

ORNAMENTAL MOTIFS OF INDIAN ORIGIN IN INDONESIA

The cultural influence of Hindu-Buddhist India on Indonesia has made significant changes in many areas of life and art, which proved to be permanent. Indonesia without India would probably look like those parts of the country, where cultures referred to as tribal, archaic or megalithic are found: mainly East Indonesia (the Lesser Sundas Islands or Nusa Tenggara; and Moluccas), as well as the interior of Borneo, central Sulawesi, areas inhabited by the Batak of North Sumatra, the island of Nias and others. In those parts of Indonesia there exists an ancient common law called adat, elements of ancient beliefs cultivated to different degrees, a simple social structure whose most complex level is essentially that of a village, Neolithic motifs in decorative crafts at best with some subsequent cultural strata mainly from the Bronze Age (e.g. on the Lesser Sundas).

Under the Indian influence, civilisation underwent major development:

- a centralised, hierarchical form of government developed, headed by the ruler who took the title of raja (king) from India (in the Indianised part of the Malay Archipelago at least a few such states of different sizes were formed during that period.);
- writing developed (although generally this is an earlier phenomenon that emerged in the Bronze Age, it reached Indonesia during the era of Indian influence). This was the writing of the Pallava kingdom in South India (inscriptions in Sanskrit). The Old Javanese writing and all other scripts in Indonesia developed from it¹⁾ (including the Balinese writing still used till today, in addition to the Latin alphabet);

¹⁾ Bernet Kempers (1959: 9).

- Buddhism and Hinduism arrived and together with them a developed theology, philosophy, art, architecture (temples built in stone) based on Indian designs and richly decorated with sculptures (reliefs and three-dimensional sculptures) with realistic forms;
- iconography associated with the two great religions (including the iconography of gods, heroes and animals, including those from the Hindu epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana and edifying Buddhist tales-jatakas);
- symbolic motifs (such as royal symbols – the umbrella, disc, lotus and others.) and floral ornamentation (which for the first time appeared in the Malay Archipelago²⁾);
- certain aspects of music and ritual dance (e.g. the transverse flute, bottle-shaped drum and plucked string instruments – which have not been preserved as Javanese instruments). However, the gamelan orchestra itself, typical of Java and composed mainly of metalophones, is a genuine, local achievement, older than any influence from India.³⁾

With all this it should be stated that the Indian influence stretched only as far as West Indonesia (and even not the whole of it), namely Sumatra and Java, and later Bali. It was strongly visible in the art of the period since the mid-7th century till the end of the 15th century (in Bali till today). Other cultural influences were also accumulated in Indonesia: Islamic, European and Chinese. Despite this, the impact of India is not lost and a number of consequences of the Indian impact are still relevant: many Indian ornamental motifs have survived in Javanese batik, which in its current, developed form, is a relatively new phenomenon, dating from about the 16th century.

²⁾ This view prevails in the literature. Only Anthony Granucci, an American collector of arts and crafts of the Lesser Sunda Islands (Nusa Tenggara) and also the author of a monograph on the rare topic, believed that the Austronesians (peoples that include Indonesians) had known the tree and vine and these motifs depicted the force of growing. Although he said that trade relations with India, China and Europe had brought floral motifs to the Lesser Sundas, he added that these motifs had found recipients to whom they were not strangers. He believed that some floral motifs were there known already in the paleometalic era (the early era of metal): the example was a miniature bronze drum called moko of the island of Alor known from excavations (donation of Ch. Leroux for the National Museum in Jakarta, inv. number 1428). On the drum branches are visible around a medallion which may represent a face or the sun. Granucci (2005: 78–80).

³⁾ Lindsay (1979: 3–4).

The Indian impact arose from trade contacts, and only slightly from migration. In addition, there were hardly any wars between the two countries⁴⁾ and Indonesia was not subordinated to India. Trade relations with India were associated with the favourable geographical location of Indonesia on the great sea route linking China with India and farther on to Rome – the marine equivalent of the land Silk Road. Indonesia has provided India with spices (a great wealth, always attracting willing buyers) and also tropical timber, in exchange for the most desirable commodity – Indian fabrics.

It is not certain when trade with India, with such major effects on the culture, started up. Contemporary research tends to push that date further and further back and it is assumed today that it took place not later than in the 1st century before Christ.⁵⁾ But the current impact, in terms of actual surviving works of art created in the archipelago, probably required a lot of time to gain any recognition and that is why the Indian-influenced period in Indonesia dates back to the period since c. 650 AD (buildings since c. 730) to the 15th/16th century (or c. 1530). This period is conventionally called Hindu-Javanese, although it included, amongst others, Sumatra. One may distinguish two sub-periods within it due to a shift in the cultural and political centre to the eastern part of Java:

- central Javanese: approximately 650 until approximately 930,
- east Javanese: approximately 930 until approximately 1530.

Over time, during the east Javanese sub-period, external influences were assimilated and a new, specific, individual style was created. The style, characteristic of Java and Bali, consisted in presenting the human figure as a wayang (shadow theatre) puppet and was called the wayang style. It still appears today in arts and crafts.

Since the 15th/16th century, or after about 1530, a new great era in the culture of Indonesia began, the Muslim era.

Although Islam had reached the archipelago earlier, at the end of the 13th century in Sumatra (via trade), the date of a new era was established by the slow decline of the Majapahit empire (the last Hindu-Javanese empire based in East

⁴⁾ Except for the marine invasion of the South Indian dynasty Chola on the Buddhist Sumatran kingdom Srivijaya in 1025. Brinkgreve, Sulistianingsih (2009: 16).

⁵⁾ Granucci (2005: 51). In addition, there is now a tendency to believe that India was not making contact, but Indonesia first reached India by sea. Indonesians were immigrants and colonizers on a large scale, who settled in the islands of the Malay Archipelago (from sea and not from the mainland), as well as Polynesia and Madagascar and have therefore had appropriate knowledge of shipbuilding and navigation.

