

## ETHNIC ORNAMENTS ON ANCIENT TOMBS AS A SOURCE OF NEW IDEAS FOR DEVELOPING NUSANTARA BATIK MOTIFS—SURAKARTA, INDONESIA

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### Abstract

*Batik Nusantara is a masterpiece of Indonesia that has received recognition from UNESCO (2009) as a humanitarian heritage for oral and intangible culture. This research aims to develop batik motifs by utilizing ethnic ornamental sources from ancient tomb areas often found in the Surakarta region of Central Java, Indonesia. Various ethnic ornaments in the ancient tomb area hold actual and historical values of beauty, philosophy, authenticity, and uniqueness. The ancient tomb area has a great opportunity as a source of inspiration for batik motifs because it is rarely considered except as a sacred, magical, and mystical archaeological and cultural heritage. This research is exploratory qualitative, which explores various new forms and values not widely known by the public by taking creative, flexible, and open efforts and utilizing all sources considered essential. Data sources were obtained from seven ancient burial areas in the Surakarta area. Data and information, both visual and verbal, are processed carefully and thoroughly using eclectic stylization techniques to discover new batik motifs, values, and characters. The results of this research can improve the quality and quantity of high-quality archipelago batik typical of Surakarta, thereby encouraging the progress and development of traditional archipelago batik motifs in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** Surakarta; Motifs; Indonesian batik; Ancient tombs; Ethnic ornament

### Introduction

The city of Surakarta, also known as Solo or Sala, has "Dasa Citra" as a Javanese cultural city, which is supported by various palace cultural products, performances, and Javanese cultural festivals, which are held regularly and exclusively [1]. In historical records, since 17 February 1745 AD, the Islamic Mataram Palace was moved from Kartasura to Sala village because of the triangular war between Javanese, Chinese, and Dutch soldiers. After the move, the new kingdom became widely known as the Surakarta Hadiningrat Palace [2]. The elegance and beauty of Surakarta Palace are limited to not only tangible cultural traditions but also intangible culture, which has been recognized by UNESCO (2009) as a City of Culture because it has distinctive artistic characteristics, namely Sekaten, Keris, Wayang, Gamelan, and Batik [3].

The city of Solo is known as the City of Batik because there are many batik industry centers. One of the most famous is the batik village in Laweyan and Kauman, as well as support from other districts, namely Sragen, Sukoharjo, Wonogiri, Boyolali, and Klaten districts. The

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specialty of Solo Batik lies in the elegance of historical motifs such as Parang, Truntum, Kawung, Sidomukti, Sidoluhur, etc. [4]. Why? Because this motif is of high value in local wisdom. Furthermore, batik motifs continue to develop, which is marked by the emergence of new motifs [5], namely animal, floral, geometric, etc., which are exceptional motifs. On October 2, 2009, UNESCO designated batik as a Humanitarian Heritage for Oral and Intangible Culture [6].

The development of batik in the Surakarta region and its surroundings can never stop, continuing to develop in shape, beauty, and the depth of its philosophical meaning [7]. For example, the Sogan batik motif is a batik with a classic nuance. Currently, further forms are being developed using natural dyes not only from the trunk of the Soga tree, but also the possibilities are being researched from natural materials. Apart from that, the development of motifs takes the form of a combination of lines, shapes, and isen into a single unit, which forms new motifs, including animal, human, geometric, and other motifs [8]. This breakthrough became the "bloodline" for batik to survive the onslaught of rival textiles from abroad, which are increasingly widespread and with prices that continue to be increasingly difficult to match.

The development of batik motifs from ancient manuscript illumination has been carried out at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta (2020), and Andalas University, Padang (2022). The research scientists collected various forms of ornaments from ancient (Illumination) manuscripts from 50 selected Minangkabau manuscripts, stylized in such a way that they met the criteria of being attractive, beautiful, and exotic to be suitable for use as batik motifs. The same thing, since 2020, has also been carried out at Pakualaman Temple, Yogyakarta, utilizing the ancient manuscript collection at the Paku Alam Yogyakarta Library. The results are pretty good, especially with the appearance of Yogyakarta and Minangkabau motifs in Indonesian batik. These two businesses trigger further development by taking other alternative potential sources.

