



## Fashion Clothing and Garment as Communication: The Case of Batik 3 Negeri Solo by Tjoa Family, the Popular Choice of the Sundanese M<sup>én</sup>ak's Taste, Priangan, Indonesia

Sandy Rismantjo<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Veerawat Sirivesmas<sup>1</sup>, and Eakachat Joneurairatana<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Decorative Arts, Doctor of Philosophy in Design Arts (International Program), Silpakorn University, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Arts and Design, Bachelor Program in Visual Communication Design, Universitas Kristen Maranatha, Bandung, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author, email: [rismantjo\\_s2@su.ac.th](mailto:rismantjo_s2@su.ac.th)

Received July 27, 2022/ Revised November 23, 2022/ Accepted December 8, 2022/ Publish Online November 22, 2023

### Abstract

Fashion, clothing, and garments are nonverbal communication media. As a garment, batik has been an important part of the nonverbal communication process since the days of the ancient Mataram Kingdom. This study aimed to examine how fashion, as Barnard's communication, Saussure's semiotic theory, and Bourdieu's theory of taste, dissects the popularity of Batik 3 Negeri Solo by the Tjoa family. Furthermore, it focused on the batik's vital role in communicating social roles and status, as well as social and economic values to political symbols. In 1910, the Tjoa family from Surakarta began to produce the batik Tiga Negeri, branding it as Batik 3 Negeri Solo. According to one expert, the Tjoa family's batik became the first choice of the *M<sup>én</sup>ak* Priangan as gifts for their subjects at the beginning of the 20th century because of the motif's beauty, complexity, and high production quality. Therefore, the Batik 3 Negeri by the Tjoa family became well-known and sought-after by the Sundanese in Priangan, West Java, because it also represents a high social class's taste and lifestyle for the Sundanese. The results reveal the factors making the Tjoa family's Tiga Negeri batik highly reputable and popular in Priangan, West Java, Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Fashion; Communication; M<sup>én</sup>ak; Tiga Negeri Batik; Tjoa family*

### 1. Introduction

Fashion protects the body, meets the needs of modesty, functions as a communication tool to convey personal, social, and cultural identity (Hasyim, 2016). This is because one communicates their identity through fashion, indicating their social identity through a dress code. Moreover, it shows certain cultural characters expressed through dressing and appearing in a nation's society. (Rahmawati, 2020)

Fashion, clothing, costumes, garments, and adornments are artifactual communication forms. In general, *Artifactual Communication* is conveyed through fashion, clothing, and artifacts, such as clothes, make-up, jewelry, garments, motifs, or spatial decoration arrangements. This means that fashion or clothing is included in nonverbal communication because it conveys messages without spoken or written words (Barnard, Ibrahim, & Iriantara, 2011). Lestari (2014) stated that fashion is nonverbal communication that delivers messages using symbols without direct-conversational words. As a garment, Indonesian batik has motifs with visual compositions, as well as explicit and implied functions and meanings. Some examples are the forbidden (*larangan*) batik motifs from Yogyakarta and Surakarta, such as the *parang rusak*. Also, there is *sawat garuda*, specially designed for the Sultan and his family, and the *sidomukti* motif meant for prayers for a new and lasting life full of blessings. During the Solo and Yogyakarta sultanate period, ordinary people could not wear forbidden motifs. However, ordinary people are allowed to wear those motifs today but not in the palace's vicinity as a form of respect to the sultanate. These batik motifs express function and convey nonverbal messages to signify a mutual community agreement.

Umberto Eco in Barnard et al. (2011) spoke through his clothes as though using the spoken words in other contexts. Eco's metaphor states that clothes are assembled into a composition in the way words are arranged into sentences. When someone mixes and matches clothes with additional accessories such as belts or watches, it resembles setting words into a sentence. In this case, each piece of clothing has a meaning, chosen and combined by the wearer in one look. Similarly, batik is a fashion item or clothing as a medium

used to express a message in nonverbal communication. Through these distinctive batik motifs, people communicate their message as their intent is conveyed through the clothes in communication. Therefore, people in Java, Indonesia, use batik as a medium for delivering nonverbal messages.

The batik technique used in Java, Indonesia, is the traditional Javanese textile decoration. Batik is a textile decoration technique in which a color-resistant hot wax is applied (Hout, 2001). Hot melted wax is applied to a plain white cotton cloth using *canting*, a unique tool with a small copper container, and a thin, sturdy opening connected by a short bamboo handle (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, 2008). With extraordinary intuition, the batik artists pour out their creativity using *canting* on a piece of cloth to produce intricate motif designs.

The term batik comes from the Javanese word *amba*, which means to write with the suffix *titik*, implying a small dot or creating dots. A manuscript on palm leaves dating from around 1520 AD found in Galuh, South Cirebon, West Java, mentions that batik means *seratan*, which means 'writing' in Javanese (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, 2008). According to Asa (2014), batik emerged from the 10th - 14th century during the Galuh and Pakuan-Padjadjaran Kingdoms in West Jawa, Indonesia. It is derived from the Ancient Sundanese word *ambatik*, which means drawing. In Javanese, *ambatik*, or *mbatik*, began to alight in the 11th century.

