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Corresponding author:
Ach. Saidika Taufiqur'anam
6688031022@student.chula.
ac.th

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***Calligraffiti* on Sarong: The Challenges of Contemporary Batik Creativity in Santri Culture**

Ach. Saidika Taufiqur'anam^{1*}, Rr. Paramitha Dyah Fitriasari², Sindung Tjahyadi³

¹Master of Performing Arts and Visual Studies, Graduate School,
Universitas Gadjah Mada

^{2,3}Master Pengkajian Seni Pertunjukan dan Seni Rupa, Sekolah Pascasarjana,
Universitas Gadjah Mada

ABSTRACT

Calligraphy as motifs on sarongs in the santri environment is a challenge because batik motifs with calligraphy are prone to resemble writing that has a sacred meaning and makes the user feel sorry when wearing it. The purpose of this study is to analyze the creative response of contemporary batik artist, Abyan Farazdaq, in creating the motif “calligraffiti”, which is a combination of calligraphy and graffiti aesthetics on sarong which is a product of santri culture. The research uses a qualitative approach on Abyan Farazdaq’s batik artwork by collecting data through observation, interviews and visual documentation of artworks. This research show that the artist created a calligraphy pattern, so that the motif cannot be read literally in order to maintain the cultural ethics of sarong users. As a result, the calligraphy motif becomes a form of visual adaptation that maintains the identity of the students and enriches the expression of contemporary batik art.

Keywords: contemporary batik; calligraphy; sarong; students; calligraffiti

ABSTRAK

Kaligrafi di Sarung: Tantangan Kreativitas Batik Kontemporer dalam Budaya Santri. Penggunaan motif kaligrafi pada sarung di lingkungan santri menjadi tantangan karena motif batik dengan kaligrafi rentan menyerupai tulisan yang memiliki makna sakral dan membuat penggunanya merasa iba ketika mengenakannya. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisa respons kreatif seniman batik kontemporer, Abyan Farazdaq, dalam menciptakan motif “kaligraffiti”, yang merupakan kombinasi antara kaligrafi dan estetika graffiti pada sarung yang menjadi produk budaya santri. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif pada karya seni batik Abyan Farazdaq dengan menghimpun data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi visual karya seni. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa seniman menciptakan pola kaligraffiti agar motif tidak terbaca secara literal demi menjaga etika budaya pengguna sarung. Hasilnya, motif Kaligraffiti menjadi bentuk adaptasi visual yang mempertahankan identitas santri serta memperkaya ekspresi seni batik kontemporer.

Kata kunci: batik kontemporer; kaligrafi; sarung; santri; kaligraffiti



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1. Introduction

Sumenep Regency is one of the districts on Madura Island. Epithet as *The Soul of Madura*, Sumenep is one of the tourist attractions, both natural tourism, pilgrimage and cultural tourism (Malik et al., 2016). One of the tourist attractions is traditional batik in Pakandangan Village, Bluto District as well as a batik center in Sumenep as a batik center, Pakandangan Village has many production houses and galleries that sell traditional Sumenep written batik. The traditional batik from Pakandangan is one of the diversity of traditional written batik on Madura Island.

Near Pakandangan Village, precisely in Aengpanas Village, Pragaan District, Sumenep Regency, there is a community of santri alumni who are also active in creating written batik. The community is named Tabun Educulture Art. Founded by Turmedzi Djaka, as Chairman of Dewan Kesenian Sumenep (2022-2027) since 2009, this community's written batik is specific to contemporary batik. The contemporary batik created has its own uniqueness in each artist's work.

Contemporary Batik created different batik Pakandangan Style Even though contemporary batik is taken outside of its packaging, the batik motifs still intersect with the traditional batik around it (Wardoyo et al., 2019). Tabun Educulture Art's contemporary batik also has a historical slice with traditional Pakandangan written batik (Taufiqur'anam, 2024). Although historically still connected, contemporary batik in Tabun Educulture Art tends to avoid the pattern from the creative process to motifs that are different from traditional Pakandangan batik (Djaka, 2024). Tabun Educulture Art's contemporary batik leads to the formation of motifs that are closer to the artist's background. In this case, the uniqueness of this community is the background of the members who are alumni Santries (Taufiqur'anam, 2024).