Java and named after its ruling dynasty) and the gradual replacement of it (not without conflict) by new, smaller, Muslim sultanates (Demak originating from the North Coast of Java and then Mataram II that ruled Central Java in the years 1582–1755). In fact, relations with India have never stopped, but since the 13th–14th century the impact of India, especially Indian fabrics, was inseparable from Islam,⁶ because there was supremacy of Indian Muslim merchants (Arab traders) over Hindu merchants.⁷ Moreover, Islam radiated from the Mughal empire of northern India. At the end of the 18th century, however, there was a decisive weakening of the impact of India as a result of the acquisition of the role of trade partner by Europe. A unique position in the art of Indonesia has been occupied by the island of Bali, which has remained (until now) an enclave of Hinduism and pre-Islamic art forms, such as, among others, figural sculpture and painting in the wayang style.

Java has become the centre of another art form – batik. It had been cultivated on Java for centuries, but its patterns were very simple, geometric (e.g. stars, swastikas, bands of triangles), rice pasta being used instead of wax and the implement called canting (a copper container with a spout and bamboo handle to write patterns with melted wax) was not known. Analogues of this early form of batik are found in Indochina. However, batik – in its more developed form – is likely to be a relatively new phenomenon, dating back to approximately the sixteenth century (based on a text from a 1518 manuscript written on palm leaves, describing the customs in the principality of Galuh on the north coast of Java during the period prior to the emergence of Islam. It refers to a male batik-maker and ten batik patterns). The canting is a Javanese invention, without which it would not be possible to achieve the high precision in design, which has become typical of batik. The second condition of high precision was the availability of exceptionally smooth white cotton fabric that, till the end of the eighteenth century, had been imported from India and then later from Europe. By the end of the seventeenth century, the central Javanese batik was white-blue (single dyeing) and in the eighteenth century soja brown was added. The background was white in the Principality of Yogyakarta, and yellowish in Surakarta. Products from the north coast of Java are generally in red, blue and cream colours and they give an impression of being more colourful than those in the Principalities; in many cases other colours – such as green – were used, too.

⁶) Maxwell (2003a: 154).

⁷) A separate, later phenomenon – since the 16th century – was the presence of Europeans. The cultural influence of Europe started, however, to be noticeable since the 18th century.

At the end of the eighteenth century the sultan of Surakarta reserved from hundreds of motifs that had evolved over the centuries a collection of motifs deemed *larangan* – forbidden to the people, and reserved for the sultan himself, his family members and high officials of the court. The motifs included (among others): the *sawat* (a pair of wings and fan-like tail of the eagle Garuda), which is a royal symbol in Java and Southeast Asia; *parang rusak* or “crushed rock” / “broken knife” (a geometrically diagonal motif: diagonal bands made up of forms similar to the double spiral); *cemukiran* (bands of tiny, flame-like form); *modang* – a large, sometimes elongated diamond, a symbol of the mirror, probably derived from the Buddhist mandala and its simplified version – the Hindu yantra; *udan liris* (lit. “drizzle” – a set of different, small geometric patterns arranged in diagonal bands); *tumpal* (elongated triangles arranged in series) on a white background.

Soon after, the sultan of Yogyakarta introduced a similar ban. He reserved for himself, for the heir to the throne and closest comrades the following patterns: *parang rusak* and Garuda *ageng* (lit. “great Garuda”, presumably it was *sawat*); for other relatives of the ruler: *semen* – a vegetable pattern symbolising the cosmos, composed of vegetable tendrils with the accumulation of other motifs, like miniature hills, temples, animal forms; *lar* – a single wing of the eagle Garuda, *mirong* – a couple of these wings; distant relatives could wear *kawung* pattern of intersecting ellipses or four overlapping circles. These motives performed twofold role: one believed in their particular “auspicious power” and also they were supposed to help identify members of the hierarchical court.⁸⁾

Currently, these motifs are not reserved any more (however, the rigour of the ban was generally inversely proportional to the distance from the court), but wearing an attire decorated with the *parang rusak* motif at the court of Yogyakarta (if the wearer is not “entitled”) is seen as inappropriate.⁹⁾

INDIAN ORNAMENTAL MOTIFS IN INDONESIA¹⁰⁾

Under the influence of India many new decorative motifs arrived in Indonesia, although some of them, such as the snake, impinged on indigenous motifs already existing there. Later, as noted, the Indian motifs mainly entered into

⁸⁾ Chukina (1979: 14).

⁹⁾ Khan Majlis (1984: 57).

¹⁰⁾ The article is illustrated with exhibits from the collections of the Asia and Pacific Museum

batik and there they have remained to the present day: many of the most popular batik designs are stylised versions of Indian textiles.¹¹⁾

Indian decorative motifs in arts and crafts Indonesia are:

1. Eagle Garuda (Sanskrit: “winged”). It is a mythical eagle mount of Vishnu (also worshiped by Buddhists as a god in the high rank of a bodhisattva). In Indonesia the cult of the eagle overlaps with the earlier, indigenous, animistic worship of the god-bird associated with the sun and the upper world.¹²⁾ That god-bird had the form of a hornbill.¹³⁾

The eagle was depicted in Hindu-Javanese art (and also in Bali now) as a human with features of an eagle, including a powerful beak, wings and fan-shaped tail.

In Java it is shown in a highly stylised form: as one leaf-like wing (lar), a pair of such symmetrically arranged wings (mirong), or a pair of the wings with the characteristic tall tail in the middle (sawat) (Fig. 1). In these versions it is found, among others, on batiks. In Java (and in many courts of Southeast Asia) it has become a symbol of royalty. It used to be one of the larangan motifs – proprietary designs in the central Javanese sultanates of Surakarta and Yogyakarta.¹⁴⁾

Garuda was also found on Java in a full-figure version – as an eagle – as a decoration of the blencong – the oil lamp of the shadow theatre wayang (the lamp was the source of light during all-night performances) (Fig. 2). The body of the bird was a container for fuel filled through a hole in the back, and the flame came out of the beak. Besides, it was also a decoration of other Javanese oil lamps,¹⁵⁾ not only in the theatre, both as the eagle itself and as the eagle

in Warsaw. The museum, collecting works of art and crafts of Asia, Australia and Oceania, was founded in 1973 thanks to the efforts of Mr. Andrzej Wawrzyniak, who gave his large private collection of Indonesian arts and crafts to the Polish state and was appointed the director of the new museum. It originally had the name of the Museum of the Nusantara Archipelago (1973–1976). Although later it greatly expanded its interests and inventories – often by gifts from orientalist, ethnographers or globetrotters (it comprises collections from Islamic countries and Central Asia, India, China, the Tibetan Buddhist countries, Burma, Indochina, Australia and Oceania) – the Indonesian collection is still the largest and accounts for 1/4 of the more than 20 thousand exhibits that are gathered in the Museum’s stores.