Batik has become a significant part of Indonesians' lives because it is used in rituals, traditions, and celebrations with its symbolism. Its motifs carry various symbolic meanings inherent in Indonesian cultural heritage. Moreover, the diversity of these motifs reflects influences from foreign cultures that enrich the Indonesian batik culture, including the Chinese phoenix, European flower bouquets, Arabic calligraphy, Japanese cherry blossoms, and Indian or Persian peacocks. Batik is often passed down through generations in Indonesia, becoming an exclusive product as a wedding gift. This is because it is linked to people's cultural identity through the symbolic meaning of colors and designs. Furthermore, the batik motifs have rich symbolism of nature, history, social status, local communities, and cultural heritage. This gives Indonesians a sense of identity and continuity as an essential component in their lives (Ikatten, n.d.)

UNESCO recognized batik as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on October 2, 2009. This is because Indonesian batik motifs have deep philosophical values and meanings passed down from ancestors to their descendants. Therefore, batik has become a part of Indonesian people's daily lives for many centuries. According to the philosophy adopted, the artists design their creations with various good intentions, hopes, and wishes. A batik contains three interrelated elements, including motifs, functions, and philosophy (Suliyati, & Yuliati, 2019). Batik techniques are found in various regions globally, such as China, Thailand, Malaysia, and Africa. However, UNESCO recognizes the intangible heritage of the Indonesian batik, not the technique.

In Indonesia, batik was initially produced on the island of Java, especially on the north coast and Central Java's inland. It was divided into *Vorstenlanden* and *Pesisir* (Coastal) batik since the Dutch colonial period. *Vorstenlanden* batik came from Surakarta, or Solo, and Yogyakarta (Yogya), the sultanate or principalities (*Vorstenlanden*) during the Dutch colonial era. The batik produced outside these two cities was known as *Pesisir* batik (Djoemena, 1990). One of the legendary *Pesisir* batiks produced with complex techniques and premium quality is the Tiga Negeri Batik (Three Countries batik), which has distinctive characteristics. Tiga Negeri Batik later became the leading choice for the *Ménak* Priangan in the early 20th century. This choice based on *Ménak*'s taste eventually influenced the choice and batik buying pattern in the Priangan community, West Java, Indonesia.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of this study are listed as follows:

- 1) To identify how batik is considered a part of nonverbal communication and deliver messages using symbols or signs.
- 2) To examine the factors behind the popularity of Batik 3 Negeri by the Tjoa family, which became the most favorable choice in the Priangan community.

## 3. Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive qualitative method through literature review and an online interview with Mr. Benny Gratha, the author of *Batik 3 Negeri Solo: A Legend*. An offline interview was conducted with Mr. Asep Dede Mulyana as a Batik 3 Negeri enthusiast. Direct observations could not be performed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This study examined Tiga Negeri Batik from Fabric of Enchantment and the North Coast of Java, samples by the Tjoa family from Mr. Gratha's book, and a private collection. Furthermore, the concepts of Saussure's Semiology, Barnard's fashion as communication, and Bourdieu's theory of taste were applied to analyze fashion, clothing, and batik as a garment to explain the production of social and cultural meanings. This helped examine how fashion, clothing, and batik act as signs related to power and ideology (Barnard, 2002). The concepts were applied to analyze how fashion, clothing, and garments are nonverbal communication and deliver messages using symbols or signs (Lestari, 2014). This study focuses on fashion, clothing, and batik with its motifs as communication. It examines why the Batik 3 Negeri by the Tjoa family became the most favorable choice in the Priangan community.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1 Fashion as Communication

Barnard et al., (2011) stated that fashion, clothing, and garments are signifying practices that generate meaning, producing and reproducing cultural groups in line with their position in relative power. These groups use fashion, clothing, and garments to express or reflect on the positions of those wearing them. Additionally, Barnard emphasized that fashion and clothing are cultural beliefs, values, ideas, and experiences communicated through practices, artifacts, and institutions. In this case, fashion, clothing, and garments are ways humans communicate or express their social feelings, moods, values, hopes, and beliefs. Clothing and garments form social groups and individual identities, giving meaning to differences in social groups.

Fashion and clothing show how social groups build, support, and reproduce positions of power and relations of dominance and subservience, making them ideological. Consequently, this dominant and subservience position becomes completely natural, proper, and legitimate. Furthermore, fashion and clothing make social and economic status inequalities appear legitimate and acceptable by people in dominant and subservience positions, described as hegemony. The differences in power and status between the lower and higher classes eventually emerged as legitimacy and propriety by using fashion and clothing. Additionally, clothing and fashion show a person's social value or status. People judge social status and roles based on what a person is wearing. Society uses clothing and fashion to show or define a person's social role. For instance, the community expects local government officials to behave in a certain way and not in conflicting behavior. This means that clothing and fashion worn by an official is a sign for certain people with specific roles and expected to behave in certain ways (Barnard, 2013).

