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Sacred Batik Motifs and Their Philosophies in Giriloyo Village Amid Modernization

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Abstract.
Giriloyo Batik Village is one of the centers of written batik in Yogyakarta that maintains traditional values through batik techniques and symbolic meanings of each motif. Some motifs, such as Parang Barong, Parang Rusak, and Semen Ageng Sawat Gurdha, are considered sacred and cannot be used carelessly. This community service activity aims to explore the symbolic meaning and social function of these motifs and increase cultural awareness in the midst of modernization. The program is carried out through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and active participation with local artisans in Giriloyo Batik Village, Bantul. The participants were invited to dialogue and follow the practice of batik making to understand the cultural and ethical context in the use of classical motifs. The results of the activity show that despite the commercialization and visual trends in the batik industry, the Giriloyo people still maintain traditional values through collective awareness and local rules, including the prohibition on the use of stamping or printing techniques. These findings suggest that the sustainability of batik as a cultural heritage depends not only on technique, but also on cross-generational collaboration and mutual understanding. This activity provides a participatory model in the preservation of local wisdom and can be further developed as a framework for cultural education and the involvement of the younger generation.
Keywords: *Batik Larangan; Batik Sustainability; Community Service; Cultural Identity; Giriloyo Batik Center*

I. INTRODUCTION

Batik is one of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage that has been recognized by UNESCO since 2009. The 2003 UNESCO Convention defines intangible cultural heritage as any form of practice, expression, knowledge, skills and representations that are considered part of cultural identity by a particular community or group (Hajattulloh, 2025). In this context, batik is not only a work of textile art, but also contains philosophical, symbolic, and social values that are part of the life of the Javanese people.

In Giriloyo Batik Village, there are a number of batik motifs that are categorized as prohibited motifs, which are motifs that can only be worn by nobles, courtiers, or in traditional ceremonies. These motifs include Huk, Kawung Alit Gurdha, Parang Klitik, Parang Barong, Parang Gendreh, Parang Rusak Barong, Semen Ageng Sawat Gurdha, and Rujak Senthe. This ban is not just a restriction on use, but reflects deep values such as ethics, spirituality, and respect for the

socio-cultural order (Abdullah *et al.,* 2024).

However, based on observations and interviews with local artisans, several key problems emerged: the low understanding of the meaning and rules of batik motifs by the younger generation and tourists, the assumption that batik is just a visual product with no cultural value, and the tendency of producers to prioritize commercial aspects over philosophical meanings. If not handled properly, this can lead to the cultural dilution of classic batik motifs and weaken the local cultural identity. This process must also be accompanied by an understanding of the philosophical meaning and cultural value of each motif. Unfortunately, this aspect is often overlooked by the younger generation, who tend to wear batik without understanding the cultural context behind it (Noviana *et al.,* 2024). Similar findings were also shown in the study of Balinese batik, where the preservation of indigenous knowledge and the transmission of symbolic meanings are essential to prevent cultural dilution (Igiriza *et al.,* 2024).

As a form of contribution to overcome these problems, the proposed solution includes the development of educational media in the form of a catalog of sacred motifs and the philosophy and context of their use, cultural training for visitors and the younger generation, and a digital campaign that emphasizes the importance of ethics in the use of classic batik motifs. Digital platforms and social media engagement have also been proven effective in strengthening awareness and broadening the reach of batik cultural values among the public (Wilujeng *et al.,* 2024). This effort aims to strengthen public awareness and understanding of the cultural values inherent in Giriloyo batik, while maintaining the preservation of batik as a cultural heritage that is not only visually beautiful, but also rich in meaning.

Data was obtained through field observations and interviews conducted during ICS 2025 activities. This activity is designed with a participatory approach, where the author is directly involved in the process of making batik with artisans and dialogues with local cultural figures. The community is not only the object of this activity, but also acts as the main resource person, field practice companion, and facilitator of conveying batik philosophical values. The active participation of this community shows that there is a two-way interaction that strengthens cultural understanding while strengthening the relationship between artisans and participants, making this activity a tangible form of collaborative and mutually beneficial service.

II. METHODS

This service activity was carried out in Giriloyo Batik Village, Giriloyo Hamlet, Wukirsari Village, Imogiri District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, as part of the ICS 2025 program. This activity took place on Tuesday, May 20, 2025. The departure of participants starts at 08.00 AM from the gathering point at the Malyabhara Hotel, Yogyakarta. The series of activities started at 09.00 AM to 12.00 PM, and included educational and interactive sessions with the local community.