The development of batik motifs from ancient tomb ornamental sources has at least three primary reasons: (i) The ethnic ornamentation of ancient tombs is a vehicle for preserving past historical relics that have not received attention [9]; (ii) Ethnic ornaments in ancient tombs symbolize past works with unexplored power of form, aesthetic value, and philosophy [10]. Exploration of ethnic ornaments is essential because (a) it is strategic in exploring unique cultural potential, and (iii) it has an excellent opportunity to be developed with increasingly developing style-exploration techniques. It has a uniqueness that can be sold because it is the "Dream" of every batik fan worldwide that the batik they wear is unique, matchless, and distinctive through stylization techniques [11].

## **Theoretical Basis**

### ***Ancient Tombs in the Surakarta Region***

Ancient tombs in this research are defined as old burial areas built decades or centuries ago and are defined by the customs and traditions of the past. Ancient tombs are places where prominent figures are buried and locations for various social and cultural practices in Javanese history. Although ancient burial sites contain the graves of various figures with different backgrounds regarding ethnicity, history, and beliefs, they are usually associated with certain respected groups [12].

Ancient tombs in Surakarta are spread across various districts, including Boyolali, Sragen, Wonogiri, Sukoharjo, and Surakarta (Table 1).

### ***Ornaments on Ethnic Graves***

Ornaments are part of fine art, which the general public calls ornaments. In the context of ornamental fabric, it can also be called a motif, an ornamental design repeated to form a picture

pattern on a fabric [13]. Motifs are often considered similar in meaning to patterns, although fundamental differences exist. This research defines ornaments as decoration in the form of repeating patterns, which are usually made on a piece of batik cloth, wovencloth, or *songket* cloth, or even in a temple, tomb, and/or ancient prayer place.

**Table 1.** Ancient Tombs in the Surakarta Region

NO	TOMB NAME	REGENCY/CITY	INFORMATION
1	Hastana Tomb Sublime Indrokilo	Boyolali	Prince's Tomb Notopuro, 1929
2	Prince's Ancient Tomb Sukowati	Sragen	Prince's Tomb Sukowati, 1800s
3	Raden Ngabehi Family Tomb Poncoprabowo	Wonogiri	R. Ng's grave. Poncoprabowo, 1795
4	Pracimalaya	Sukoharjo	Palace Tomb, 1889
5	Grand Mosque area	Surakarta	Tomb of Abdi Dalem Pangulon, 1800s
6	Bonoloyo	Surakarta	Kraton General Cemetery, 1889
	Astana Bibis Luhur	Surakarta	Tomb of Mangkunegara VI & Relatives, 1800s
8	Ki Ageng Nis	Surakarta	Ki Ageng Nis's grave, 1700s
9	Astana Girilayu	Karanganyar	Mangkunegara Tombs IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, 1881
10	Astana Mangadeg	Karanganyar	Tombs of Mangkunegara I, II, and III, 1716

A sheet of batik cloth has various ornamental shapes. The art of cloth ornamentation in Indonesia has been around for a long time. Since time immemorial, every important object and piece of ceremonial equipment can be found decorated [14]. Ornaments are realized in visual form and are believed to have aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual value, but in the form of certain symbols or symbols [15]. Obviously, ethnic ornaments are ornaments belonging to a particular ethnic group found on specific objects/places such as ancient tombs (tombstones, entrance fences, barriers, and aesthetic ornaments) and are also often attached to the entrance gates of ancient tombs.

The ethnic ornaments on actual tombs are almost similar to those found in the relief decoration of ancient temples, mosques, and even illuminations in ancient manuscripts. Most ethnic ornaments are dominated by flora and fauna. In fact, what is interesting is the stylized motif, which is genuinely classic [16]. There are Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and Javanese (local) influences considered important, sacred, and highly valued. Second, it is not only related to the sacred but more to the art of past lives that were drawn or carved. In contrast to those in ancient temples, ethnic ornaments in tombs are rarely found in the form of phallus or *yoni* but rather in art paintings from the past, which are very interesting. Generally, the materials used are stone, wood, and cloth. Very little metal was found.