Meaning in fashion and clothing intersects with semiology, the science of signs consisting of two Greek words, *semeion*, and *logos*. *Semeion* means sign, while *logos* denotes story, account, science, or knowledge. Saussure defined semiology as a science that studies social signs, their composition, and the laws governing or regulating them (De Saussure, 2011). According to Saussure, human communication involves dividing signs into the signifier and the signified. Although two parts form a sign, a signifier represents the signified (Barnard et al., 2011).

Roland Barthes developed Saussure's semiotic study by creating a systematic model to analyze the meaning of signs and add signification levels. Barthes focused on the opinion of the two-level significance into denotation or primary signification and connotation or secondary signification. The first significance level is the relationship between the signifier and the signified within a sign to an external reality known as denotation (Rahmawati, 2020). In this case, denotation is the first, simple, basic, factual, descriptive level of meaning with a broad consensus agreeable to most people (Hall, 1997).

Connotation is the second signification level describing the interaction when the sign meets the reader's feelings or emotions (Rahmawati, 2020). It is a word or image that makes people think, feel, or associate with the meaning of a word or image. Semiologically, fashion is a sign system formed by the relationship between the signifier or the clothes and the signified meaning emanating from the clothes. Therefore, denotation and connotation are two signification levels or types of meaning (Rahmawati, 2020). Connotation has a second, broader meaning that is not a clear, descriptive, or interpretation level. In this case, a person interprets signs closely related to the cultural, knowledge, and historical influences they experience

in their social environment (Hall, 1997). Barnard et al. (2011) stated that denotation and connotation are analytical concepts used to analyze and explain instead of finding experiences.

Barthes in Trisnawati (2011) stated that words, images, and objects function as signifiers in producing meaning in a semiotic system. This indicates that clothing covers the body and functions as signs, because they form meaning and convey a message. For instance, an evening dress signifies elegance, a batik shirt signifies formality, and a t-shirt with jeans is considered a casual dress. These signs allow clothing to convey meaning and function as a language. However, gender, age, class, and race differences make people read fashion differently. Those sharing the same fashion code interpret the signs relatively the same (Hall, 1997). Therefore, meanings result from social negotiations and agreement among the community.

#### **4.2 Theory of Taste by Bourdieu**

Huang (2019) showed that Bourdieu claimed that making choices reflects one's tastes mapped on a person's social status. Taste establishes distance and creates differences between upper and lower social classes. According to Bourdieu, taste develops during the early years of life. This development makes a person look for an appropriate social status equivalent to their educational background. It guides them to behave elegantly and politely and differentiate themselves from others.

Lukman (2016) stated that taste is an attribute found in humans that must be understood concerning social class, subculture, and lifestyle. This is because it results from struggles in art relations and power strategies to monopolize art appreciation (Martini, 2003). Moreover, the taste is always based on standard recognition of perfection or a legitimate model within a particular concept. As long as there is a social practice, a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by symbolic interests (Bourdieu, 1998). Society inserts symbolic items, especially those considered primacy attributes, in differentiation. For this reason, people used taste differences as cultural capital to signify the variations between social classes (Bourdieu, 1987).

According to Sturken and Cartwright (as cited in Aziz, & Hashim, 2021), Bourdieu argues that taste is informed by experiences related to a person's class, cultural background, education, and other aspects of identity. Understanding taste is always connected with social identity and class status. Furthermore, taste can be trained and displayed through consumption and display patterns, a point that is in line with the idea of class and hierarchy. Bourdieu believed that differences in class and taste arising from social agent dispositions would determine aesthetic preferences. Each social class has its tastes learned from the beginning of life in the family environment. This taste distinguishes social classes, especially in aesthetic choices.

#### **4.3 Tiga Negeri Batik (Three Countries batik)**

In the late 19th century, the Chinese Peranakans along the north coast of Central Java and Surakarta-Yogyakarta developed Tiga Negeri batik, which undergoes dyeing processes in three centers. The processes involve using natural red dyes in Lasem, blue in Pekalongan, and soga brown in Solo or Yogyakarta. This creates a beautiful and unique piece of batik featuring red *getih pithik* (chicken blood), indigo blue, and soga brown. Also, the products have motifs resulting from the hybridity of *Vorstenlanden* (Solo and Yogyakarta batik) and *Pesisir* (Coastal) batik motifs originating from each center. Many experts believe that completing one piece of Tiga Negeri batik takes approximately 650 km to travel, also known as the Tiga Negeri batik triangle route (Malagina, 2018).



**Figure 1** Map of Priangan Area, West Java: Cianjur, Sukabumi, Bandung, Sumedang, Tasikmalaya, Garut, Ciamis and Tiga Negeri Batik Triangle Route, Central Java. Source: Author

Roojen (2001) stated that:

Deliberate efforts to combine the best style elements, one locality with another, involved producing one batik cloth in two different centers, each applying motifs of its specialization. The result became known as *Dua Negeri* batik, meaning two countries. This development was later taken further, with typical designs from two north coast centers. Also, a third classical design was added in either Surakarta or Yogyakarta. This latter variety was called *Tiga Negeri*, meaning Three Countries.

