

Cultural Materialism and Aesthetic Analysis of *Ikat*-Woven Sarong Production in Parengan Village, Lamongan, East Java

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Abstract

This research investigates the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of *ikat*-woven *sarong* production in Parengan Village, Lamongan Regency, East Java, using a material culture biography approach. The research addresses how traditional *sarongs*—particularly those with legendary patterns such as *tempean*, *botolan*, and *putihan*—function as cultural commodities shaped by communal production, religious practice, and regional identity. Drawing on Raymond Williams' theory of cultural materialism and Edmund Burke Feldman's aesthetic theory, the research analyzes the visual structure, motif repetition, and socio-cultural functions of the *sarong* as both a physical object and a symbolic medium. Data were collected through ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews, visual documentation, and observations in representative weaving centers. The findings reveal that *sarong* production in Parengan is not only a site of artisanal heritage but also a dynamic cultural practice influenced by commodification, Islamic traditions, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. The research contributes to the discourse on material culture by demonstrating how textile production reflects broader social transformations and cultural negotiations. It highlights the importance of integrating visual analysis and cultural theory to understand the evolving meaning and function of traditional craft in contemporary society.

1. INTRODUCTION

Textiles have long transcended their functional role as repositories of cultural memory, social identity, and symbolic meaning. In Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia—woven fabrics such as the *sarong* have played a pivotal role in shaping communal life, religious practice, and local aesthetics. Artistic expressions from the Dong Son culture, dating to approximately 500 BCE, provide early evidence of significant transformations in Indonesian textile traditions, particularly through the visualization of geometric motifs [1]. These visual forms functioned not merely as decorative elements but as symbolic instruments embedded

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within religious practices and ritual contexts. The development of Indonesian textiles reflects a long-standing civilizational trajectory shaped by phases of social integration within human society. In this context, integration refers to the role of material culture—specifically textile products—as catalysts for interactive engagement within the socio-cultural systems of a pluralistic community. This dynamic is exemplified in the communal production practices of small to medium-scale industries, where textile cultivation is collectively undertaken by localized artisan groups. Such practices not only result in the creation of tangible goods but also foster participatory modes of production rooted in collective artistic labor. Consequently, the cultural meaning of these products is continually enriched, symbolized, and embedded within the lived experiences of the community.

Traditional woven *sarongs* have evolved into commodified garments whose contemporary use is closely tied to religious observance, particularly within Muslim communities. As a culturally distinctive form of attire, the *sarong* remains integral to the daily lives of the majority Muslim population, worn across both formal and informal settings. Islam has historically dominated the religious landscape of coastal regions throughout the Nusantara Archipelago, particularly in areas controlling major harbors and estuaries. From the 15th century onward, Islamic influence extended into the feudal territories of Java, including Mataram and its successors. The prominence of Islam in shaping trade dynamics along Java's northern coast facilitated cross-cultural exchange and social integration. Port cities such as Gresik, Tuban, Jepara, and Demak played pivotal roles in sustaining global trade networks, with textiles—especially high-quality woven fabrics—emerging as key commodities [2]. The enduring impact of cultural forms, including belief systems, continues to shape community lifestyles and material practices. The *sarong* is not merely a garment; it constitutes a cultural artifact embedded within daily rituals, spiritual observance, and intergenerational systems of knowledge transmission. Despite its cultural significance, scholarly engagement with *ikat*-woven *sarongs* remains limited, often confined to descriptive accounts of motifs and techniques without critical or interdisciplinary analysis.

The most significant woven sarong textiles are not only used as daily wear, but also as cultural artifacts that communicate religious and historical values. Studies on Indonesian textiles generally emphasize historical and aesthetic aspects, as done by Maxwell (1990), who documented how Southeast Asian textiles, including sarongs, underwent transformation through trade routes and cultural interactions, making them both commodities and symbols of regional identity [3]. Kartiwa (1987) emphasizes the rich variety of techniques and motifs in Indonesian *ikat* weaving, which reflect ethnic diversity and local values passed down across generations [1]. Kusrianto (2020) specifically discusses woven sarongs as a living cultural heritage, but does not link them to contemporary socio-religious and economic dynamics [4]. Benny and Judi (2016) also highlight the tradition of Nusantara *ikat* weaving as a community practice rich in values, but their study is still descriptive and does not deeply engage with theoretical aspects [5]. The literature references above that are complementary to this research are crucial in revealing that sarongs are not merely garments, but also cultural artifacts that embody spiritual and social values.

The research discusses several critical gaps in Indonesian textile culture studies. The first aspect is the need to further clarify the impact of insufficient cultural analysis on the production of sarongs. The literature rarely adopts an interdisciplinary approach that integrates visual studies, anthropology, and sociology of art to further examine the critical issues between documenting and theorizing the dynamics on the transformation of *ikat* weaving practices in Parengan. Another aspect also requires further concern, such as the urgency to theorize about the sarong as a dynamic cultural commodity shaped by socio-religious, economic, and environmental factors. In addressing these gaps, the research uses Raymond Williams' theory of cultural materialism, which places the sarong in living social relations and historical processes, alongside Edmund Burke Feldman's theory of aesthetics,

which facilitates a critical reading of motifs, forms, and ornaments. This theoretical framework provides a deeper understanding of how material culture acts within systems of meaning, power, and identity.