Based on the explanation above, the ethnic ornaments found in ancient tombs can be used as an idea for developing batik motifs based on existing patterns that can be developed, including three main elements, namely:

- The main ornament (*klowongan*) is a form of decoration and is the main constituent element of batik.
- Isen-isen (filling in *klowongan*) is a decoration that fills parts of the main ornament (*klowongan*), usually called "*isen-isen*," which consists of *cecek* (dots), *sawut* (bent lines), *cecek sawut* (a combination of dots and lines), and *melik* scales.
- Filling ornaments are decorations given to the background of the pattern as a balance so that the pattern looks harmonious. There are three forms of Isen-isen ornaments: *ukel*, *gringsing*, and *galar* [17].

### ***Batik Pattern Shapes***

Generally, batik patterns can be divided into geometric patterns (repeating patterns) and non-geometric patterns. Geometric patterns contain elements of lines and shapes (squares, trapeziums, and parallelograms) that are created repeatedly to form patterns. There are at least various types of geometric patterns, namely *Ceplok* Patterns, *Lereng* Patterns, and *Parang* Patterns [17]. Non-geometric patterns consist of four groups, namely *semen* patterns [səmɜn], *lung-lungan* patterns, *buketan* patterns [bUkətan], and *pinggiran* patterns. Meanwhile, special patterns are other patterns that cannot be included in the two previous patterns, for example, the *Panji Naga Liman* pattern and *Kasepuhan* patterns. Special patterns, based on the batik style, are more common in inland areas compared to coastal areas [18].

## **Methods**

### ***Research Forms and Strategies***

The form of research that is considered most appropriate for this research is exploratory qualitative [19]. This research seeks to explore and realize the possibility of developing Indonesian batik motifs sourced from the ethnic ornaments of ancient tombs in the Surakarta area. It is realized that there is a long way to achieve this, including taking pictures of each element, recording all information (oral and written), selecting, observing, and looking for forms of development so that new motifs are found that have superior form, value, beauty, product quality, and novelty. This research also highlights carefully and critically every potential and strength of stylized design based on the power of thought, imagination, and skill [20]. The research strategy chosen is a focused single case study [21] so that the process of reconstructing wisdom values and stylizing the shape and beauty of ethnic ornaments in ancient tombs can be compiled and visualized in detail and completely.

### ***Sources and Research Data***

The first step for the research team was to conduct an in-depth study of the object, conduct a focus group discussion, and find and compile important notes before entering the tomb location [20]. Next, the team collected research data at the research location in the form of (1) Description of the condition of the ancient tombs to date, (2) photographing the core ethnic ornaments, accompanying ornaments, and other ornaments from the tomb area, and (3) collecting information from the custodians of the tomb, namely *kuncen* (manager, caretaker), palace servants, and community figures who understand the history, philosophical meaning, and important oral stories related to the tomb. The *Kuncen* who were successfully interviewed were Sudarmo (72 years, Giri Layu Tomb), Sukirman (68 years, Mangadeg Tomb), Mr. Sudarno (69 years, Haji Tomb), Pasiran (66 years, Bonoloyo), and Hartadi (52 years, Pracimoloyo). They are key informants who can provide information regarding ancient tomb ornaments in the research area.

### ***Data Collection Technique***

Data collection was carried out with three methods [22]: first, an area survey of old graves on location study. Second, in-depth interviewing is a deep interview technique for a real informant who understands and can answer the problem in this research [23]. Third, Content Analysis, namely the technique of collecting written data with the method of reading, recording, collecting, grouping, and displaying data [21].