¹¹⁾ Maxwell (2003b: 148).

¹²⁾ van der Hoop (1949: 178); Chukina (1979: 13).

¹³⁾ Irvine (2006: 26).

¹⁴⁾ Besides, batik was largely reserved for Javanese aristocracy and silk and brocade were fully reserved for this social class on Sumatra. Maxwell (2003b: 72, 75).

¹⁵⁾ and not only lamps; it was found too on blades of a spears or as a decoration of a gong.

with the figure of Vishnu on the back (they both are shown in the wayang stylisation). His connection with lamps resulted from another element of his symbolism – in Indonesia it was a bird symbolically related to the sun. One should add that wayang styling was an asylum for figural depictions in Muslim Java. Besides, Garuda in the form of an eagle, with no elements of human figure, is the emblem of the contemporary Republic of Indonesia, due to his symbolism of royalty, power and success. However, depictions of the hornbill remain present in the tribal art of Indonesia (e.g. among the Toraja, Sulawesi).

2. Snake Naga. As in the case of Garuda, so in the case of the snake, Hindu mythology impinged on ancient Indonesian belief. According to the ancient, indigenous philosophy of the Indonesians, the Universe consisted of pairs of opposites: the upper world and the underworld, which corresponded to the opposition of sun and moon, fire and water, light and dark, right and left, and many others. The previously mentioned bird was related to the sun and the light, while the snake was connected with the underworld and water.¹⁶⁾ Birds and snakes were also in constant battle with each other. This hostility is also present in the Hindu mythology, according to which snakes (Nagas) are the rulers of the water and aquatic underworld and are in constant battle with the eagle Garuda (Fig. 3).

In the art of the Indianised part of Indonesia, the snake is crowned. Such a crowned snake's head was a decoration of the stem of a sultan's ship (also during the Islamic period), because the snake has been until today (as well as Garuda) a symbol of royalty. Both these creatures appeared on various regalia. The whole silhouette of a crowned snake was hammered and often gilded on kris blades in Java and Bali,¹⁷⁾ and was found as well on Javanese batiks – until now. There is also a variation of the snake that shows it with wings. In this version, it brings together the royal symbolism of both mythical animals.

3. Plant motifs appeared in Indonesia during the time of the Indian influence and since that time they have become essential to Indonesian art.¹⁸⁾ There were a variety of plant forms, such as: a mythical tree, real lotus flowers and leafy vegetable tendrils (Fig. 4).

¹⁶⁾ van der Hoop (1949: 134, 208).

¹⁷⁾ Today such krises are not hammered more, however, on Madura there are workshops producing copies of these krises on a modest level, for tourist purposes.

¹⁸⁾ van der Hoop (1949: 252).

3a. The Wish-fulfilling Tree or the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is found in the beliefs of many cultures. In many religions it symbolised the upper, heavenly world. For Hindus and Buddhists it was, among others, a tree fulfilling wishes, but its symbolism was not exhaustive. For Muslims it is a symbol of Paradise.

The Wish-fulfilling Tree arrived in Indonesia along with Indian mythology and impinged on ancient, pre-Indian beliefs. It had been believed that between the upper world (heaven) and the lower world there was a tree of life, a symbol of supreme unity, which connected both worlds (and was also the source of life, wealth and well-being).¹⁹⁾ Many tribal peoples of Indonesia used to plant a tree (considered to be sacred) on a special terrace in the middle of the village. On the same terrace they placed the skulls of sacrificed buffalos. Sometimes the role of the tree was taken up by a sacrificial pole – “an artificial” (or rather, symbolic) tree of life, which was decorated with fabrics and buffalo skulls. Depictions of the tree of life with an angular, geometrical form appeared on woven mats from Borneo and textiles from the province of Lampung on the southern tip of Sumatra (here they were sometimes extremely stylised, similar to the “Christmas tree” or “herringbone” pattern and they were only a visually small supplement to the dominant ship motif with figurines shown in the wayang stylisation).

In Hinduism there are a number of mythical trees:

- the jambu tree (also referred to as jambul and rose apple tree) was believed to grow in the middle of the continent Jambudvīpa (the Land of Jambu, i.e. India) and reach the sky;
- the holy fig tree *asvattha*. According to Hindus it is a holy cosmic tree in which the triad of Hindu gods – Trimurti is present. The fig tree is also important in Buddhism because it was under the *Ficus religiosa* tree that, as the followers believe, Buddha Shakyamuni, the historical founder of the religion, was enlightened;
- the *kalpavriksha* tree – a mythical tree of abundance, fulfilling all wishes and containing the elixir of immortality.
- the *parijata* tree, which also had the power to fulfil wishes and was a symbol of abundance.

The *kalpavriksha* tree is an element of the Prambanan motif. This is a frontal image of a lion (a symbol of royalty) between two symmetrical *kalpravriksha* trees on which jewels are suspended. This motif appeared only once, on the walls of the Shiva temple Prambanan in central Java, around the middle of the 9th c.

¹⁹⁾ van der Hoop (1949: 278).

During the east Javanese period, the kalpravriksha was replaced in art by the parijata, which was given the form of a stylised trident.²⁰⁾

In the Muslim era in Indonesia, Indian fabrics called palampore became popular. These were large format textiles, hand-painted with mordants (or sometimes decorated with batik), usually with a picture of a blooming tree.²¹⁾ Many of the fabrics presented the tree in the Muslim stylisation – within the framing of a Muslim prayer niche, and the tree itself was stylised, with an unnatural, symmetrical shape, similar to a palmette or a big leaf. Bouquets and animals: peacocks and tigers were additionally placed on these fabrics with precisely designed details. The palampore were copied in Indonesia (though not always with complete fidelity). The Toraja of Sulawesi did so on their fabrics painted and printed by means of a woodblock. The palampore motif was also repeated in Javanese batik and embroidery.²²⁾

3b. Lotus. A plant revered in many Asian countries and symbolic in Hinduism and Buddhism. In the latter it is a symbol of creative powers, hence Buddhist deities are shown on lotus flowers as if on thrones (also Hindu deities are often presented this way), and it is an attribute of a number of deities in both religions. Besides, the lotus is a Buddhist symbol of knowledge and of purity. During the Hindu-Javanese epoch (8th–15th c.) the lotus was presented in religious sculpture either as a flower or bud in the hands of a deity, or as a bunch of flowers and leaves next to a deity, or else as a throne, as mentioned above. The lotus became a common decorative motif in Java, Bali and Sumatra.²³⁾

3c. Leafy and flowery plant tendril. This motif could stand alone as an architectural relief, as well as fabric decoration (it had been frequent on Indian chintzes) but sometimes it was also shown in combination with a row of triangles (tumpal). A floral form – just like a geometric one – was also willingly accepted in the art of Muslim Indonesia because it was neutral: it did not fall in any conflict with the Islamic ban on figural forms.