Raymond Williams' theory of cultural materialism and Edmund Burke Feldman's theory of aesthetics are used to interpret how sarongs function within a system of meaning and authority. However, the lack of critical research examining how community-based ikat weaving practices in Parengan have transformed in the face of commodification and social change remains a significant gap. Therefore, studies that integrate visual, anthropological, and sociological approaches to ikat sarongs—especially in the context of the Parengan community—are lacking. This study aims to complete this gap by mapping the visual and symbolic identity of Parengan ikat sarongs and analyzing their function in the Islamic social system and global market dynamics.

This research focuses on the *ikat*-woven *sarong* produced in Parengan Village, Lamongan Regency, East Java—a region historically situated within the dynamic trade networks of Java's northern coast [6]. The weaving traditions in Parengan, sustained through communal labor and familial inheritance, reflect a unique convergence of Islamic cultural influence, artisanal heritage, and regional identity. Patterns such as *goyor*, *botolan*, *putihan*, and *tempean* are not only aesthetic expressions but also manifestations of inherited cultural knowledge and social values. The production system, characterized by decentralized, home-based workshops, exemplifies a resilient community-based model that continues to adapt to shifting economic and cultural conditions. Traditional textile practices globally are faced with increasing pressure from industrial commodification, cultural homogenization, and the fading of indigenous craft knowledge. Locally, the urgency lies in documenting and theorizing the transformation of *ikat* weaving practices in Parengan, whose production is deeply rooted in community-based systems and familial inheritance. The preservation of complex techniques such as *ikat pakan* and *ikat ganda*, alongside the visual repetition of geometric motifs, signifies a resilient and evolving cultural practice that demands the attention of researchers.

The purposes of this research included mapping the visual and symbolic identity of Parengan *ikat* sarongs through their design, production techniques, and distribution in society; analyzing the socio-cultural function of sarongs in relation to Islamic tradition, coastal trade history, and diverse community life; and examining how the commodification of textile products affects their cultural meaning and status in both local and global contexts. By placing the Parengan sarong within a broader cultural and theoretical framework, this research contributes to the discourse on material culture, cultural heritage preservation, and design ethics. The positions traditional weaving not only as a heritage practice, but also as an ongoing site of negotiation between tradition, innovation, and global market forces.

2. METHODS

The scope of this research was based on research enquiries that focussed on how the sarong became the biographical journey and characteristics of the Parengan community through the form as a material culture product and the creative process as the background of the socio-cultural activities of the producer or weaver community. The research adopts a qualitative ethnographic approach grounded in the biographical model of material culture. The ethnographic method in this research study is shaped as an endeavor to conceptualize day-to-day experiences that are formulated as arguments and supported by theories and thoughts [7]. This model is chosen for its relevance in tracing the cultural, symbolic, and functional transformations of the sarong as a material artifact within the Parengan weaving community. The biographical method enables a contextualized understanding of how woven sarongs—particularly those with legendary patterns such as *tempean*, *botolan*, and *putihan*—

are produced, inherited, and adapted through communal creative processes. This approach is further supported by art anthropology, which facilitates the examination of lived experiences and cultural knowledge embedded in textile production.

The research population consists of weavers, workshop owners, and cultural facilitators involved in the *ikat* weaving industry in Parengan Village and its neighboring areas, including *Pringgono* and *Jangkungsumo*. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants with deep expertise in weaving techniques, motif development, and community-based production systems. The sample size comprises 15 key informants, chosen based on their representativeness and depth of experience. This number was determined through data saturation, ensuring that the collected data reflected the diversity and richness of local practices. Inclusion criteria required participants to have a minimum of ten years of weaving experience and active involvement in sarong production, while exclusion criteria omitted individuals not directly engaged in weaving or lacking historical knowledge of the craft.

Data were collected using multiple instruments to ensure triangulation and analytical depth. These included semi-structured interviews conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese to capture bilingual nuances, field observations of weaving practices and workshop environments, visual documentation such as photographs and motif sketches, and archival research involving local government reports, historical trade records, and literature on coastal textile production. This research was conducted in stages over an extended period of time, but the main focus during the six months from July 2023 to January 2024 was on designing research instruments and conducting fieldwork to update data, which involved daily field visits to weaving centers; data collection through interviews and visual documentation; and data organization through transcription, and cataloging of motifs.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in narratives, visual motifs, and production practices. The analysis was guided by Raymond Williams' theory of cultural materialism, which provided a tripartite lens; cultural institutions, examining the roles of producers, community networks, and external stakeholders; cultural content, analyzing the physical form of the sarong as both commodity and symbolic object; and cultural effects, interpreting the socio-cultural consequences of production changes and commodification [8]. The role of cultural institutions in production activities is crucial in mapping the direction of production changes which are based on the popular culture or trends in the social environment. The second component also underlies the production factors of a material cultural product through an analysis of the content or cultural content. In this case, cultural content is an artefact or physical form such as commodity item from the production activity. The analysis of the visualisation form of production activities in this case indicates how a product is mass-produced and inherited by the community as a form of fulfilment of social necessity. The role of cultural institutions as actors in these production activities contributes to determining the direction of development and change from the visual aspects (physical products) and socio-cultural product functions.

