its lush, green and beautiful natural situation. Illustrations of the natural and agricultural atmosphere in Girilayu can be seen in Figures 6 and 7. These thriving crops have inspired the development of Batik Girilayu designs including the Tepas Ros batik motif which comes from the Javanese word *tepas* which means hand fan and *ros* means rose flower, which can be seen in Figure 8. The Tepas Ros batik motif means that a person's good name depends on his actions, like someone who spreads coolness to other people who symbolized by a hand fan, then the goodness

of the fragrant smells in various parts of the place symbolized by the rose flower representing beauty and fragrance. In ancient times, according to information from the people of Girilayu, roses were planted in the house yard, because they were used as flowers for grave pilgrimages and were sold to pilgrims. The new rule for grave pilgrims not to bring the sow flowers and dangerous thorns of the rose plant causes the plant to be cleaned from the yard [23].



**Figure 8** The batik motif of Tepas Ros by Girilayu Batik craftsman, Mrs. Dwi Sunarti, which symbolizes a person's fragrant name will be obtained from good and beneficial actions

### 3.2 The role of artisans in the development of Batik Girilayu designs as traditional textiles

Girilayu Batik artisans play a role and influence the development of Batik Girilayu designs. This is evidenced by the emergence of new Batik Girilayu motifs by batik craftsman in Girilayu. The batik business in the area is located in one village area and is divided into 7 groups of craftsman, namely the Sido Mukti in Ngadirejo area, Wahyu Sari in Seberan area, Truntum Kuncoro in Seberan area, Tresna Dharma in Wetan Kali area, Mekar Sari in Madang area, Mekar Jaya in Plombokan area, the Vocational Group in Wetan Kali area belongs to the village government. The data is the result of information and instructions from the Girilayu Village Government, participation of local governments and government agencies through the CSR program in providing additional operational capital, training facilities, business support equipment and appropriate technology [24]. Bank Indonesia as the official bank of the Indonesian government is the agency that provides capital support and cooperation through programs on a national and international scale. The support of the Bank Indonesia program is in line with the activities of batik crafters in design development through collaboration between batik artisans and Indonesian fashion designers. Community and batik artisans are motivated to develop designs to show their identity and bring out the distinctive features of Batik Girilayu which have differences in terms of decorative details. These characteristics are

a description of the geographical atmosphere, historical heritage and economic potential that exists in Girilayu. Batik is for Girilayu communities the foundation of life. The life that is meant by the Girilayu community is to live spiritually as a means of contemplation, become an education media form, and be economically able to improve welfare, even though it is not a primary object needed daily [25].



**Figure 9** The new batik creations are the result of the development of designs by Batik Girilayu craftsman, Ms. Reni Supentangin, featuring butterfly motifs with soft color nuances, portraying a subtle and cheerful female character

#### 4 DISCUSSION

The development work of the Girilayu Batik motif design is visualized in various forms of clothing designed by designers Tuty Adib and Djongko Raharjo. The works of the craftsman and the designs of designers Tuty Adib and Djongko Raharjo can be seen in Figures 9-11 [25]. The collaborative work was presented in an exhibition and fashion show entitled *Pesona Batik Girilayu* which took place on November 20, 2020 at Solia Zigna Hotel, Kampung Batik Laweyan, Surakarta. At the exhibition, batik products by batik craftsman from Girilayu were shown which were collaborated into fashion designs for women who wear hijab and a market for young women with an age range of 20-40 years. The event was also designed as a socialization for the public to be proud wearing clothes that made by Indonesian traditional fabric craftsman i.e. batik. Illustration of batik wearing as everyday clothes can be seen in Figures 12-14. Facilitation support from the government stimulates Batik Girilayu craftsmen to be more active and motivated to make new designs by adjusting market trends and demands [26].



**Figure 10** The designer and owner of the BILQIS Muslimah Fashion House, Ibu Tuty Adib, along with the models wearing the collaborative designs of batik fabrics by Batik Girilayu craftsman, Ms. Reni Suprihatin



**Figure 11** The famous Indonesian fashion designer from Solo (Surakarta), Mr. Djongko Raharjo, together with the models wearing his designs using batik cloth by Batik Girilayu craftsman Mrs. Yuliasih



**Figure 12** The use of Batik Girilayu cloth for daily clothing for men consists of a headband, batik shirt and batik sarong



**Figure 13** The use of Batik Girilayu cloth for daily clothing for women consists of batik kebaya and cloth with natural dyes from Secang wood extract



**Figure 14** Fashionable batik clothing without cutting the fabric with a wrap and drapery system even though wearing classic motifs that are characteristic of Batik Girilayu

Basic knowledge of batik and carefulness in reading opportunities and trends are the capital for batik crafters to work. Indirectly, they have applied the aspects that must be considered in making textile designs, namely aesthetic functions, materials, fashion trends, consumer tastes and marketing. This can be an indicator of the efforts and activities of the Batik Girilayu artisans towards the goals and contributions of the development of batik designs as traditional textiles which are described in tabular form (can be seen in Table 1).