The activity began with a presentation about the history and background of Giriloyo Batik Village by craftsman representatives. After that, it was followed by an in-depth explanation related to the philosophy and rules of using certain batik motifs that are considered sacred, such as Parang Barong, Parang Rusak, and Semen Ageng Sawat Gurdha. Participants then conducted direct observations of the traditional batik process, and were involved in the practice of batik making using canting and malam (wax) with local artisans.

Data collection techniques were carried out through field observations, semi-structured interviews with local artisans and cultural figures, and visual documentation. The resource persons were selected purposively, namely individuals who have a deep understanding of the philosophical meaning of classical batik. During the activity, the Giriloyo community is not only an object of observation, but also an active partner who provides direct understanding to participants about the cultural values they maintain.

The main problem behind this activity is the lack of understanding of the general public, especially tourists and the younger generation, about the meaning and limitations of the use of sacred batik motifs. Many of them only view batik as a visual product or fashion trend, without knowing the philosophical values and cultural ethics behind it.

Through this activity, it is hoped that there will be an increase in participants' awareness of the importance of preserving batik culture, not only in terms of technique, but also in terms of meaning and social context. This activity is also expected to be a cultural advocacy medium that encourages the active participation of the community and the younger generation in maintaining the sustainability of batik as an intangible cultural heritage of noble value.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Community service activities in Giriloyo Batik Village will be held on May 20, 2025. Based on direct observation, the process of making batik at this location is still carried out traditionally with the written batik technique. The main materials used include silk cotton mori, malam (wax), as well as synthetic and natural dyes. The tools used in the batik making process include canting, small pans, stoves, wickets, and dingklik.

The craftsmen show a high level of skill and precision in every stage of the workmanship. In one batik fabric production process, there is usually a division of labor between four to five people. The stages of work consist of drawing patterns using pencils, outlining the motif, and filling in the dots on the motif. The processing time of one batik fabric ranges from three weeks to three months depending on the level of complexity of the motif made.

According to a direct explanation from one of the craftsmen, Mbak Utami, the most often produced motif is the Sidomukti motif because it is considered relatively easy and fast in the process of working. In addition, the craftsman explained that there are several classic motifs that are classified as sacred and should not be worn carelessly, such as Parang Barong, Parang Rusak, Semen Ageng Sawat Gurdha and others. These motifs should only be used in official events or by certain circles such as the royal family.

In terms of motifs, even though there is a traditional pakem, craftsmen in Giriloyo are now starting to improvise. However, this improvisation still follows the rules because there are certain motifs that are prohibited from using it carelessly. All batik production in this center uses writing techniques completely. The local village government prohibits the use of stamping or printing techniques because it is feared that it will shift the existence and preservation of written batik as a typical cultural heritage of Giriloyo.

In addition to observations of the batik process, the craftsman also said that most tourists and general consumers do not understand the philosophy and limitations in the use of certain batik motifs. They often buy batik without asking the meaning or meaning of the motif, even wearing it at casual events without realizing the sacred value contained in it. This is a serious concern for

craftsmen in preserving the meaning of batik as part of the noble culture of Javanese society.

The results of this observation can be related to various study findings and experiences during the activity, as the following discussion material.

The preservation of batik motifs in Giriloyo Batik Village is not only seen from the use of traditional written batik techniques, but also through the collective attitude of the community in maintaining certain traditional standards (pakem). The rejection of the production of batik stamps carried out by the village government is a form of cultural resistance to commercialization pressure. Efforts like this are also in line with the approach of legal protection of local batik through collective brands carried out in Lamongan, in order to maintain the authenticity and cultural sovereignty of the artisan community Setyawati *et al.,* (2024). This shows that preservation is not only about the product, but also maintaining the local identity and values inherent in each process.

Figure 1. *Batik craftsmen using writing techniques as a symbol of dedication and intergeneration skill transfer*

The process of making batik in Giriloyo is still carried out with meticulous writing techniques that demand precision and patience. This illustrates not only the artisans' technical mastery but also their cultural dedication to preserving intangible heritage. Each stage ranging from drawing patterns, outlining motifs, to filling dots is performed collaboratively, with specific roles distributed according to individual expertise. Such collaboration functions as an intergenerational transfer of knowledge, ensuring that younger artisans inherit both technical skills and cultural values. This finding aligns with Magdalena & Meliyanti (2024), who emphasize that written batik artisanship embodies both artistic quality and sustainable cultural practices.