### ***Data Analysis Technique***

The data analysis technique chosen in this research is the "interactive analysis model," which includes three stages: (1) data reduction, the process of sharpening, directing, and organizing data; (2) data presentation; and (3) drawing conclusions. The data reduction stage in

this research is the data selection process related to sources that can be utilized [19]. This technique is considered appropriate because it can be used technically based on considerations of time, age, validity, important notes, etc. Because this research uses informant sources to appreciate the informants' feelings, emic and ethical presentation methods are used [23]. The conclusions obtained were tested for truth and validity in two ways: (1) data triangulation and (2) informant review.

## Results and discussion

### *Ancient Tomb Ornaments as an Idea for Developing Batik Motifs*

Until now, there has not been a specific concept regarding the prerequisites for a textile design. Designers are free to search, choose, and determine or change the form of their expression until a design meets certain requirements and qualities. Designers will examine various forms of design ideas in their own way by carrying out a series of strategies, methods/techniques, or certain experiments to explore design ideas. Ultimately, a designer will determine the formula through a personal approach.

The stages carried out include: (i) determining the source of the idea for the batik motif, (ii) identifying the characteristics of the ethnic ornament of the tomb, and (iii) designing the main motif, accompanying motifs, and Isen-isen motifs. and (iv) structuring various motifs into a basic design (not yet colored), which can be explained as follows.

#### *a. Determine the source of the batik motif idea*

This stage is critical because it draws visual and non-visual impressions from the tomb area, which is seen as "other" by most Javanese people. Details of the grave area were recorded (video and photos) to obtain adequate image quality. It turned out that several core parts of the tomb could not be photographed because there was a prohibition from the tomb management for "faith" reasons. Of the ten tombs designated as sources, only five tombs meet the four primary categories, namely, ancient, historic, containing selected ornaments, and having a unique attraction.




#### *b. Characteristics of Ethnic Ornaments*

Ornaments in the ancient tomb area (Table 2) can generally be divided into geometric and non-geometric ornaments. Each ornament has its own function as an aesthetic decoration. The ethnic ornaments of ancient tombs in the Surakarta region, based on their shape, layout, and type, have several functions, namely (i) aesthetic functions, only as decoration to beautify the tomb. The shape is just a patch, not a basic shape. If you remove it, it does not change the basic shape; (ii) Symbolic function, symbolizing certain cultures, religions, and beliefs; (iii) Technical (constructive) function, functional and an essential part of a construction (Table 3).

**Table 2.** Ancient Tombs in the Surakarta Region

NO.	GRAVE NAME	LOCATION	SELECTED ORNAMENT
1	Giri Layu Tomb	Karanganyar District	gates, humans, flora, fauna, reliefs, decorations, head and body of tombstones, dreadlocks, monuments, and mythology.
2	Mangadeg	Karanganyar District	flora, fauna, reliefs, decorations, tombstone heads and bodies, human (God) dreadlocks, monuments
3	Pracimoloyo	Sukoharjo District	flora, fauna, reliefs, decorations, monuments
4	Bonoloyo	Surakarta City	flora, fauna, mythology, reliefs, gates
5	Makam Haji	Surakarta City	cupola, head and body of the tombstone.

Table 3. Functions of the Ornaments

Ornament functions	Shape Variants	Information
Aesthetic		Decoration only sticks to the field walls, walls, building roofs, and furniture.
Symbolic		The dragon is a symbol of power and strength; Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and beauty (Hindu), strength; and Makara as a symbol of security.
Technical (Constructive)		Buffer statue, head A tombs, decorations on the body tombs, and pillar grave.

Choosing the Ancient Tomb Ornaments

Not all ornaments in the ancient tomb area can simply become a source for developing batik motifs. Most of the ornaments chosen were non-geometric ornaments, and some were chosen for supporting ornaments and *isen* (filling motifs). All photographic results in the grave area are researched and considered with careful intuition and calculation. As a result of deepening the object in the photo, critical analysis to select parts that can be utilized, and techniques that can be utilized, namely object amplification, object substitution, and decorative stylization, the following results were obtained.