*Tiga Negeri* Batik results from the collaboration of batikers in three centers. It features red, blue, and soya brown colors and three different motifs in one piece of batik cloth. This batik proves the mixing of cultures and ethnicities on the island of Java. The red represents Chinese culture and ethnicity, the blue represents the Dutch influence, while the Soga brown represents Javanese culture. According to Laksmi (2010), each batik center area has unique natural and socio-cultural conditions, causing variations in visual styles. Therefore, the batik motif is a medium for expressing feelings visually inseparable from environmental influence.



**Figure 2** Sarong Batik Tiga Negeri 1900-1910. Source: Fabric of Enchantment, Heringa, and Veldhuisen (1996)

The *badan* or body section in Figure 2 has the primary motif of two sets of flowering trees in Lasem red and Kudus blue. The secondary central Javanese *semen*, the group name of batik patterns representing organic motifs, comprises large double wings (*sawat*), winding vines, and tiny tendrils (*ukel*). The *Kepala Gigi Balang* design in *Peranakan* style on the head section is dominated by red on brown, with blue and white accents and *ukel* background. The *pinggiran* or batik borders were decorated in the typical Kudus style, with

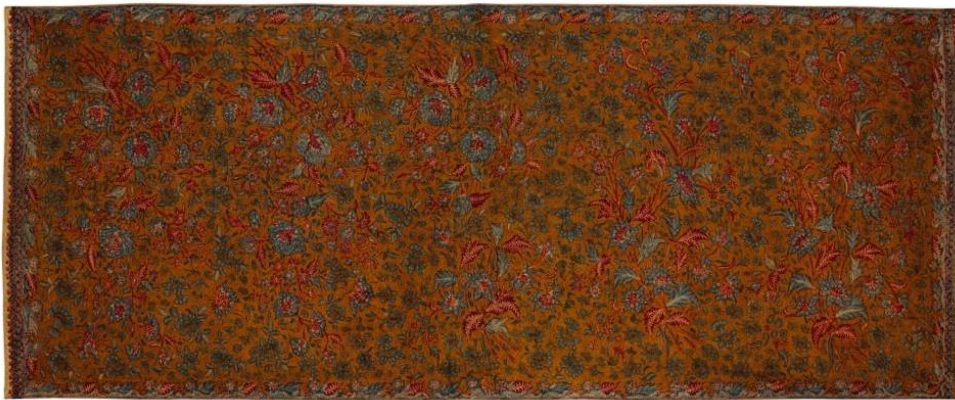


white accents sparkling against bright blues. This batik shows the difficulty in working on one Tiga Negeri batik in three different centers (Heringa, & Veldhuisen, 1996).

Batik Tiga Negeri is one of Javanese's most expensive premium batiks ever created due to its high quality and elaborated motifs drawn on both sides in almost perfect precision. Other reasons are the number of *isen* or intricate patterning in the batik motif and the transportation cost (Veldhuisen, Setiadi, & Laksono, 2007). Tiga Negeri batik's production technique, colors, and motifs are unique, depicting a beautiful cultural blend that appears harmonious with *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, an Indonesian motto that means Unity in Diversity.

#### 4.4 Batik 3 Negeri Solo Tjoa Family

In 1910, Tjoa Giok Tjiam, a Chinese *Peranakan* from Rembang, Central Java, started a batik business in Solo along with his wife Liem Netty. The Tjoa family has a special place in Indonesian history for producing batik Tiga Negeri for three generations from 1910 to 2014. Mrs. Tjo Giok Thiam taught her sons' wives the batik technique because they would be directly involved in its production. The husbands mixed the color because the parents only passed the family secret of color mixing recipes onto sons (Gratha, 2018). The Tjoa family branded their products as Batik 3 Negeri Solo and later immortalized their brand with a logo. Their brand name was inspired by a legendary story from China entitled Sam Kok, meaning Three Kingdoms (Alisjahbana, 2018). The first generation ordered *blangko* batiks waxed and dyed red on the edges and head of the sarong, leaving the body plain white from Lasem. Also, they ordered a *buketan* or flower bouquet motif and red borders, and later added other motifs and dyed them in blue and soga brown at their workshop in Solo. The family applied the classic Batik Tiga Negeri creation concept using three colors, but the process was carried out only in Lasem and Solo.



**Figure 3** Tiga Negeri Batik by Tjoa Tjoen Tiang (Second Generation). Source: Kusumahhani Collection 2019

The first generation always signed their batik with Mevrouw Tjoa Giok Tjiam's signature. The signature was waxed and dyed by a *cap* (stamped) or *tulis* (hand-drawn), and usually located in the *Kepala* or head of a sarong or the corner of a *kain panjang* (long cloth). Sometimes, it was framed as a label by a border of contrasting color (Elliott, 2010). Mevrouw referred to batik produced during the Dutch colonial era. Probably, they followed a trend of the Pekalongan's Indo-Dutch entrepreneurs that also put their signature on their batik. This aimed to state the authenticity of each batik produced, which symbolized status and high quality.