Figure 2. *ICS participants learning batik making directly with artisans as a form of experiential cultural education*

Direct interaction between ICS participants and local artisans illustrates the effectiveness of experiential learning in transmitting cultural values. Through hands-on practice using canting and wax, participants not only understand the technical aspects of batik but also internalize the ethical and symbolic rules of sacred motifs. This process reflects the artisans' role as cultural educators and ensures that philosophical meanings are communicated across generations. Such methods resonate with the findings of Siregar *et al.,* (2024), which show that edutourism and cultural dialogue significantly increase participants' awareness of local wisdom.

Figure 3. *Artisans explaining batik techniques and philosophies to ICS participants as part of cultural dialogue*

The explanation session about batik techniques and the philosophy of sacred motifs highlights the importance of direct cultural dialogue. Artisans emphasized that motifs such as Parang Barong, Parang Rusak, and Semen Ageng Sawat Gurdha contain deep symbolic meanings that should not be worn casually. This moment underlines the role of artisans as guardians of intangible heritage,

while participants act as learners who absorb both technical knowledge and cultural ethics. The integration of dialogue and practice reflects an innovative educational approach that combines theory with lived cultural experience (Soemaryani *et al.,* 2025).

Figure 4. *ICS participants observing various classical batik motifs as part of cultural appreciation*

The observation of classical motifs by ICS participants serves as a reflective space for appreciating the depth of Javanese cultural values. Before the activity, many participants and tourists did not realize the existence of sacred rules in motif usage. After direct exposure, participants became more aware of the cultural and ethical contexts underlying batik. This reinforces the idea that cultural appreciation must go beyond aesthetics and include philosophical meanings. Similar results were demonstrated by Indriana *et al.,* (2024), where educational programs about motif philosophy increased students' understanding and love for batik.

In addition to maintaining traditional customs, the Giriloyo people also show selective adoption of innovations, such as improvising motifs that still respect cultural boundaries. This practice shows the ability to adapt to the times without losing cultural identity. These findings are in line with innovative activities as reported Prabowo & Simanjuntak (2021), where the presence of a motif design workshop based on digital technology in Giriloyo allows batik makers to explore a variety of motifs efficiently without violating traditional customs.

The group photo symbolizes collaboration across campuses and communities in preserving batik as cultural heritage. Beyond documentation, the image reflects the spirit of shared responsibility between artisans, students, and academics in sustaining traditional knowledge. This collaborative model also demonstrates that cultural preservation is not an isolated task of artisans but a collective movement that unites multiple stakeholders. In line with Baskoro *et al.,* (2024), cross sector collaboration strengthens awareness and empowerment, making cultural preservation more adaptive to modernization pressures.

In the midst of modernization, batik is increasingly seen as a mere visual product without a deep understanding of its philosophical value. If the younger generation is not invited to understand the cultural meaning inherent in batik motifs, there will be cultural dilution of the classic motifs that

have been preserved. Therefore, activities such as ICS become a strategic space for education, advocacy, and cross-generational collaboration, so that batik is maintained as a living and meaningful cultural identity. The importance of an educational approach to the younger generation has also been proven through community service by Indriana *et al.,* (2024), which shows that the socialization of the philosophy of batik motifs directly to elementary school students is able to increase understanding and love for batik in a sustainable manner.

Figure 5. *Group photo of ICS 2025 participants as a symbol of cross campus collaboration and collective cultural preservation.*

IV. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes that the sacred motifs of Giriloyo batik are not merely decorative patterns, but symbols rich in philosophical and ethical values that regulate their proper use. The novelty of this article lies in the integration of field practice during ICS 2025 with a participatory approach, where artisans act not only as craftspersons but also as cultural educators who directly transfer knowledge to participants. Unlike previous studies that mostly focus on motif documentation or technical aspects, this research highlights the active role of the community in co-creating cultural education through experiential learning, dialogue, and intergenerational collaboration. Such a model shows that batik preservation can no longer rely solely on artisans, but requires collective awareness across campuses, local communities, and visitors. This conclusion provides new insights into how cultural heritage education can adapt to modernization pressures while maintaining the authenticity and sacredness of traditional motifs. Ultimately, this work demonstrates that cultural preservation is most effective when positioned not just as conservation, but as a collaborative innovation that bridges tradition with contemporary educational practice, while also recommending the strengthening of batik philosophical education for the younger generation through digital learning, community training, and institutional collaboration, as well as replicating the ICS model in other regions to expand participatory and collaborative cultural preservation.

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