²⁰⁾ Bernet Kempers (1959: pl. 142).

²¹⁾ Palampore textiles were widely popular in Asia and Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.

²²⁾ Maxwell (2003a: 341–345).

²³⁾ There are many other flowers, not only the lotus, in the decoration. Chintz fabrics of the Coromandel (East) Coast of India (whose special specimen was palampore) often presented tulips and carnations, which were then repeated in batiks on the North Coast (pasisir) of Java. These flowers, originating from Persia and Turkey, entered Indian art and also became very popular in Europe both in art and as real plants; according to: Veldhuisen (1993: 21). In general, the numerous flowers in Indonesian art do result from different cultural impacts. For example, in the art of Bali (and not only) the chrysanthemum is well known and this illustrates the Chinese influence, not Indian.

3d. So called “recalcitrant spiral”. It was a leafy plant tendril (the motif is supposed to represent a lotus) arranged in a series of spirals that faced alternately in opposite directions. Within the spirals there were lotus buds. The motif often occurred during the central Javanese period (8th–10th c.) of Hindu-Javanese art. It was shown in relief on temple walls.

4. Mountain Meru. Although the mountain as such was probably already a Neolithic motif in Indonesia,²⁴ it coincided with the Indian idea of the sacred (mythical according to our concepts) mountain Meru – the axis of the universe and the home of gods (the idea was also largely taken on by the Buddhists). Meru was believed to be situated between four island-continent, of which the southern one – called Jambudvīpa – represented India. Hindu-Javanese temples, called *candi* (*chandi*), both Buddhist and Hindu, were symbolic replicas of the cosmic mountain Meru and symbols of the cosmos. The early Indonesian temple owed its architectural form to India (though temples in Indonesia have gained an individual character, including their slender proportions) – it was “more a sculpture than a work of architecture” and it often had the form of “a mountain”. As a matter of fact, it was more like a cube with a roof more or less like a pyramid, and its walls decorated with plenty of relief.²⁵

On Javanese *batiks* (on which – as was mentioned – old Indian decorative motifs survived) there appear Meru mountain motifs depicted as miniature hills with shell-like shapes. They are shown in combination with many other motifs, such as a wing or two wings of Garuda (the *lar* and *mirong* respectively), a pair of wings and the tail of Garuda – the motif *sawat*, snakes, peacocks and other animals, bees and other insects, centipedes, small plant forms, leaves, roots of the “sacred” banyan tree (otherwise known as *waringin*), as well as stylised temple pavilions. As a whole it is the motif known as *semen*, a stylised floral motif, which is a “landscape” that symbolises the cosmos. *Semen* appeared during the Hindu-Javanese period in relief in stone on temple walls, Borobodur included.

²⁴ As Anthony Granucci suspected. Granucci (2005: 185).

²⁵ The Buddhist *stupa* had a similar symbolism of the mountain and the axis of the universe (in addition to many other symbolic meanings, among which was the symbolization of the mind of the Buddha). The *stupa* was – and is still today – a Buddhist reliquary of different sizes (from huge mounds to miniature shrines on the altar) and quite different forms (there was a series of historical and regional varieties).

The symbolism of the mountain merged with that of the tree in *gunungan*²⁶ – the main requisite of the shadow puppet theatre *wayang* (Fig. 5, 5a). Its outline shows a mountain (similar to a giant leaf), but inside there appears a symmetrical, stylised tree of life with birds, a tiger and a buffalo symmetrically on its branches, and at the sides, and at the bottom – a temple, interchangeable with a pool for ritual bathing.²⁷ *Gunungan* is a symbol of “everything”. While used (moved) during the performance, it shows one of the elements, or wind, earthquake, extreme emotions or a specific place: a palace, a house or a forest, depending on the requirements. Its main role is, however, to be placed at the centre of the screen (before the performance, during the breaks and at the end), where it denotes a break in the performance and separates positive and negative puppets that are arranged symmetrically at both ends of the screen. Today, sometimes more than one *gunungan* are used at a time for a better effect.

5. Mandala and the plan of a temple. The mandala is a magical, “sacred”, geometrical diagram from ancient India, depicted in many different variants, including a circle inscribed in a square within an outer circle. It played a huge role in the art of Vajrayana (the latest phase of Buddhism), which is confessed in Tibet, Mongolia and northern India under the name of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as in two (of the many) Japanese Buddhist schools. The mandala serves as an aid to meditation. In Tibetan Buddhism it usually takes the shape of a palace mandala – like a palace of deities, based on a geometric plan, shown from the top. Mandala is a symbol and – as is believed – an “image” of the cosmos, but also of the spiritual core of man. It also occurs in Hinduism in a simplified version called *yantra*, a geometric form, composed for example of many smaller triangles.

In Indonesia, the mandala appeared, of course, during the Indian era. It is sometimes believed that the large temple Borobodur on Java (8th century) has the layout of the mandala and so therefore is a mandala.

During the Muslim epoch the mandala practically vanished, but it left some mysterious, vague traces in the form of geometrical symbols on fabrics, mainly from Bali and Java.

²⁶ Javanese: *gunung* – mountain. The requisite is also known as *kayon* or *kekayon*, Jav.: a group of trees.

²⁷ The back side is decorated differently from the front side (this is the only such an object in the theatre *wayang*) and here an element is painted: flames or stylised waves on water.

a) On Bali, in a particular locality (a village named Tenganan Pagersingnan) cotton double ikats, called *geringsing*, are produced (a difficult and very time-consuming technique) (Fig. 6). They are elongated rectangles, approximately 2 x 0.5 m in size. They play a role in rituals, as magical powers are attributed to them (if they themselves were made in accordance with appropriate rituals). On these fabrics appear:

- along the longer edges: characters in the *wayang* style;
- in the middle: a large circle with a labyrinth-like form inside, and the whole circle is located within a four-pointed star. The motif is like a mandala or a stylised plan of a temple;
- along the shorter edges: halves of the form mentioned above.