The prominent motif of Tiga Negeri batik is *buketan* motif because the Dutch authority decreed the Dutch Nationality Law, *We top Het Nederlandsch Onderdaanschap* in 1910. According to the law, every newborn in the East Indies of Chinese parents would be considered a Dutch subject (Lee, 2016). This caused the Chinese Peranakan to legally wear and produce European-style *buketan* batik sarongs and the lace *kebaya* (Lee, 2016). As a result, the Chinese Peranakan adopted the *buketan* style to express their position as legally equal to the Dutch. Additionally, European designs on batik became a symbol of rank (Heringa, & Veldhuisen, 1996).

*Buketan* style became a popular motif, but the choice of flowers changed, where European flowers were replaced or melded with peonies, chrysanthemums, or combinations. For instance, the Dutch tulip was transformed into the Chinese lotus (Elliott, 2010), while peonies, chrysanthemums, or their combination replaced European flowers. Various types of flowers were used in a bouquet, such as chrysanthemums, lotuses, orchids, and others. Chrysanthemum flowers were prevalent and familiar as decorative motifs on coastal batik produced by Peranakan entrepreneurs in Java. Probably, this practice referred to the Chinese community's belief that chrysanthemums symbolized longevity, strength, and loyalty.

#### 4.5 The *Ménak*

The local rulers known as the *Ménak* governed the Priangan West Jawa since the fall of the Sunda Kingdom in the 16th century, throughout the 19th century, until Indonesian independence. The *Ménak*, the ruling class or lords, were the Sundanese Regents' descendants that emerged after the Sunda Kingdom ended and eventually came under the Mataram Kingdom's influence from Central Java. Although these Regents were not kings, they had the position of local kings. The Sultan of Mataram initially appointed the Regents when Priangan was still under Mataram Kingdom's influence. Furthermore, the Governor-General appointed the Regents in Batavia after the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) and the Dutch East Indies period. Regardless of their origin, their descendants were all classified as *Ménak*.

C. van Vollenhoven explained that the term *Ménak* from the Javanese tradition was also used in the Priangan region to refer to aristocrats and high-ranking officials. There was also a lower aristocratic group called *Santana*, the descendants of previous kings in the Sunda region. The terms *Ménak*, *Santana*, and *Cacah* are found in the list published by *Adatrechtbundel VIII* by *De Commissie voor het Adatrecht* (Customary Law Committee). In the glossary, the *Ménak*, *Ménak Gede*, or *Ménak Pangluhurna*, which means mayor, is the highest class of society. Also, it refers to high nobility eligible for the *Radén* title, the group with the highest rank, and a ruling class. In contrast, the *Santana* or *Ménak Leutik* (Mayor assistant) is a small aristocratic group descended from a marriage between a Raden and a lower class. The *Santana* group falls between the *Ménak* and the *Cacah* or *Somah*, comprising commoners or ordinary people. *Cacah* or *Somah* are the lowest class in the traditional status hierarchy (Lubis, 1998).

The *Ménak* did not lead a court life in the regency but sometimes imitated the court life of the Surakarta and Yogyakarta kings. However, they occupied the highest Priangan community social class status because they were considered descendants of the regent, a descendant of the Sunda king. In this case, the *Ménak* fashion and clothing also referred to the Mataram Kingdom dress code. A source written by D.K. Ardiwinata in 1908 stated that the clothes usually worn by the *Ménak* consisted of *Gede* and *Jajawaan* costumes. Ardiwinata obtained information from Radén Sumodirejo that the *Jajawaan* outfit had the following provisions (Lubis, 1998).

In Table 1, the elements or items of fashion worn by a *Ménak* are analyzed as signifiers because they represent something else. For instance, Javanese style hat (*bendo*) signifies authority and formality. Similarly with the batik worn, the *parang rusak* motif represents the social status and role of the *Ménak*'s authority in society. The role of authority to become a community leader is represented by batik with a *parang rusak* motif, a *larangan* or prohibited motif in the palace vicinity in Solo and Yogyakarta. The composition of clothing in Table 1 communicates a nonverbal sentence representing the status and social role of the *Ménak* in the Sundanese community. In the second meaning or connotation level, the dress code of the *Ménak* means they are the chosen people descended from the ancient Sundanese kings. Therefore, they were appointed leaders or regents that owned the land with its contents. The meaning formed has become a mutual agreement or consensus accepted legally in the Sundanese community in West Java.

*Ménak*'s official attire is a dress code worn since the time of the Mataram Kingdom as their representative in the West Java region. The Dutch colonial government continued this tradition until the Indonesian independence period in 1945. The clothing composition is worn to express the *Ménak*'s hegemony, making them leaders with particular social roles that dominate and govern the ordinary people. The Sundanese community knows that batik, as an element of clothing with a specific motif, is only worn by the *Ménak* and their families. The *Ménak* wear the signifier or a form of clothing, while its meaning is the signified or members of the *Ménak* community. Therefore, the dress code serves as a social identity, meaning formal clothes show *Ménak*'s authority and power.