- a. The image that becomes the main/basic pattern (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Images to pattern conversion

- b. *Isen-isen*, namely the process of filling in the specified ornament parts in the form of special images in small form. Decorations for *Isen* are images in the form of dots, lines, full circles, flat circles, leaf frames, small mountains, splashes of light, leaves, or parts of animal organs that are stylized in such a way that they are small and occupy empty space on the batik background. The purpose of adding this *isen* decorative variety is to strengthen the main character (*klowongan*) of batik and add aesthetic value (Fig. 2).

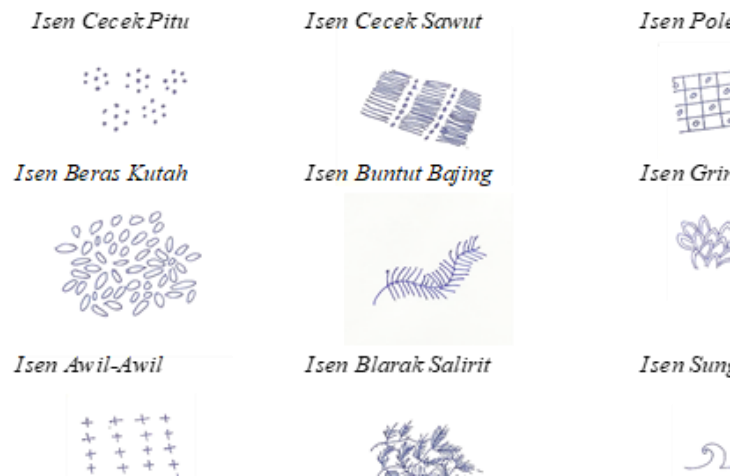


Fig. 2. Varieties of additional patterns (*isen-isen*)

- c. Harmony (additional) style, namely the placement of various backgrounds in the overall design to form general harmonization (Fig. 3).

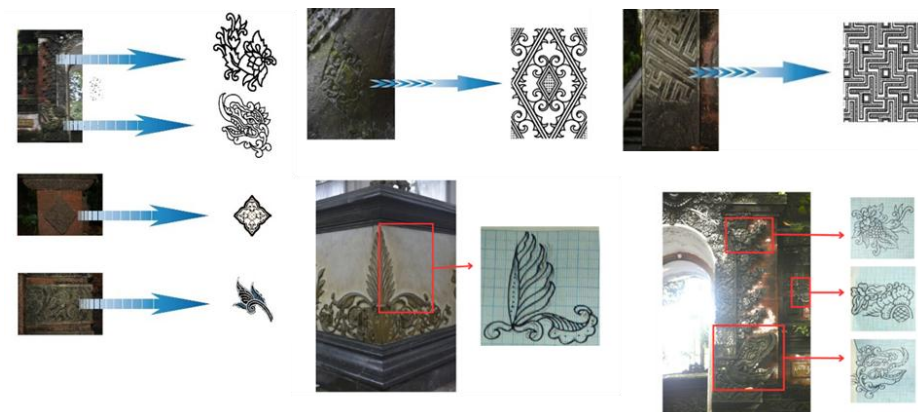


Fig. 3. Various forms of harmonious batik motifs from ancient tombs

The process of making motif patterns from ethnic ornaments in the dining area is designed very carefully. Firstly, attention is paid to the core pattern (*klowongan*), then the supporting motifs, and the *isen-isen* in or around the *klowongan* motif pattern.

#### ***Making Batik Motif Patterns***

The parts that have been prepared are the main motif, additional motifs, and *isen*, which are then arranged to form a complete batik motif pattern structure. In making ancient grave batik motif patterns, two motifs are combined: geometric motifs (application of motifs in the form of planes) and organic motifs (incorporating certain animal or plant subject images). The motif creation model uses three techniques, namely:

- Stylization technique to build a style on the basic motif object to look more beautiful and attractive. For example, the object of the *Kala Makara* image from the Ancient Tomb of Mangkunegaran Mangadeg Temple is stylized to have an aesthetic rather than a frightening impression. Plus, stylization of fire objects, plants, vines, etc. The *Kala Makara* object stylization technique also utilizes deformation techniques to maintain the original character even though the basic shape has been changed.