A variant of this motif appears on some specimens of these special fabrics: wide bands of these motifs, filling the whole surface. Indeed it gives an effect similar to the *kawung* pattern (made up of ellipses), but in an enlarged version.

b) On Java, religious Muslim men wear head cloths *iket kepala* (approximately 1 x 1 m) with a large central rhombus called *modang*. It is suggested that this pattern may have derived from the mandala, and also may stand for the mirror (which in Buddhism symbolises consciousness reflecting reality).²⁸⁾ One can speculate if this sign on head cloths derives from an ancient Buddhist tradition. A similar, but elongated rhombus is seen on large ceremonial fabrics called *dodot* (about 4 x 2 m), which are worn as an additional cloth by Javanese aristocracy at ceremonies (draped around the lower half of the body). However, the rhombus here (as well as the rectangle or hexagon that replaces it sometimes) symbolises the source of life-giving power and is surrounded by stylised flames – the *cemukiran* pattern that stands for magical forces.²⁹⁾

c) On some ceremonial embroidered fabrics from the province of Lampung, South Sumatra, a sign appears that is similar either to a simplified mandala or to crossed vajras – Buddhist symbolic sceptres of spiritual power. The fabrics are known only in a small number and now they are no longer manufactured.³⁰⁾

6. Realistic stylisation of human (and animal) figures. In India, from about the beginning of the Christian era, an anthropomorphic iconography of Buddhist and Hindu deities evolved, replacing earlier symbolic representations (e.g.

²⁸⁾ Maxwell (2003a: 200, 203).

²⁹⁾ Wrońska-Friend (2008: 49).

³⁰⁾ Maxwell (2003a: 200, 203).

where the Buddha was depicted as the tree of enlightenment, the empty throne under a tree, et al.). On Java, images of gods and men, including characters from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Buddhist jataka tales, appeared during the Hindu-Javanese period in reliefs on temple walls (Fig. 7) (as well as figures of temple guards in full sculpture).

The human figure in the Indian styling was essentially realistic and alive, depicted according to knowledge of the correct anatomy and often in motion. In one word: different from that of Indonesian tribal art, in which the figure is generally (though not always or not quite) static and often frontal (in flat depictions, such as fabrics) and also strongly stylised, which lends it a somewhat “primitive” character.

However, during the times of the Singasari dynasty (13th century) a new, genuine Javanese styling started to appear in temple reliefs. Known as the wayang style, it is typical of the wayang theatre puppets on Java and Bali. On the former island it is – probably under the pressure of the Islamic ban on figural renderings – even more deeply stylised and partially unreal. Islam curbed significantly the production of figural depictions there, apart from theatre puppets, illuminated manuscripts and batiks. The human figure has been shown in the wayang style in these medias, whereas animals retained realistic features.

7. Animals endowed with symbolism and presented realistically during the Hindu-Javanese period.

a) The elephant and lion were royal symbols from India. However, the elephant was probably known earlier in the art of Indonesia³¹⁾ (it lived here, as opposed to the lion). Also, under the influence of India there are images of riders on an elephant³²⁾ and some of the riders are shown in profile, which was typical of India art. During the Muslim epoch in Indonesia (except for Bali), the lion became the symbol of caliph Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law.

b) The goose hamsa occurs in the Hindu faith as a bird associated with the sun and is a solar symbol (usually presented in gold). Also it stands for the universal spirit – the supreme god and the individual soul. In Hindu mythology it is the mount of many deities, among others Brahma, Kubera – the god of

³¹⁾ van der Hoop (1949: 136–137).

³²⁾ However, the riders were known – as is supposed – independently on the Indian influence and prior to it, in many countries of Southeast Asia. They were symbols of passage from one stage of life into another. Maxwell (2003b: 187).

wealth, Varuna – the god of water, and Vishnu. To a lesser extent, it appears in Buddhist art in the backgrounds of thangkas – Buddhist religious painted scrolls.

c) The peacock in Hindu mythology is associated with rain (as it announces the monsoon), and is also an enemy of snakes (believed to be immune to their venom). It is, too, a symbol of beauty and the mount of Skanda or Kartikeya (the god of war) and Sarasvati (the goddess of science, art and literature). In Buddhism, the peacock is associated with Amitabha (the transcendental Buddha of infinite light) whose throne it supports. The peacock in the art of the Muslim epoch in Indonesia is one of royal symbols.

d) Monkeys. Characters from the Ramayana, first of all white Hanuman – the leader of the army of monkeys and a great ally of the hero Rama in his fight against the giant Ravana. Today they appear on Java and Bali among theatre puppets and also in Balinese temple paintings in scenes from the Ramayana.

8. Kala mask/head

A demonic face/mask with dangerous, sinister features, often without the lower jaw. It originated from India where it was called *kirtimukha* (Sanskrit: “Face of Glory”) and under the Indian influence it spread throughout the Hindu-Buddhist world. On Java it was common during the Hindu-Javanese period over doors and gates in relief and was called *Kala* (“Black One” or “Time”). On Bali it has taken various forms and various names, including *Boma* (“Defender”) (Fig. 8) and is present in art to this day in many different versions: with one or both eyes, a version similar to the head of a lion, with or without the lower jaw. Its role is to “ward off the forces of evil”.

9. Mythical animal hybrids

During the central Javanese period on Java, the *Kala* mask was found in combination with two *makaras* symmetrically arranged on either side of it. The mask was on top of the frame, and the *makaras* at the bottom part. The *makara* also originated from Indian art, as a mythical aquatic animal hybrid. In Indonesia it had an elephant’s head with elongated crocodile jaws and an elephant’s trunk growing out of the top of them. They were found not only on Java, but too on Sumatra (Jambi).