**Table 1** Jajawaan Costume

1. Javanese style hat (bendo).
2. Black short-cap coat called sikepan, with rows of buttons totaling 7, 9, 11, or 13 pieces.  
In Sunda, there are only nine buttons at most.
3. A white shirt worn underneath a coat. The cut is the same as the suit.
4. Kain kebat/kain panjang (long cloth); This cloth is about 1 or 2 inches from the ankle and tied with a belt. For the Ménak Gede, their batik motifs are special: kawung besar and kawung ece; lereng: parang rusak barong, parang rusak sedang, parang tejo, parang kusuma, parang kembang, parang centung, curiga and udan liris. Other lowly Ménak are prohibited from wearing batik with these motifs.
5. Belt
6. Keris (small sword with a wavy blade)
7. Sandals
8. Pants
9. Coat



**Source:** Kehidupan Kaum Ménak Priangan 1800-1942. Lubis, 1998



**Figure 4** Mènak Sunda, Late 19th and Early 20th Century. Lubis, 1998

In traditional Javanese, the relationship between men as local rulers and their people in the 19th to the 20th centuries is a close interdependence between two distinct but inseparable elements because it is a king-servant relationship. Javanese traditions rooted in the Mataram Kingdom heavily influenced the *Mènak's* way of life, which controlled the Priangan region in the past. Mataram's cultural influence is found in many aspects oriented towards Javanese tradition during the two centuries after the end of the Mataram Kingdom. One of these traditions is a symbol of power shown in the clothes and accessories worn (Karmila, & Widiaty, 2016).

The clothes and accessories worn by the *Mènak* express or reflect their social status. They signify practices and ways of generating meanings, producing and reproducing those cultural groups and their positions of relative power. In this case, clothes and accessories are artifacts, practices, and institutions that shape people's beliefs, values, ideas, and experiences. Clothing is how people communicate about their social groups' feelings, moods, values, expectations, and beliefs. Therefore, they differentiate one group from another, ensuring that identities remain separate and distinct. This means that clothing and accessories are



defenses used by different groups to form social order and hierarchy in achieving, challenging, or maintaining domination and supremacy (Barnard, 2002).

The batik with motifs only worn by the *Ménak* maintains the hegemony and justifies their identity differences and social status. It cannot be given as gifts to the social classes below the *Ménak* or even worn by them. Furthermore, the *Ménak*'s high social status determines a particular lifestyle that must be owned and lived to maintain prestige or authority. Their position as bureaucratic elite brings political power and social influence. In this case, the *Ménak* culture or lifestyle is a role model for other social classes and an example to be emulated because it represents a status symbol.

The Sundanese understand the *Tritangtu* philosophy as a concept, standard, or book of cultural values (*Kitab Ahlak Budaya*) as a reference for social behavior. In *Nagara*, *Tritangtu* is an insight into the norms that govern each individual's life and group within a territory of power or state administration (Saavreda, 2016). The Sundanese society manifests the relationship between the community and the state life in the philosophy of the *Resi* (teacher/*ulama*), the *Ratu* (regent/leader), and *Rama* (both parents) (Rusmana, 2017). Based on this philosophy, they respect teachers or scholars, leaders, and parents as role models for social behavior. Therefore, the regents or leaders (*Ménak*) must be respected, obeyed, and followed, meaning their lifestyle and aesthetic choices become a reference for the Sundanese people.

This study explored how Batik 3 Negeri produced by the Tjoa family obtained a high-status symbol in West Java. According to A. D. Mulyana (personal communication, May 4, 2020), the Regents in Priangan West Java started wearing Batik 3 Negeri, favoring it as a gift of appreciation for the commoners. For instance, the *Ménak* often gave Batik 3 Negeri to their subjects that went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. As a result, the community considered those owning and wearing have received blood, tears, and prayers from the batik makers. They inherited *pamor*, a word translated as fragrance, prestige, and strength, from the batik (Gratha, 2018). According to Gratha (2018), in the past, Batik 3 Negeri by the Tjoa family was in great demand by Sundanese in Bandung, Tasikmalaya, Garut, Majalengka, Priangan, West Java because it reflected the *Ménak*'s taste.

Based on Bordieu's theory of taste, *Ménak*'s taste became a guide and benchmark for people with lower social status. When the taste became a symbol of legitimacy for *Ménak*'s social status, lower-status classes were limited in wearing batik motifs. However, the Batik 3 Negeri made by the Tjoa family was usually worn by the *Ménak* and often became their choice as a gift for their people. Therefore, Tiga Negeri batik could be owned and worn by the general public, and finally became the legitimacy for the Sundanese to achieve a status similar to the *Ménak*. Batik Tiga Negeri, with the signature of the Tjoa family, signifies prestige, high social status, and *Ménak*'s taste, which are the signified.