Complementing this research, Edmund Burke Feldman's aesthetic theory supported formal visual analysis of the sarong designs, focusing on structure, ornamentation, and motif repetition [9]. The structure of art form and function assists the formal analysis of the visual product which includes design details, ornamental motifs or ornamentation [9]. The third component in Raymond Williams' concept theory of cultural effects to assist the analysis in this research is based on the direction of the consequences or effects of the development and changes in the production of commodity items. Williams has suggested a perspective in interpreting a dynamic production activity that should be adapted to the social conditions surrounding the activity. This aspect would have a complex impact on mapping the consequences of the development and change of the physical form of the product as well

as the function of the product in the socio-cultural context. These frameworks enabled a layered interpretation of the sarong as both a visual product and a dynamic cultural medium shaped by history, belief systems, and community agency.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. RESULT

Sarong is utilised as the main instrument to support the daily activities of the community, especially for religious activities for the Muslim community [4]. The production of sarongs with various types of products is also influenced by their utilization in the daily lives. Sarong is one of the textile craft products through a variety of visual patterns with each complexity of diverse production techniques in the making process. Craft becomes a terminology identified as a product of the art of the Indonesian people who have a root culture on two basic conceptions of the meaning of 'beauty' (*kalango*) and 'utility' (*wiguna*). Craft products have become one of the visual art products of the archipelago to contemporary era Indonesia [10]. Therefore, the conception of present history is established by the very extensive and complex history of craft.

Textile traditions in Indonesia, especially the ones who use traditional and authentic techniques such as weaving and batik, in the application of ornamental motif elements are closely related to the function of the usage [11]. Weaving motifs are interpreted to contain philosophical values and spiritual meanings that are associated as metaphors for the consumer. In this case, the process of adapting external ideas to techniques, designs, motifs, and textile patterns is also preserved by the people of the Nusantara, especially Indonesia, related to the principles of the indigenous local traditions. The people of Southeast Asia were not only passive recipients and were pressurized against the clash of external principles (mainly Arab, Gujarati, Indian and Chinese merchants as major influencers in the spread of philosophy, religion and politics, as well as trade which then had an impact on the products of material culture in the Nusantara) [2]. The Nusantara craftsmen equipped themselves to accept the influences of external cultures such as India and appropriately adapted and positioned the external knowledge with the indigenous local traditions [12]. It is intriguing to recognize that traditional textiles provide a variety of visual resources but also take into consideration external cultural aspects that influence transformation, diffusion, adaptation and adoption. Such aspects are conceived in the context of transformation, diffusion, adaptation and adoption of various characters of ornamental entities that can be implemented throughout different eras and socio-cultures of a particular society. Each region would display identical characteristics to each local entity in the treasury of commodity products in their production areas.

Ornamentation patterns on traditional Indonesian *wastra* or fabrics have traversed a long journey in the textile civilization in Indonesia through the assumption of one of the popular and distinctive production techniques for traditional *wastra* such as the weaving technique [13]. The production of the technique is considered one of the types of material culture products that have previously adapted the many textile production techniques disseminated by merchants such as the renowned Chinese and Indian textiles. The role of merchants in influencing textile production techniques to the Nusantara is very beneficial for craftsmen as a new insight into the creativity of product innovation. Weaving as one of the *wastra* (traditional fabrics) emphasises the technical aspects of production that are so complex and unique that it becomes one of the authentic Nusantara craft products.

Weaving is one of the Nusantara's visual art products when traced through the historical roots of *wastra* and textile culture in Indonesia, which was mostly influenced by Indian and Chinese merchants and scholars. Since the beginning of the first millennium AD, the

merchants dominated the Southeast Asian trade routes, which had an impact on the dissemination of ideas and production techniques in certain sectors, one of which was textiles. The variety of textiles from motifs to production techniques throughout the centuries of Hindu-Buddhist influence has continued to be absorbed in Southeast Asian cultures, one of which is Indonesia. Such a process of Indianisation has been amply evidenced in the various material and immaterial cultural products that have been conceived and adapted to the inherited traditions. One result of this was the adaptation of conservative ideas in Southeast Asian textiles with the stylistic character of visualisation from the transformation of designs, motifs and themes according to local aesthetic principles [3].

The development of ornamental patterns and structural forms in textile products such as from the influences of Gujarat, China, and India with Indonesian textile products is symbolically interpreted as a signifier of identity between each country and contributes as a world heritage material cultural product with authenticity of visual style characters [14]. The trade route became the central relationship between the relations of cultural influences, especially on textiles. In fact, not all textiles developed in the Nusantara necessarily adopted entirely from a variety of styles to their application from external influences, such as Java. Instead, the process of localisation was also applied by craftsmen to combine external cultural ideas and concepts with local interpretations. The aesthetic differences revealed in the visual form have made the influence of external cultural ideas only as an artistic reference for the creative development of local Indonesian textile designs.

3.1.1. The Dynamics of Sarong Production Systems and Cultural Institutions: Material Techniques and Product Differentiation

Maduran Sub-district is an area in Lamongan Regency, East Java, which has a weaving industry consisting of *ikat* woven sarong products that are concentrated in villages. The woven *ikat* commodities are dominated by *goyor* sarongs of various patterns such as *botolan*, *putihan* and some home industries that are producing *tempean*-patterned sarongs. *Ikat* weaving products such as sarongs are the main commodity for the weavers who have inherited many weaving activities from the internal inheritance system through family businesses. The production of *ikat* weaving that develops in the sub-district is located in several areas such as Parengan Village, Pringgoboyo Village, and Kanugrahan Village in Maduran Sub-district [15]. Parengan Village, which is administratively located in Maduran Subdistrict, is one of the areas that has a weaving production center with the expansion of production activities. The Parengan weaving tradition has been present since pre-independence or during the Dutch East Indies with products that were originally a simple woven fabric (plain weave) that still utilized *gedog* / *hand-loom* weaving devices. These woven products with fabric characteristics are common and popular in today's consumer society such as blacu fabric.