Another type of hybrid was the *kinnara* – a hybrid from the Hindu mythology, a heavenly being endowed with a beautiful voice, and the appearance of a horse with a human head. In Indonesia, took the form of a bird with a human

head or else it was a half-bird and half-human. It occurred only during the east Javanese period (10th–15th century). Kinnaras were presented in temple reliefs: they were flanking a mythical tree kalpavriksha or sitting on its branches.³³⁾

10. Repetitive geometric motifs, covering the whole surface like wall-paper were in Indonesia another idea of Indian origin. They may comprise both wholly geometric (stars, rosettes) and geometric vegetal patterns in a regular arrangement. Repetitive patterns were already used in Hindu-Javanese architectural relief and in Javanese batik they are called *ceplok* (pron.: *cheplokan*) (Fig. 9). The category is wide; it comprises among others:

a) *kawung* – a pattern made up of four ellipses inclined so that they visually fit into the shape of a circle and such circles repeat all over the surface (in another version it is composed of intersecting circles). It is known since the 13th century in temple wall reliefs and on disguise of deities shown in religious sculptures – the latter case proves that the pattern was used already then on real fabrics (so as today).

b) *jilemprang* is made up of an eight-petalled rosette within a circle and such the circles are arranged side by side, all over the surface (Fig. 10). The pattern came from Gujarat³⁴⁾ in India, from a silken double ikat called *patola*.³⁵⁾ Original *patola* fabrics were the most highly valued of Indian fabrics in Indonesia. They were carefully stored from generation to generation in aristocratic families (they formed part of the family heritage *pusaka*). Faith in their magical forces was associated with them.³⁶⁾ *Patola* were also a sign of power in Indonesia. When the import of textiles from India stopped at the beginning of the 19th century, these and other fabrics and their ornamental motifs were copied in Indonesian textiles in different techniques. The motif *jilemprang* when copied was not always quite regular: there were different degrees of faithfulness to the original (batiks from Central Java and warp ikats if the Lio people of Flores – in both cases are very similar to the original; ikats from the island of Lembata – here

³³⁾ Bernet Kempers (1959: pl. 55, 144).

³⁴⁾ A state in the western part of India, which was one of the earliest Indian areas converted to Islam.

³⁵⁾ It was not the only decorative pattern on *patola* fabrics. Also elephants – a symbol of royalty – could have been rendered there (although stylised, shown as massive silhouettes). They, too, were produced for the sales in Indonesia. Maxwell (2003b: 147).

³⁶⁾ In Indonesia one used in the trade the term *sarasa* to describe textiles from India. One believed in their magical forces, first of all in those of *patola*. Maxwell (2003b: 115).

the imitation of patola was more distant³⁷⁾). Besides, the use of the motif has a long tradition: it was also used during the Hindu-Javanese period in stone and bronze sculpture on the costumes of deities.

Apart from these two repetitive patterns, the ceplokan type comprises many other varieties, such as: square grid with a tuft of leaves and wavy lines within each eye (the pattern called surketan, a grass design).

Also the motif sidomukti belongs to this type. It is a diagonal grid, inside which a variety of other forms are placed, such as wings of Garuda, eight-pointed stars, plant tendril, butterflies, little shrines. The diagonal grid sidomukti is a Muslim pattern, connected with India only partially. It was transferred to Indonesia from Central Asia and India (it appeared on chintz fabrics painted with mordant, from the Coromandel Coast L – East coast – of India).

10. Eight-pointed star and eight-petalled rosette

In the parts of Indonesia touched by the Indian influence, the eight-pointed star and eight-pointed rosette were an important pattern. They both have continued to be repeated also in the Islamic period. In accordance with Indian symbolism, the star had cosmological connotations as it represented the eight directions of the Universe and the centre. Particular directions were associated with deities of the Hindu pantheon, reserving the centre for Shiva. So, there is a similarity to the symbolism and the shape of a mandala. During the Majapahit empire (late 13th – late 15th century) of Indonesia the eight-pointed rosette was a common motif. It often had the form of a circle with eight triangular rays (also an image of a deity – or more deities – could have been placed within the central circle). It was common to many Majapahit era monuments. Presumably, it was used as a coat of arms of the state and is sometimes referred to as “the Sun of Majapahit”³⁸⁾ The above-mentioned motif jilemprang³⁸⁾ can also be included into the type of the eight-pointed star. The eight-petalled rosette has the same symbolism as the eight-pointed star.

11. Symbolic objects (selection)

a) The umbrella was one of royal insignia of ancient India, which has become a symbol of rank (not necessarily royalty, but also belonged to lesser dignitaries) in all parts of Southeast Asia influenced by India. The gesture of protection-

³⁷⁾ Batiks with the motif jilemprang: Maxwell (2003b: 145); the other examples: Maxwell (2003a: 214–215, 220).

³⁸⁾ Kinney, Klokke, Kieven (2003: 34).

carrying an umbrella over the head of a dignitary protecting him from the heat of the sun and from the rain – lay at the root of this symbolism. Umbrellas were depicted in Hindu-Javanese temple sculpture. Today, ceremonial umbrellas are used at the courts of sultans of Central Java. There is a sanctioned hierarchy of these objects: they can be multilevel, depending on the rank of the person.

- The trident, fan, disc (chakra) and the previously mentioned lotus – also were symbols of royalty in the Indianised world, as well as attributes of the deities in Hindu and Buddhist art.
- The conch shell was an attribute of Vishnu and appeared sporadically in sculpture.

Clearly, Indonesia has adopted from India a wide set of ornamental motifs, some of them with complex symbolism. These patterns were in many cases associated with Hinduism and Buddhism. However, some patterns that reached Indonesia from India were connected with Islam (a palmette, a blooming tree). Islam, which emerged in Indonesia at the end of the 13th century in Sumatra, and triumphed in the late 15th century, when it prevailed on Java (and then spread further), resulted in the disappearance of only some Indian motifs (kinaras, mandala). Many designs continued (birds, a snake, a tree) in the Muslim epoch, but sometimes underwent some changes in their appearance. However, the impact of India – unlike later Islam – reached only Java, Sumatra and Bali (only part of Indonesia) and introduced a deep cultural division of the country, visible to this day.