Santri is a term for students who study at Islamic Boarding School Educational Institutions. Santri has to live in Islamic boarding schools during their education. Inside the Islamic boarding school, students delve deeper into Islam, memorize the Qur'an, and interpret it. In Pragaan District itself there are 52 (Kemenristekdikti, 2024) with the largest Islamic boarding school is Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan and inside the pesantren also has Universitas Al-Amien.

The number of Islamic boarding schools affects the culture of the community in Pragaan. The culture of the community is influenced by many values in the Islamic boarding school. Such as the fashion style where the male community wears sarong and songkok, to the artistic movement initiated by santries. Including the Tabun Educulture Art community as an art community driven by santries who have completed their education at Islamic Boarding Schools.

One of the Tabun Educulture Art artists who is active in the art of batik is Abyan Farazdaq. Abyan Farazdaq is one of the students of Tafsir Qur'an at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri Madura. He is a contemporary batik musician and artist who has been performing for the past seven years. Contemporary batik works created by Abyan are characterized by motifs adapted from calligraphy. The batik works are usually in the form of sarongs, shawls, bandanas and clothes. In addition, Abyan also collaborated with Lembana Artgroecosytem by creating the Lembana Installation which was exhibited at the Jogja Biennale in 2023.

The focus of this research is on Abyan Farazdaq's work in the form of Sarong. Sarong has a functional value that is closely related to the culture of the Madura people, especially the Pragaan society. This is related to the daily life of the community, especially men, using sarong in carrying out daily activities. Such as working, relaxing and worshipping. This habit is one of the impacts of the habit of Islamic boarding schools who also wear sarong during activities in Islamic boarding schools. Such as working, relaxing and worshipping. This habit is one of the impacts of the habit of Islamic boarding schools who also wear sarong during activities in Islamic boarding schools. This influence is a reciprocal relationship that is a challenge for Abyan Farazdaq in creating contemporary batik works in the form of sarongs.

Calligraphy, which is closely related to Arabic typography, has an intersection with sacred words or sentences in the Qur'an. Such as the writings of Allah, Muhammad, or other sacred words contained in the Qur'an. Calligraphy as a batik motif on the sarong provides anxiety for users if sacred writing is found on the sarong. Abyan shared that user's question, "*Panekah bedeh tolesan Allah?*" that means "is this (sarong) contain of word Allah?" (Farazdaq, 2024). The anxiety was expressed to Abyan. This is related to the ethics of dress. Although sarongs are also worn during worship, sarongs are also worn in the daily activities of the people in Pragaan. The use of sarong on the lower body is contrary to the location of sacred writings that are considered to be placed higher as part of society belief. The existence of sacred writing on the sarong worn has the potential for blasphemy which is contrary to the ethics that grow in society. This is a challenge for artists in creating batik works with calligraphy motifs that function as sarongs.

Therefore, Abyan adapted calligraphy motifs to be created into motifs called "Calligrafitti". This concept is a motif concept developed by Abyan Farazdaq towards the challenges that exist in the culture of the society. This makes his work avoid user anxiety with the calligraphy motif on the sarong worn. Haidar, one of the contemporary batik artists, stated that the calligraphy motif is one of the favorite motifs of students. So, despite the challenges, the creation of calligrafitti motifs has actually become one of the favorites of the society.

This research will dissect how artists formed the concept of Calligrafitti motifs. We also analyze how calligrafitti as a form of artist responds to the challenge of creating works of art that intersect with ethics in the culture of the community around the artist. This research is expected to increase knowledge about the paradigm of batik art in Sumenep. In this case, Tabun Educulture Art is located in Pragaan District which is a tourist gateway to the Traditional Batik Center in Pakandangan Village.