Weaving activities in the 1960s became increasingly popular with a variety of product innovations, one of which was supported through the *upgrade* of the loom technology [5]. The development of the loom began to be recognized by the craft community with the knowledge of *tijak* looms/non-machine looms (ATBM), which are still popular in production in weaving centers in Java and especially Parengan Village. The weaving tradition has been inherited by the local community in the production area, certainly also influenced by externals in the development process both on the product form and the supporting production pattern. The production gradually popular and active with the main commodities such as sarong is also supported by cultural institutional factors, such as the 'market' of textile commodities [8]. The role of the 'market' in this case is complementary to the liveliness of production to respond to challenges and trends in fulfilling the needs of the

consumer. It cannot be denied that textile products are one of the commodities that will always have a significant role in supporting the life activities of its society [16].

The great influence of the global position within a dominated regional system, such as religious influence in a certain era, also has an impact on the production of commodity objects which are based on material culture products. The spread of the first Muslim era in the Nusantara had an impact on textiles, whose role can be concretely observed as a material culture product to support the daily activities of the society. Textiles used for religious costumes that are related to the use of ceremonies and prayer activities in the center of the aristocracy and the civil society have long been a support instrument for these religious activities.



Figure 1. Portrait of Sarong Weaving Activities in Parengan That Would Have Shaped the Lifestyle of the Community Who Made Them.
[Source: Photo Nusantara, 2022]

The use of sarongs by the majority Muslim society is vital to its role as a complementary costume for religious activities [4]. Sarong has been widely interpreted by society as an object whose existence and ideas of symbolization function on a personal physique on a spiritual and socio-cultural level. Sarong has been widely used by the wider society at the spiritual level as a costume that was formed from knowledge that developed in its socio-cultural environment and inherited as an object of support for religious activities and none other than for daily activities. At the socio-cultural level, the sarong is also an object that can strengthen social ties within the society, where all interests based on daily societal activities, especially the items interpreted at the spiritual level, which have been accommodated through the use of sarongs at religious moments.

The production system based on collective-collaborative (communal) work is shown in the weaving activities in Parengan. The community of weavers is fully involved in the interactivity process of sarong weaving production that is not centralized in one production center. The decentralized structure of weaving practices in Parengan exemplifies cultural resilience by facilitating the intergenerational transmission of artisanal knowledge while simultaneously accommodating economic adaptation. The autonomy inherent in home-based production systems enables weavers to navigate market fluctuations, retain control over their craft, and sustain livelihoods independent of centralized industrial mechanisms. The weavers are scattered in the production areas in the villages and sub-villages in Parengan. Most of the weavers worked in their own workshops in one of the steps in the production of woven sarongs. This indicates the characteristics of a collective-collaborative work system on a material culture product in a small-medium industrial center in the villages, which would indicate the equivalence of the thought patterns that underlie their knowledge of the dynamics of a particular material object product. The relationship based on the perspective of a particular thing, such as the recognition of the material production, would be dynamic and transformed in visualization and meaning from time-to-time, which is formed collectively from the perspective of the society. Therefore, in this case, the roles of subjects as patrons or pioneers of cultural change become central and fundamentally influence the development of a material culture production by producing innovative and/or modified products that have an impact on the people who make and even use these products [8].

Raymond Williams' theory of cultural materialism provides a lens to interpret the production system in Parengan. The weaving community functions as a cultural institution where knowledge, technique, and meaning are transmitted through lived experience. The role of the market, as Williams suggests, a cultural institution is central to shaping production trends and consumer preferences. In Parengan, the commodification of sarongs—especially the *tempean* type—illustrates how traditional products are recontextualized within systems of exchange and status signaling. The decentralized nature of production reflects Williams' concept of "residual culture," where traditional practices persist and adapt within modern economic frameworks. The weaving system is not static; it evolves in response to external influences, consumer demand, and cultural mobility. The sarong is interpreted as a product shaped by cultural institutions, production systems, and socio-economic forces. The decentralized weaving model in Parengan reflects a grassroots cultural institution where knowledge is transmitted through familial and communal networks.



Figure 2. One of the Weaving Activities Inherited by Weavers Through Internal Regeneration (From Family).

[Source: Photo Nusantara, 2022]

3.2. DISCUSSION

3.2.1. Visual Ornamentation and Motif Typology: Aesthetic Analysis of Motif and Symbolic Interpretation

The variety of visualizations on sarong ornamentation in the Parengan *ikat* weaving industry has consistently embodied the character or visual style of the material culture product. The harmony of the visual form composition of the Parengan woven sarong represents the character and/or characteristics of the interplay of color compositions with bright/light intensity, as well as the geometric and symbolic organization of the motifs displayed. The visual structure of the sarong products of Parengan from era to era indicates how the practice of art creation is correlated with the socio-cultural environment that shapes it. Ideas, imagination, and the influence of trends in environmental necessities have influenced how the society's conception of the embodiment of material products is structured from the scope of the catalyzing factors [17]. Therefore, the various manifestations of textiles also have not escaped the change in function from sacred to profane or secular, from those full of transcendental power to those that have experienced commodification in the mainstream of cultural civilization. Observation and interpretation of the historical thread of material object production in an area are influenced by the context of the period and the form of belief of the local community.