What happens in the Sundanese lives is unique because the taste education from the *Ménak* to their subjects affects the aesthetic choices, particularly the Tiga Negeri Batik. The batik worn by the *Ménak* carries the *Vorstenlanden* motifs, which people outside the royal family circle cannot wear according to restrictions that apply to Sundanese society. That is why the Regents or the *Ménak* could not give batik with specific motifs reserved only for them as a gift. Therefore, the Tjoa family's Batik 3 Negeri became the favorable choice because it was an expensive premium batik of high quality. The *Ménak* choices represented their taste, ultimately making the Tjoa family's Batik 3 Negeri very popular among the Sundanese in Priangan. For the Sundanese, owning and wearing the Batik 3 Negeri by the Tjoa family is a high-status symbol.

The *Ménak*'s golden age of becoming government officials in the Sundanese community ended with Indonesia's independence. The regent position previously confirmed and given by the Dutch colonial government and became hereditary in the *Ménak* family ended. However, the *Ménak* status as descendants of the previous Sundanese leaders is still respected.

## 5. Conclusion

Batik has been a communication medium among Indonesian people on Java Island since the ancient Mataram Kingdom. Its motif's function as a sign to show the legitimacy and hegemony of power. In *Ménak*'s dress code, the clothing composition and batik symbolize their leadership and authority to lead the Sundanese people in West Java. Therefore, batik motifs contain implied and explicit meanings that have become part of the community's life cycle. The meanings generated by the motifs on batik are arranged together with other clothing elements, similar to assembling sentences as nonverbal communication. The

resulting meanings have become a mutual agreement or consensus recognized and passed down through generations.

In Surakarta and Yogyakarta, court and folk arts live together for different purposes. Court arts support special ceremonies and rituals, glorifying the past for the spiritual identity and unity of the Javanese world. Furthermore, the artworks preserve and sustain cultural values in court pride and cultural heritage. In contrast, folk arts live and maintain Javanese culture's philosophy of life and are understood as the commoners' artworks. They preserve, sustain, and develop Javanese culture and tradition and facilitate innovation and improvisation without following traditional and religious patterns. Batik *Vorstendlanden* is considered court arts, while batik *Pesisir* is folks arts. This consideration might explain why Batik Tiga Negeri and Batik 3 Negeri by the Tjoa family are more in demand outside the *Vorstenlanden* community that prefers court arts batik (Wiriyomartono, 2016).

One of the famous Pesisir batik in the Priangan area of West Java is the Batik 3 Negeri Solo. It is a Tiga Negeri Batik masterpiece, immortalized with a signature from the Tjoa family. This batik has a special place in the community because it represents the taste of the Sundanese *Ménak*. Moreover, the motif's beauty and complexity, with high production quality, make the batik premium and expensive. Therefore, Batik 3 Negeri by the Tjoa family represents a high social class's taste and lifestyle for the Sundanese.

## 6. Acknowledgements

With the utmost gratitude, the author would like to thank Assistant Professor Veerawat Sirivesmas and Professor Eakachat Joneurairatana, dissertation advisors, Doctoral Program in Design Arts International Program (DinDA), Department of Decorative Arts at Silpakorn University, and all faculty members for their guidance. Also, many thanks to Mr. Benny Gratha, author of Batik 3 Negeri Solo and Mr. Asep Dede Mulyana as a Batik 3 Negeri enthusiast for their time to be interviewed online and offline.

## 7. References

- Alisjahbana, T. (2018). *The True Stories Behind Batik Tiga Negeri or Three Counties Batik*. Independent Observer. Retrieved from <https://observerid.com/the-true-stories-behind-batik-tiga-negeri-or-three-counties-batik/>
- Asa, K. (2014). *Mosaic of Indonesian Batik*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Red & White Publishing.
- Aziz, J. B., & Hashim, F. (2021). Rhetoric of Food Authenticity and National Identity in the New Media. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 21(2), 253-272. <http://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2021-2102-14>
- Barnard, M. (2002). *Fashion as Communication*. London, UK: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315013084>
- Barnard, M. (2013). *Fashion as Communication Second Edition*. London, UK: Routledge. <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=QRKOAQAAQBAJ&pg=GBS.PT2&hl=id>
- Barnard, M., Ibrahim, I. S., & Iriantara, Y. (2011). *Fashion sebagai Komunikasi: Cara mengkomunikasikan Identitas Sosial, Seksual, Kelas, dan Gender*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Jalasutra
- Bourdieu, P. (1987). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, US: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason: On the Theory of Action*. California, US: Stanford University Press.
- De Saussure, F. (2011). *Course in general linguistics*. New York, US: Columbia University Press.
- Djoemena, N. S. (1990). *Ungkapan Sehelai Batik, Its Mystery and Meaning*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Penerbit Djambatan.
- Elliott, I. M. (2010). *Batik: Fabled Cloth of Java*. North Clarendon, US: Tuttle Publishing.
- Gratha, B. (2018). *Batik Tiga Negeri Solo: Sebuah Legenda*. Jawa Tengah, Indonesia: Komunitas Peranakan Indonesia.
- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Vol. 2). California, US: Sage.
- Hasyim, M. (2016). *Fashion Sebagai Komunikasi: Analisis Semiotis Atas Fashion Jokowi Pada Pemilihan Presiden 2014. International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research (ICMR 2016) Universitas Hasanuddin*, Indonesia