2. Literature Review

A literature review of batik in its history contains the emotional context of artisans and their environment. In the history of Batik Tulis Tanjung Bumi, it also intersects with the feelings of a wife who waits for her husband to return home from going to sea or (Purnama, 2022). Emotions related to the expression conveyed, stripping away the sense channeled through a batik artwork. This emotional context also gives rise to symbols that describe the human condition of the creator. Like in classic Javanese batik, there is a separate arrangement to place symbols that characterize the lifestyle of the traditional Javanese people (Sumardjo, 2006). The concept of the traditional symbol has become a tradition of regional symbols that currently there is a batik motif character in every region in Indonesia.

In the context of contemporary batik, a study conducted at the Wardi Batik House in Galuh Village, Bojongsari, Purbalingga, concluded that batik received development from classical batik (traditional). There is a simplification to make it look iconic and overall closer to the Banyumasan style (Wardoyo et al., 2019). The contemporary concept in this case is related to the personal background of its creator and develops or changes the existing system. In the study of Maysaloun Faraj's contemporary artworks, artworks are not just cultural products, but interpret the cultural background of the artist (Faraj, 2023). Contemporary artworks also provide knowledge on how works can contain elements of tradition and the artist's personal identity as a form of freedom of thought (Himawan, 2014).

Based on this study, the Tabun Educulture Art community is a batik art community that has historically slices with traditional Pakandangan batik. However, his contemporary approach to creating batik resists the classic pakandangan style. Artists in this community make batik a medium of freedom of expression. Abyan Farazdaq as one of the contemporary batik artists, reflects calligraphy motifs as part of the form of expression in his work.

The choice of motif received a response from the surrounding environment which made the calligraphy motif undergo modification into Calligrafitti. The drive of the surrounding culture influences the formation of the motifs created. There is a gap in research on how the creation of motifs is motivated by the artist's background which is influenced by ethics in the culture of the student community.

3. Methods

The research was conducted at the Tabun Educulture Art Studio in Aengpanas Village, Pragaan District, Sumenep Regency. This community lives in an area that has a large Muslim culture. Supported by the many Islamic Religious Education Institutions spread in the form of Islamic boarding schools. This makes the contemporary concept in this community influenced by the thoughts of the santri.

This research is qualitative using a study on contemporary batik artworks on sarong created by Abyan Farazdaq. Data sources were obtained through observations and interviews with another three people as Tabun Educulture Art's Artist. Documentation of works obtained in the field and supported by documentation of artworks owned by artists. This study is also a literature study on the culture of the student community in Madura and Sumenep to support data collection.

The analysis uses the perspective of Bernard C. Heyl's art symbols in researching symbols in artworks that are formed based on the concept and references of artists (Greene, 1944). Attention will be focused on tracing artist references that are directly related to the cultural ecology around the artist that influences their creation (Helms, 1978). So, this study focused on the symbols of motifs by paying attention to the context of the part of creating Calligrafitti motifs as well as how the calligraphy transformed to be Calligrafitti Batiks motifs on Sarong. Therefore, we borrowed Julian Steward's concept of multi-linear cultural change to examine the change in the form of calligraphy when it became a contemporary batik motif in sarongs.

Data analysis was carried out based on Miles and Huberman (2014). Includes data reduction by classifying based on formalities and symbols formed. The data obtained will be displayed in the form of an image. Then the verification of the data obtained will consider the context of the work, the artist and also the surrounding culture. In this case, the attention of the artwork created pays attention to the cultural context as a form of data verification.

The data that has been obtained is then triangulated to ensure the validity of the data. Sugiyono in (Hardini, 2023), Data triangulation will be a combination of various data collection techniques and existing data sources.