Applying Edmund Burke Feldman's aesthetic theory, the ornamentation of Parengan sarongs can be analyzed through four dimensions:

1. Description

The ornamentation of Parengan sarongs is dominated by geometric motifs such as rhombus, four-square grids, six-square *ceplongan*, *kawung*, and *buketan*. These motifs are rendered with high symmetry and repetition, often arranged in horizontal bands across the fabric.

The color palette tends toward bright and light intensities—vibrant reds, deep indigos, and luminous whites—creating strong visual contrast and clarity. The stylization avoids naturalistic forms, favoring abstract geometry that defines the sarong's visual identity. The visual style remains consistent across generations, preserving the identity of the production area.

2. Analysis

The geometric components are systematically composed to establish rhythmic visual sequences and compositional equilibrium. Motif configurations are frequently embedded within grid-based frameworks, wherein alternating chromatic fields contribute to the overall harmony and coherence of the design. The repetition of shapes—especially in *ceplukan* and *kawung*—creates a sense of order and continuity. The interplay between motif and background reinforces visual harmony. The repetition of shapes, especially in *ceplukan* and *kawung*, reflects a design logic rooted in both aesthetic discipline and cultural symbolism.

3. Interpretation

The motifs are deeply embedded in Javanese cosmology. For instance, the *kawung tirta* motif combines rhombus shapes with water symbolism, representing purity and spiritual flow. The four-square and six-square structures evoke *sedulur papat lima pancer*—the four cardinal siblings and the center—symbolizing balance between the self and the universe. Ornamentation thus becomes a visual manifestation of *sangkan paraning dumadi*, the philosophical idea of origin and destiny. The sarong, through its motifs, serves as a medium for expressing spiritual beliefs, ancestral memory, and communal identity.

4. Judgment

The design of Parengan sarongs effectively communicates cultural meaning through its formal and symbolic elements. The consistent use of geometric motifs, symmetrical layout, and vibrant color schemes reinforces the textile's role as both a functional garment and a bearer of cultural knowledge. The ornamentation is not only aesthetically refined but also spiritually resonant, making the sarong a powerful expression of local identity. Even as commodification shifts its function from sacred to secular, the visual language retains its symbolic depth, allowing the sarong to remain a meaningful object in both traditional and contemporary contexts.

The Parengan woven sarong reveals the existence of its production through how the weavers consistently present the visual style of the traditional motif ornamentation of the sarong with a variety of ornamental stylization of the motif form. The creations based on the form are experimented in order to convey the existence of the woven sarong that would never replace the character of the visual product from the production area. The society also maintained a certain conception that the form of ornamentation displayed on the surface of the fabric not only assumed an aesthetic role, but also symbolically represented that these products were highly useful to support the meaningfulness of life for the wearers. The ornamentation organized through geometric-symbolic and traditional or classical forms (in the form of a rhombus, four-square pattern structure, six-square *ceplukan* or *buketan*) is a product of interpretation that can be based on the assumption of certain perspectives from the concept of Javanese cosmology (*sedulur papat kiblat limo pancer*, *sangkan paraning dumadi*). This symbolic geometry reflects Javanese cosmology, where visual repetition and symmetry are metaphors for spiritual equilibrium and the cyclical nature of existence. The motifs serve as visual articulations of metaphysical concepts, embedding cosmological narratives into everyday textile use. Feldman's theoretical emphasis on contextual interpretation enables motifs such as *ceplukan* and *kawung* to be understood not solely as

compositional design elements, but as culturally embedded visual signifiers that articulate notions of spiritual balance and social cohesion within the framework of Javanese cosmology.

The ornamental forms that are based on the representation of certain perspectives or conceptions have shaped the mindset of the society, thus influencing how they make forms that reflect the conceptualized elements. In this case, the role of culture is created from the knowledge of the cognition system from the people's conceptualization of components in daily life and represent their perspective [18]. Sarong as one of the textile products have a role in presenting these conceptions of what is embodied and shaped from the hope for the harmony of life. At the level of aesthetic interpretation, the ornament form within it would be able to reveal the identity and visual character of the product [9]. The visual characteristics of textiles from the various ornament patterns and production techniques used would identify that each era or period-the era context in a particular culture influences the variety of patterns, colors, motifs, patterns, and production techniques. At the symbolic level, these forms manifested the conception of life's hopes for the reality that inspired the textile.

Edmund Burke Feldman's aesthetic theory supports the formal analysis of sarong motifs. The geometric ornamentation—rhombus, *ceplokan*, *kawung*—demonstrates a structured visual language that reflects both aesthetic principles and symbolic meaning. Feldman's aesthetic framework facilitates the interpretation of textile motifs not merely as formal design components, but as culturally embedded visual signifiers that convey collective identity and metaphysical belief systems. The *kawung tirta* motif, for instance, integrates rhombic geometry with aquatic symbolism, embodying notions of purity and spiritual continuity within the Javanese cosmological tradition.



Figure 3. One of the Traditional Motifs of the Goyor Woven Sarong With a Botolan Pattern, One of Which Is Produced in Parengan (Motif Name: *Kawung*), Which Is Composed of a Rhombus Structure as the Main Motif and a Rhombus Form (Diamond).