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Fig. 1. Sawat motif: tail and wings of the eagle Garuda – cotton, stamped batik, Central Java, 1st half of the 20th c., MAiP (inv. number of the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw) 1370, photo by Eugeniusz Helbert (the Asia and Pacific Museum)



Fig. 2. Blencong – lamp of the Javanese shadow theatre; Garuda as an eagle; Java, 19th c., bronze, MAiP 17506, photo by E. Helbert



Fig. 3. Snake Naga – fragment of a frame of a gong, Java, 19th c., carved wood, MAiP 2323, photo by E. Helbert



Fig. 4. Plant tendril – fragment of a kris sheath, Bali, 19th c., wood, polychrome, MAiP 17992, photo by E. Helbert

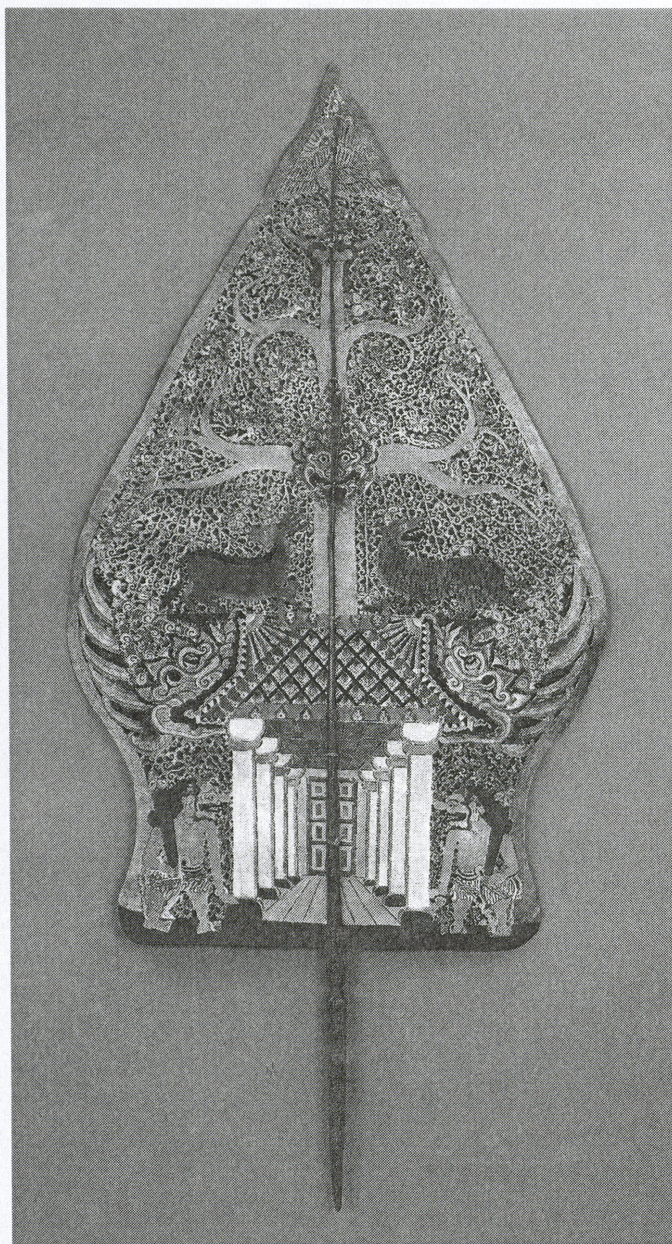


Fig. 5. Gunungan / kekayon – a requisite of the shadow puppet theatre wayang, Java, c. mid-20th c., buffalo hide, cutting, polychrome, MAiP 1219, photo by E. Helbert