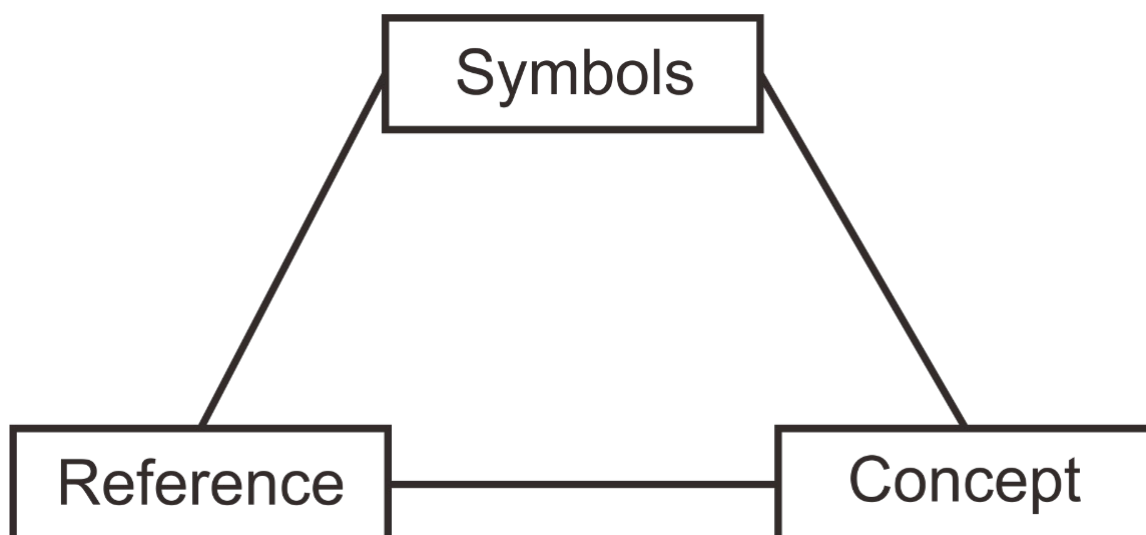


Figure 1: Symbolic relation chart (Source: Greene, 1944)

4. Results

The word “Calligrafitti” is a combination of the words Calligraphy and Graffiti. The naming was actually given by other artists around him. The calligraphy that Abyan Farazdaq adapted is Arabic typography. Graffiti refers to concepts such as graffiti artworks in the form of exploratory and attractive wall painting creations (Atik, 2021). In this case, the concept of calligraphy motifs is a creation that processes calligraphy motifs into exploratory and attractive designs.

In practice, artists create batik motifs spontaneously without sketches. The artist processed the basic forms taken from the reprocessed typeface as a new motif. Based on observations, the calligraphy that is the reference model uses the concept of *Khat Kufi*, *Khat Tsulutsi* dan *Khat Diwani Jali*. These three are identified as dominating the painted forms as Calligrafitti motifs. In its application, the calligrafitti motif taken is the basic basic form of calligraphy. The shape does not represent any of the hijaiyyah letters, but the style represents the khat used. The identification of examples of the use of *Khat Diwani Jali* as a motive is as follows;