[Source: Ilustrasi Nusantara, 2023]

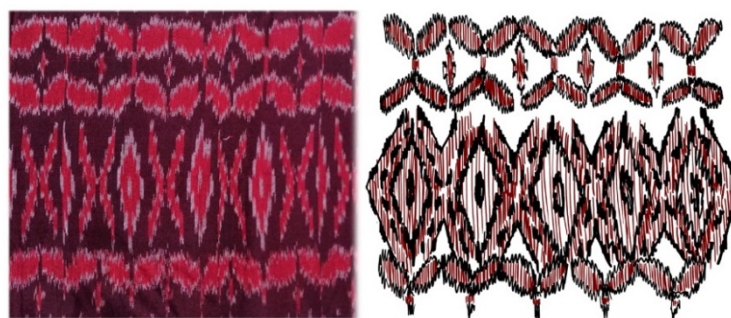


Figure 4. The Motif of the Traditional Goyor Woven Sarong With a Botolan Pattern (Motif Name: *Kawung Tirta*) Is Composed of the Main Structure of the Rhombus Form as the *Kawung* and *Tirta* Motifs (From the Intertwined Rhombus Forms).

[Source: Ilustrasi Nusantara, 2023]

3.2.2. Symbolism, Identity, and Commodification

Various spreads of historical relics which the material of clay and bronze are dominated by geometric motifs as a variety of product decoration [19]. The development of geometric motifs also spread to the application in various textile products, one of which was heavily influenced by imported textiles. The main motif used in traditional textiles was usually formed from a four-square with circular elements as a completion [19]. However, the dominance of the main motif of the Parengan *goyor* woven sarong as in the example above is organized by a pattern structure of four-square, four-rectangle, rhombus, and hexagon motifs. The use of sarong motifs organized from geometric forms also relates to the socio-cultural aspects of the local consumer community—related to belief systems and the economic aspects of where the product is disseminated (local and global markets)—related to the client's preferences. The *goyor*-patterned sarong has expanded into the textile market, which is mostly consumed by one particular faith for the necessity of worship instruments. This became the conception of society in the creation of ornamentation on products that relate to the context of the socio-cultural environment. The conception is constructed as the basis for the creation of art products which is supported by the spiritual beliefs and beliefs of a community.

Variety of patterns from the representation of figurative-realistic and naturalistic forms is not found in the ornamentation structure of woven sarong products from both *goyor botolan*, *putihan*, and *tempean-patterned* sarongs. The stylistic forms on the various variants of sarong products are dominated by the whole surface of the sarong. Geometric ornamentation is composed into representations of forms such as the visualization of *ceplokan* or *buketan* motifs, and the composition of rectangular and dot forms that represent the interpretation of Javanese cosmological concepts. The interpretation that shaped the visualization formulated the concept of knowledge that was shaped from the conception of the universe and certain forms which could be the manifestation of the cosmic center as the center of life and belief in the life-giving. The roots of pre-historic, Hindu-Buddhist, and Islamic traditions have remained with the society's conception of the object manifestation as a cultural product. Therefore, the composition of motifs from geometric forms and the representation of their forms could distinctively reveal the character of the product through the visualization and the conception that shaped it [20]. Viewed through Feldman's theoretical framework, the predominance of geometric ornamentation and the intentional exclusion of figurative motifs in Parengan sarongs signify a conscious aesthetic orientation grounded in symbolic cultural expression, rather than an adherence to naturalistic visual representation.

Kawung tirta and *ceplokan wajik* are composed of geometric forms that symbolize purity, balance, and cosmological order. Feldman's emphasis on cultural context allows us to interpret these motifs as visual metaphors for spiritual beliefs and social harmony. The dominance of symmetrical patterns and bright color compositions suggests a cultural preference for clarity and resonance. The aesthetic structure of the sarong thus becomes a medium for expressing collective identity and philosophical values.

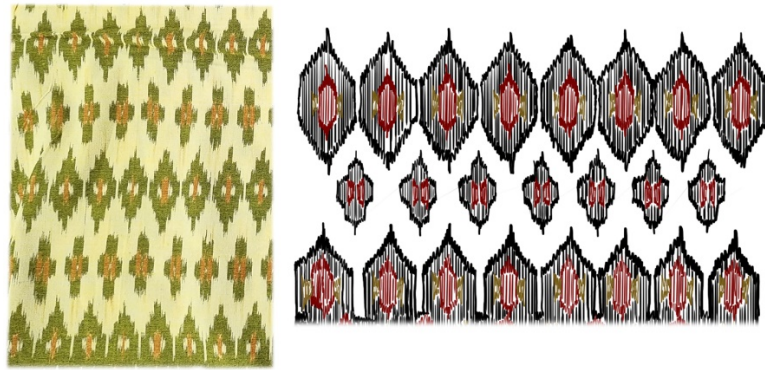


Figure 5. The Traditional Motif of Goyor Woven Sarong With Putihan Pattern (Motif Name: Putihan Wajik) Is Created From a Hexagon Structure for the Main Motif and Area Surface Complement; the "Putihan" Motif Is Derived From the Color Dominance Element of the Product.
[Source: Illustrasi Nusantara, 2023]



Figure 6. The Traditional Motif of the Putihan-Patterned Goyor Woven Sarong (Motif Name: Ceplok Wajik) Is Composed of a Variety of Geometric Motif Structures, and Within the Main Motif Is a Representation of the Ceplokan Form That Interpreted the Concepts of Javanese Cosmology.
[Source: Illustrasi Nusantara, 2023]