- b. Decoration involves arranging various forms of harmonious and *isen-isen* patterns (*cecek*, *sawut*) to create beautiful new shapes and a strong impression (Figs. 4-6).

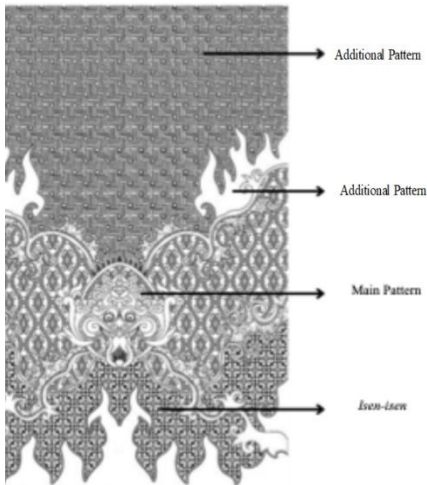


Fig. 4. “Hayu Loka” Batik Pattern

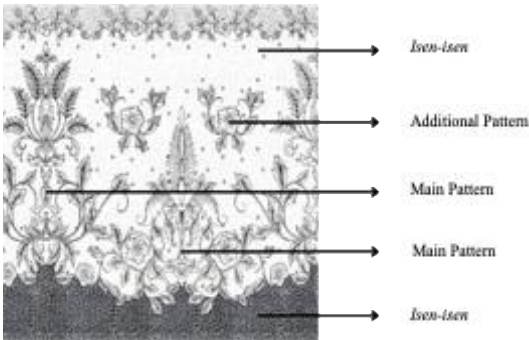


Fig. 5. “Hayu Dirda” Batik Pattern

Below are shown the results of making batik motif patterns by exploring ethnic ornaments from the source of the ancient tomb area "*Mangadeg*," Mangkunegaran Temple, and the source of the Girilayu Tomb Area in Karanganyar Regency.

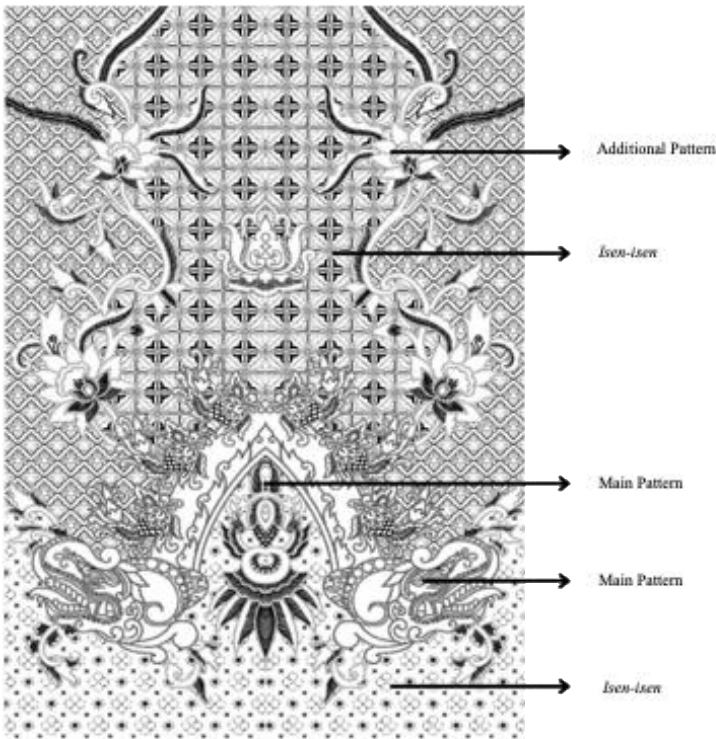


Fig. 6. “Hayu Murti” Batik Pattern

## Discussion

Batik is a human creative work that contains various knowledge from the creator's life process [24]. The nature in which humans live has always been the basic inspiration of the creator, who combines it with imagination and skills in the field he is involved in [25]. The ability to organize natural elements, human elements, and spiritual forces into constructs of knowledge has succeeded in giving birth to new creative works (Fig. 7) that guarantee the sustainability of Indonesian batik from time to time [26].