- Heringa, R., & Veldhuisen, H. (1996). *Fabric of Enchantment: Batik from the North Coast of Java: from the Inger McCabe Elliott Collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art*. Weatherhill, Incorporated.
- Hout, I. V. (2001). *Batik: drawn in wax: 200 years of batik art from Indonesia in the Tropenmuseum collection*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Royal Tropical Institute.
- Huang, X. (2019). Understanding Bourdieu - Cultural Capital and Babbitus. *Review of European Studies*, 11(3), 45-49. <https://doi.org/10.5539/res.v11n3p45>
- Ikatten. (n.d). *UNESCO and Indonesian Batik*. Retrieved from [https://www.ikatten.com/?page\\_id=6764](https://www.ikatten.com/?page_id=6764)
- Karmila, M., & Widiaty, I. (2016, April). Uncovering Sundanese Values by Analyzing Symbolic Meaning of Ménak Priangan Clothing (1800-1942). *International Conference on Innovation in Engineering and Vocational Education*. Bandung, Indonesia. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1757-899X/128/1/012050>
- Laksmi, V. K. P. (2010). Simbolisme motif batik pada budaya tradisional Jawa dalam perspektif politik dan religi. *Ornamen*, 7(1), 73-84. <https://doi.org/10.33153/ornamen.v7i1.941>
- Lee, T. (2016). Defining the aesthetics of the Nyonyas' batik sarongs in the straits settlements, late nineteenth to early twentieth century. *Asian Studies Review*, 40(2), 173-191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2016.1162137>
- Lestari, S. B. (2014). Fashion sebagai Komunikasi Identitas Sosial di Kalangan Mahasiswa. *Jurnal Pengembangan Humaniora*, 14(3), 225-238.
- Lubis, N. H. (1998). *Kehidupan kaum ménak Priangan, 1800-1942*. Jawa Barat, Indonesia: Pusat Informasi Kebudayaan Sunda.
- Lukman, C. C. (2016). *Hibriditas Citarasa Mahasiswa Indonesia-Tionghoa Pada Karya Desain Grafis* [Doctoral dissertation], Institut Teknologi Bandung Indonesia].
- Malagina, A. (2018). Adiwastra Tiga Negeri. *National Geographic Indonesia*. Retrieved from [https://nationalgeographic.grid.id/read/13312484/adiwastra-tiga-negeri#google\\_vignette](https://nationalgeographic.grid.id/read/13312484/adiwastra-tiga-negeri#google_vignette)
- Martini, M. (2003). Kaidah-kaidah Seni dan Cinta Seni. *Jurnal Basis*, (11-12), 41-50.
- Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia. (2008). *Indonesian Batik: A Cultural Beauty*. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/137007001/Indonesia-Batik-A-Cultural-Beauty>
- Rahmawati, N. M. (2020). Fashion Sebagai Komunikasi: Analisa Semiotika Roland Barthes Pada Fashion Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (Ahy): Dalam Pemilihan Gubernur Jakarta. *KREDO: Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa dan Sastra*, 4(1), 216-233. <https://doi.org/10.24176/kredo.v4i1.4903>
- Roojen, P. V. (2001). *Batik Design*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: The Pepin Press BV.
- Rusmana, T. (2017). Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Konsep Tritangtu Sunda sebagai Metodologi Penciptaan Teater Kontemporer. *Prosiding: Seni, Teknologi, dan Masyarakat*, (2), 84-99. <https://dipro.isi-ska.ac.id/index.php/SemHas/article/view/37>
- Saavreda, H. (2016, May 3). *Tri Tangtu*. Budaya Indonesia. Retrieved from <https://budaya-indonesia.org/Tri-Tangtu/>
- Suliyati, T., & Yuliati, D. (2019). Pengembangan motif batik semarang untuk penguatan identitas budaya Semarang. *Jurnal Sejarah Citra Lekha*, 4(1), 61-73. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jsc1.v4i1.20830>
- Trisnawati, T. Y. (2016). Fashion sebagai bentuk ekspresi diri dalam komunikasi. *Jurnal The Messenger*, 3(2), 36-47. <http://dx.doi.org/10.26623/themessenger.v3i2.268>
- Veldhuisen, H. C., Setiadi, A., & Laksono, D. (2007). *Batik Belanda 1840-1940: Pengaruh belanda pada batik dari Jawa sejarah dan kisah-kisah di sekitarnya*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Gaya Favorit Press.
- Wiriyomartono, B. (2016). *Javanese Culture and the Meanings of Locality: Studies on the Arts, Urbanism, Polity, and Society*. London, UK: Lexington Books.