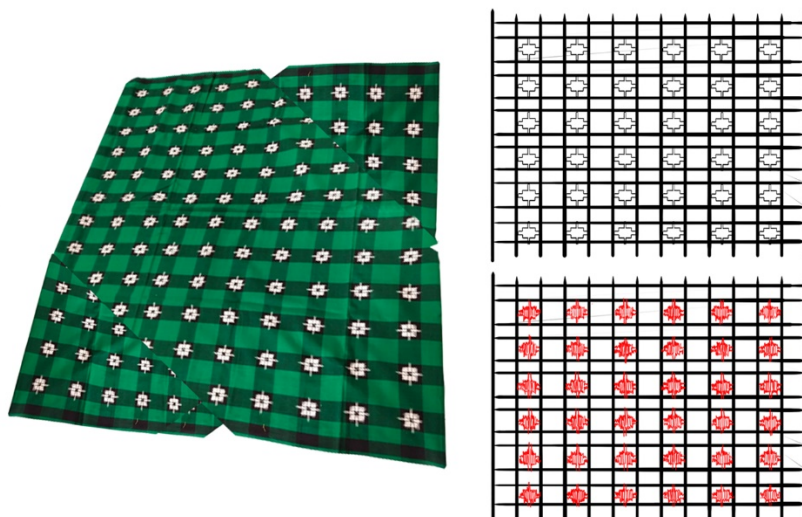


Figure 7. The Traditional Motif for a Sarong With a Tempe Pattern Is Organized From a Basic Structure of Geometric Motifs.
[Source: Illustrasi Nusantara, 2023]

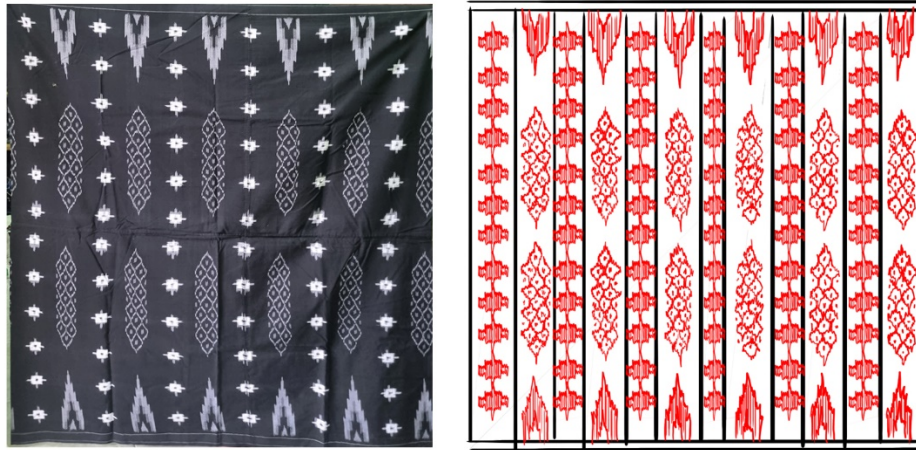


Figure 8. The Modification of Sarong Tempe Motifs Is Organized From the Basic Structure of Geometric Motifs.

[Source: Illustrasi Nusantara, 2023]

3.2.3. Sarong as Identity Marker and Social Symbol

The use of sarongs is not only interpreted as clothing (body coverings) at the level of practical functions, but also has an impact in showing a symbol of an identity's social status. In the development context, weaving became one of the commodities of material cultural products from the aspect of meaning that could reveal symbolic identities that were associated with regions and time periods in history [21]. The use of ornaments and conceptual meanings influenced each other in a common industry whenever social attachments or relations existed in art forms that were also influenced by factors such as experience, physical environment, and dynamic mass necessities [8]. Therefore, the spread and expansion of art forms in production areas with the same type of product would contribute to shaping the identity and character of the product and the social environment that shaped it.

The main aspect of wearing a sarong in daily life besides for religious activities, sarong also increasingly occupies space in the community in the usage of non-religious activities such as daily work activities. The *goyor* sarong is indicated to be often used in daily activities due to the type, nature and character of the product that is flexible in the application. The *goyor* sarong dominates the Parengan *ikat* weaving center and has the nature and character of a woven sarong that is determined by the use of the type of raw material such as fiber yarn and would produce a smooth fabric surface texture, high absorbency, and non-heat in the wear [22]. Therefore, the term '*goyor*' which is adopted from the Javanese language meaning soft and used in referring to this type of sarong product is determined by the final nature of the product which has the tendency of the above characteristics.

In the level of product interpretation in the society, sarongs were accessible and worn by various groups. Formerly, the utilization of sarong was only used as a worship instrument for Muslims in various distribution of sarong products in Indonesia, especially Java Island. Nowadays, the utilization of the product has expanded with the practical function in daily



Figure 9. The flexible wear of a *goyor* woven sarong in daily activities by one of the weaving craftsmen in Parengan, Lamongan.

[Source: Photo Nusantara, 2022]

life and non-formal momentum. In contrast to the utilization of sarong products with *tempe* patterns, which was an exclusive product from the production of the *ikat* weaving center in Parengan. The indications of this product as an exclusive product were observed from the complexity of the production and the utilization of the product in the society's daily life at certain moments. The production of sarong *tempe* was found to have utilized the double-*ikat* weaving production technique as a legendary weaving technique and a limited number of production centers that utilized this technique in the distribution of their production throughout Indonesia. The commodification of sarongs, particularly those with complex motifs and limited production, reflects how material culture is mobilized to express identity and social mobility. These textiles become markers of status and cultural capital, signifying both heritage and aspiration in contemporary society.