Table 1 is a summary of the roles and efforts of Batik Girilayu artisans who are supported by the community consisting of figures, government, consumers, and resellers, forming a support system and a special network in the development of Batik Girilayu designs. Braiding boils down to artisan as the main motor who carries out design development [27]. The role of a figure includes mentoring or as an advisory body. They consist of senior batik artisans belonging to the maestro category who are worthy of providing direction and insight into the traditions in the Girilayu region. The analysis description aspect explains that the function of aesthetics, materials, fashion trends, consumer tastes and marketing based on theories that emphasize internal and external aspects of the textile design development [28].

The traditional knowledge possessed by future generations comes from these maestro figures. An example of their role is to provide information about the name of motive, function, meaning and procedure for its use in every traditional celebration such as marriage, death and cleaning the village. The government's role, consumers and resellers are to encouraging the artisans to be able to fulfill orders according to the tastes or desires of the order. Batik Girilayu design is diverse as a positive impact on various consumer orders or desires.

**Table 1** The role and efforts of Girilayu Batik craftsmen in the development of batik designs as traditional textiles

No.	Aspect reviewers	Changes in conditions and situations as a result of the development of batik designs by craftsmen	
		Before	After
1.	Function	As clothing	As clothing, complementary materials, complementary items for daily needs and souvenirs
2.	Aesthetics	Mangkunagaran Batik classic motifs and colors or Surakarta's style	Motifs and colors are a combination of Pesisiran Batik (Pekalongan) and East Java batik, especially Sidoarjo and Madura
3.	Material	2 <sup>nd</sup> quality cotton fabric and natural dyes	1 <sup>st</sup> quality cotton fabric, silk fabrics, pineapple fiber fabrics, banana fiber fabrics as well as a combination of natural and synthetic dyes
4.	Fashion trends	Classic batik patterns and motifs	Patterns and motifs conform to fashion trends directed by the Fashion Designers Association and suit consumer tastes
5.	Consumer tastes	For the upper middle class and the majority used by adults to old age	For the upper to lower class and can be used by ages ranging from children, adolescents, adults and the elderly
6.	Marketing	Officials, batik entrepreneurs, and individuals through direct sales (door to door)	Individuals, companies, designers, batik entrepreneurs, exclusive batik material textile shops, national and international scale exhibitions, imports to the Southeast Asian region, especially Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore as well as for the European region, especially the Netherlands and France, marketing through online shops (using social media and official web)

As the findings are role of the artisans is executor in an embodiment of design based on personal imagination as a result of accumulated experiences, insights, seeing the natural surroundings, phenomena in society and market trends. The efforts of the artisans to accommodate various inputs and wishes of various parties for visualizing batik motifs form their position as a key in the development of batik designs. Girilayu Batik designs are diverse as a positive impact on various consumer orders or desires. Government and designers are the support system that gets the benefits from batik design development. Their relationship is symbiotic [29]. The government gets benefits from the increase in the performance of gross domestic products due to increased sales and community activities, especially in Girilayu. The community and artisans also get benefit from legality and administrative support to strengthen branding as a regional superior product. Designers get material benefits for their design products produced by authentic local resources. This provides a significant advantage in reducing operating costs. Community and artisans also get the benefits of being able to learn to improve the quality performance of designer-class products that usually have high standards and details.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Social and cultural factors in the development of Batik Girilayu designs become the dominant influence on the visualization of new creative motifs. This can be seen through the various elements of ornamentation, decoration and design characters of the work of Batik Girilayu artisans. Girilayu batik artisans have a lineage of Mangkunagaran's Keymaster who have premium quality batik skills. Their ancestors previously carried out batik activities as a means of contemplation and fulfilled requests of court officials for traditional ceremonies and pilgrimages. This influenced the design lines developed by batik artisans in Girilayu.

Cultural conditions are related to the development of Batik Girilayu designs, reflected in the themes and topics that underlie ideas or inspire artisans. This was stated by the majority of speakers consisting of batik artisans in Girilayu. Trees, plants, mountains, hills, forests, nearby objects and daily activities are ideas that continue in the visualization of batik motif designs. Social interactions that are still maintained based on the values and norms of the community have become a phenomenon captured by artisans to become new design motives. The major influence associated with the development of Batik Girilayu designs is the culture of Mangkunagaran Palace. The journey of Batik Girilayu stems from the social and cultural scope of the palace to the scope of society where acculturation occurs which results in new cultural

forms. Social and culture are intertwined in the Batik Girilayu culture which plays a role in the development bridged by the design of the batik motif. A series of ideas, experiences, needs, elements and aspects that exist in the behavior of the Girilayu people are directed by design in order to produce factual objects called Batik Girilayu.

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