Aesthetic ornaments in ancient tombs are the main subject and source of creative ideas in this research because they are seen as keeping authentic records of past ethical, aesthetic, spiritual, social, and cultural values. Often, these ideas appear suddenly, so the creator needs to determine concrete steps to record, save, reduce, or add to his wishes [27] in accordance with research contextual considerations.

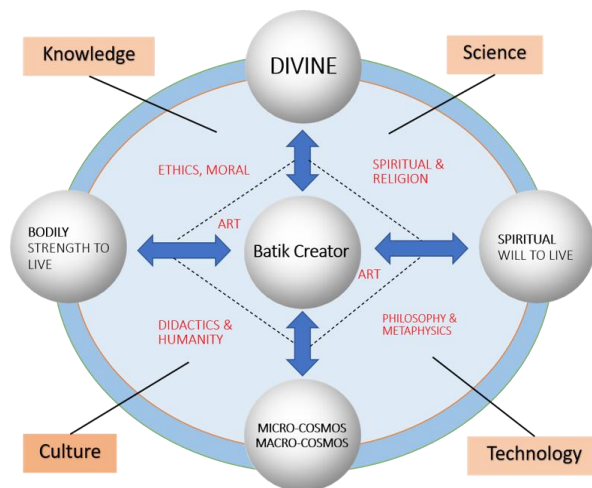


Fig. 7. Position of Creator and Source of Inspiration

The creative work of Indonesian batik design consists of a fundamental concept, a selection of visual objects, and parts that can be utilized and processed into a design structure [28] that aligns with some things to consider in design, which are:

- Awareness that the final design will be written on a cloth for batik and visualized into a typical Indonesian batik textile material. The power of object stylization and the power of imagination, creativity, knowledge, and skills based on love, patience, and sincerity are very necessary to be able to produce superior work.
- Memory, namely the ability to code, store, retain, and remember information or experiences during the process, is very important to accentuate the work of the creator's brain. Information obtained from observation, artistic images, and the touch of love in the work becomes controls that guide motor activity and thought processing [29].
- Knowledge, the preparation of mature concepts, the exploration of knowledge, and the critical power of the creator into new, enriching knowledge. The process of processing creative work depends on knowledge, interest, sensitivity of feelings, skills, and a logical-systematic mindset related to the function and meaning of the work [26].

- d. Wisdom, the birth of new motifs for Indonesian batik from ancient tomb ornaments, is the transformation of pictures of life phenomena beautifully framed to form new motif designs and patterns that characterize the development of Indonesian batik.

While processing the ethnic ornaments of ancient graves into new Indonesian batik motifs, three styles of approach were discovered: object amplification, object substitution, and decorative stylization. Object amplification allows us to use small objects to become main or supporting motifs. We even need to reposition and substitute stylized objects by adding other styles. The tomb's ethnic ornamental object must be changed to become a "new form" that is aesthetic, usable, and in accordance with existing standard rules (decorative stylization).

The results of this research will certainly become a potential new commercial subject [30]. The batik community is always waiting for the emergence of new creativity, products of new ideas. The appreciation of the batik community is great so that the future of Indonesian batik can be maintained and preserved because it continues to be explored and developed. Commodity requirements in the context of new products must be fulfilled [31], including those related to quality. From the start, we must know that the quality of Indonesian batik products with ancient tomb ornament motifs will be a new product leap with an assurance regarding quality.

## Conclusions

This research has successfully explored various ethnic ornaments from the ancient tomb area as an idea for developing Indonesian batik motifs through several stages and their respective criteria. Through strict selection, the ethnic ornaments found have met the values of beauty, philosophy, authenticity, uniqueness, and actuality so that they can be used as inspiration for developing batik motifs. Second, the development of ethnic ornaments from ancient tombs as Indonesian batik motifs has succeeded in transforming the sacred, magical, and mythical impressions into new, unique, and quality designs so that they have high commodity value. Third, this research has succeeded in constructing various old values into new sources of knowledge, especially in the field of developing Indonesian batik motifs.

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