In the weaving activities in Parengan, this technique was originally popular among weavers with qualified technical skills. However, due to the regeneration process in the inheritance system that is incomprehensive, it causes limited production aspects and product utilization that can only be reached by certain classes and became exclusive products. The consumers used the sarong in formal moments and not infrequently used it as souvenirs that could indicate the status and social stratification and even the lifestyle of certain societies. The product utilization based on the usage in the society could indicate how a cultural system is increasingly being transformed which is based on cultural mobility that causes symbols, institutions, and product values to be transformed [23]. Meanwhile, the relations between the existence of physical material as a cultural product would not be separated from how people have interpreted these products from space and time, which would continuously mobilize the interests of society.

3.2.4. Sarong as Material Culture Biography: Commodification and Cultural Transformation

The categorization of sarong as a material cultural product would be always related to how sarong is interpreted not as an object or a non-living thing. The meaning is emphasized on how the community perceived the sarong in the complexity of the physical, social, and symbolic environment which involved the interaction process for the purpose of implementing social functions and organizing social relations and providing symbolic meaning in human activities [24]. The practice of using sarongs in the society has shown how the production of material objects is not necessarily separated from the meaning of the object when it has reached the realm of utilization by the public at large. In this sense, the meaning of an object or material culture product is always based on where it is encountered, interacted with and used [24]. Through the understanding shaped by the production of material objects, it could indicate how social structures such as inequality that is caused by the process of human interpretation on material cultural products could potentially occur in the society. The use of sarongs based on the type of product in daily life activities became a value indicator and also a reflection of the social situation as well as indicating the product as a material culture biography that is interconnected to create a journey story of the meanings that have been shaped by the producer and consumer. The society has adjusted the use of sarong in daily activities based on social interaction [25].



Figure 10. The wearing of a woven sarong that indicates the use of the *goyor* sarong type by the Tengger community on the slopes of Mount Bromo in the interpretation of practical-symbolic functions in daily life activities.
[Source: Photo Nusantara, 2022]

The commodification of sarongs, especially the change from sacred to profane applications, illustrates the dynamic cultural effects described by Williams. The *tempean* sarong, once a sacred object, has transformed into prestige goods that is used to signify status or given as a ceremonial gift. This transformation reflects broader cultural mobility and the negotiation of meaning across space and time. The sarong becomes a biographical object—its meaning shaped by its journey through production, circulation, and consumption.

4. CONCLUSION

This research has demonstrated that the *ikat*-woven sarong of Parengan Village constitutes more than a textile commodity. It represents a dynamic cultural artifact shaped by communal craftsmanship, religious observance, and socio-cultural adaptation. The findings reveal that the sarong operates simultaneously as a material object and a symbolic medium—its visual motifs, production techniques, and patterns of use reflect the transmission of ancestral knowledge, spiritual values, and evolving social functions. The decentralized and intergenerational nature of its production, coupled with the symbolic complexity of its geometric ornamentation, underscores the sarong's enduring role in sustaining cultural identity and everyday life within the community.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to material culture studies by employing Raymond Williams' cultural materialism and Edmund Burke Feldman's aesthetic theory to interpret textile production as a site of cultural negotiation and visual articulation. Practically, it offers a nuanced perspective on the preservation and revitalization of traditional craft practices through community-based production systems. The research's originality lies in its interdisciplinary methodology, which integrates ethnographic inquiry, visual analysis, and cultural theory to conceptualize the sarong as a biographical object with layered and evolving meanings. The practical implications of these findings extend to the domains of heritage preservation, design education, and cultural policy. Recognizing the sarong as a living artifact provides a framework for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, supporting local craft economies, and fostering culturally embedded design innovation. The insights derived from Parengan's weaving practices may also inform sustainable models for craft-based industries in other regional contexts.

By synthesizing visual, ethnographic, and theoretical dimensions, this research affirms the Parengan *ikat*-woven sarong as a culturally resonant artifact that embodies aesthetic principles, spiritual belief systems, and socio-economic structures. The integration of Williams' and Feldman's frameworks enables a multi-layered interpretation of the sarong as both a visual product and a cultural medium. This research advances the discourse on traditional crafts by offering an interdisciplinary model for analyzing material culture, emphasizing the significance of community-based production, symbolic expression, and aesthetic innovation in the continuity of textile heritage.

Nonetheless, the research is constrained by its geographic focus and sample scope, centering primarily on Parengan and its immediate environs. Future research could extend to comparative analyses across other weaving centers in Java or Southeast Asia and investigate gendered dimensions of craft labor. Methodologically, further integration of visual semiotics and participatory design research could enrich the understanding of motif symbolism and community engagement.

This research concludes by emphasizing the importance of viewing traditional textiles not as static cultural relics, but as an evolving expression of collective memory, aesthetic innovation, and socio-economic resilience. Parengan *ikat* sarongs exemplify how material culture continually negotiates tradition and transformation. Its ongoing relevance depends on recognition and support for the cultural ecosystem that sustains it—positioning this

research as a meaningful contribution to scientific inquiry and applied practice in design, heritage, and cultural sustainability.

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