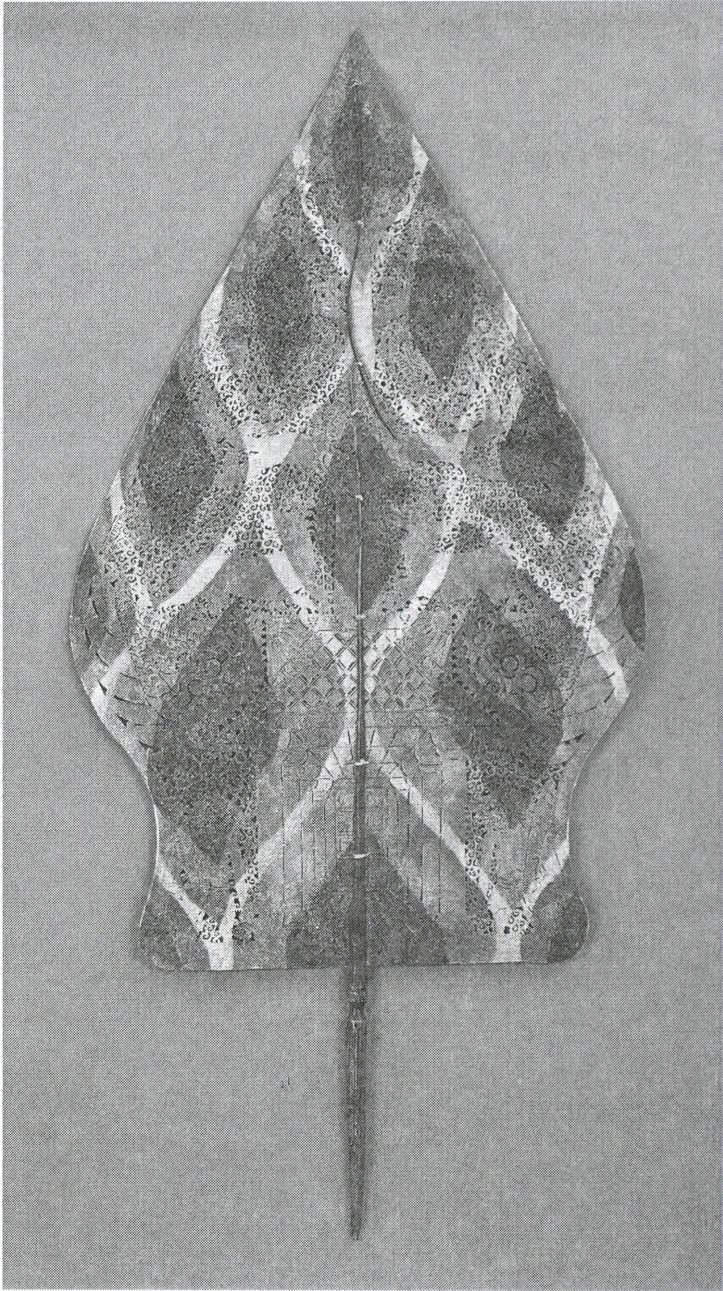


Fig. 5a. Gunungan / kekayon – the back side, MAiP 1219, photo by E. Helbert

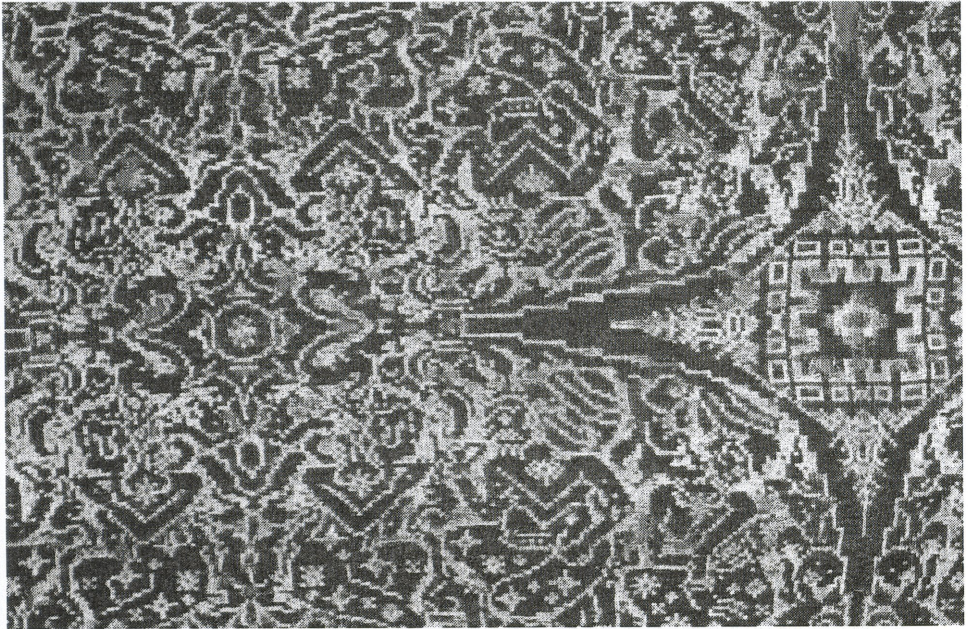


Fig. 6. Mandala or temple plan – fragment of a ceremonial textile geringsing, Bali, 2nd half of the 19th c., cotton, double ikat, MAiP 4792, photo by E. Helbert



Fig. 7. Figural relief with plant tendril – from the plinth of temple Mendut, Java, early 9th c., reproduction from the book: K. With, *Java*, Leipzig 1920, fig. 39

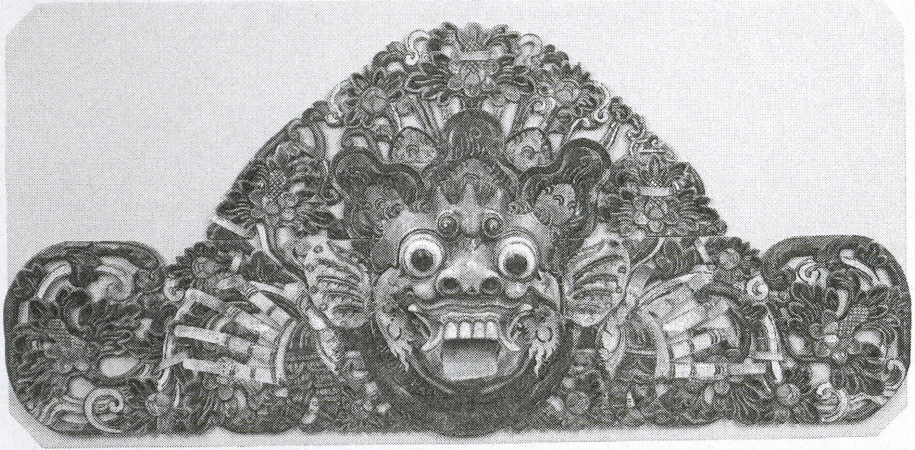


Fig. 8. Architectural relief with Boma mask, Bali, 19th/20th c., carved wood, polychrome, MAiP 737, photo by E. Helbert



Fig. 9. Ceplokan – repetitive pattern on a batik, Java, 1st half of the 20th c., MAiP 1334, cotton, stamped batik, photo by Erazm Ciolek

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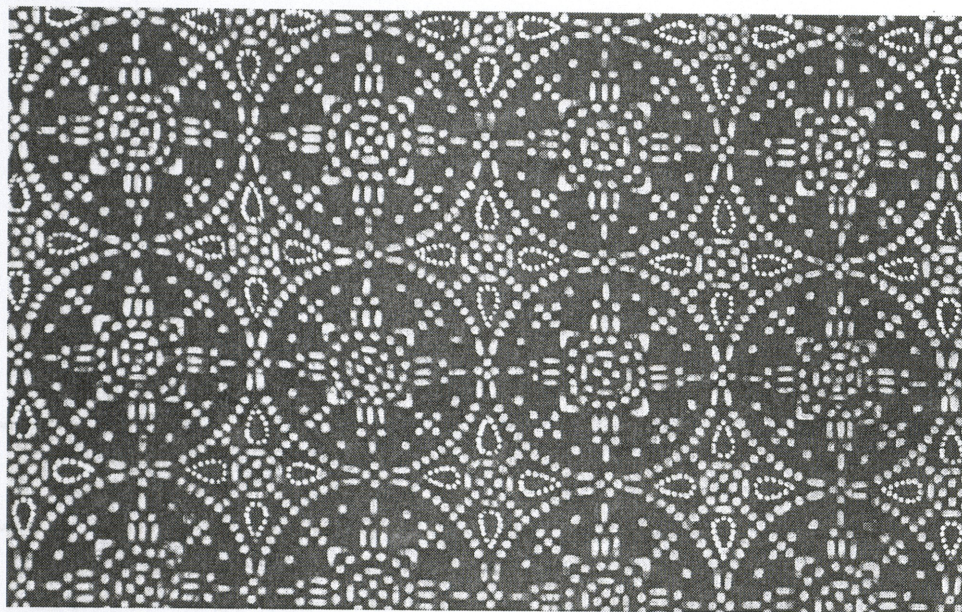


Fig. 10. Jilemprang motif (fragment of a batik), Java, 1st half of the 20th c., cotton, hand written batik, MAiP 1634, photo by E. Helbert