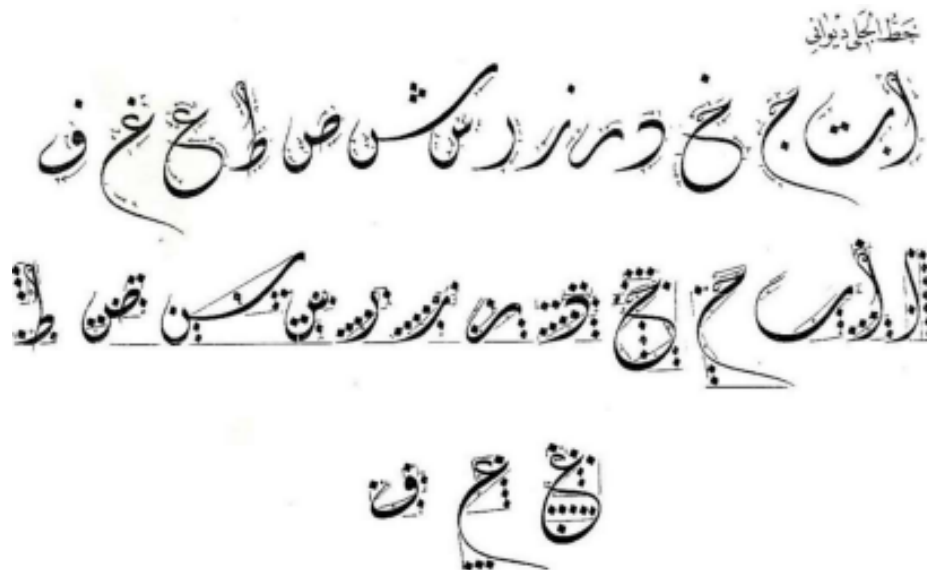


Figure 2: Khat Diwani Jali (Source: Zuhdiyah, 2023)



Figure 3: The identified Calligraphy Batik motifs are similar to the Khat Diwani Jali (Source: Farazdaq, 2024)

The basic motif that is raised is in the form of a curved tail and combined with an attractive arrangement. Such as the use of dots and shapes that are in harmony.

Then, the use of Khat Kufi as a batik motif is applied with the arrangement of basic shapes in the form of horizontal and vertical line motifs, combined with diagonal lines and a combination of other form creations.



Figure 4: Khat Kufi (Source: Zuhdiyah, 2023)



Figure 5: The identified Calligraphy Batik motifs are similar to the Khat Kufi (Source: Farazdaq, 2024)

Furthermore, the calligraphy motifs identified as having similarities with Khat Tsulutsi are as follows;



Figure 6: The identified Calligraphy Batik motifs are similar to the Khat Kufi (Source: Farazdaq, 2024)



Figure 7: The identified Calligraphy Batik motifs are similar to the Khat Tsulusi (Source: Farazdaq, 2024)

This batik work with calligraphy motifs is arranged in a structure that has the same approach as the motif structure on the sarong cloth. Such as the Tumpalan section, Edges (tepi) and Patterns (corak) (Qoiriah, 2014). Therefore, the form of the work is similar to the structural pattern of the sarong.

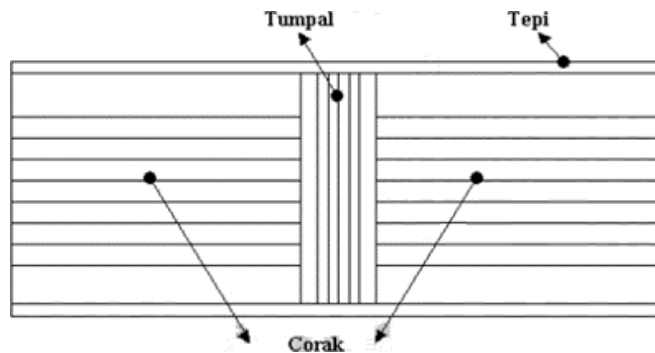


Figure 8: Structure of Sarong Fabric (Source: Qoiriah, 2014)

This structure is what Abyan Farazdaq uses in creating his batik motifs. So, these contemporary batik works are more familiar to users while still paying attention to the aesthetic side when used. In this case, the stack becomes the part that is at the back of the sarong when used. The position is perpendicular to the back like the sarong in general.



Figure 9: Calligrafitti motifs on Sarong (Source: Farazdaq, 2024)

Based on the data obtained, tumpalan and patterns are the most frequently explored media by artists. The edges are not found in the arrangement of the batik motif. The creation in composing calligrafitti motif works is to fill the space fully or leave part of it empty. Thus, there is diversity in the creation of this calligrafitti motif.



Figure 10: Calligrafitti concept (Source: Taufiqur'anam, 2024)

The concept of calligraphy motifs basically does not only rest on the creation of motifs using calligraphy. The artist also combines calligraphy motifs with other forms of typography. Such as Roots Font and also Gothic Font. Roots Font is usually used on album covers of metal bands. Meanwhile, Gothic Font is a font that has a classic style. So that the concept of this motif does not only use Arabic calligraphy, but also explores different types of typography.

The artist explores the visuals lifted from his musical experience. Such as the use of Roots, a font that is synonymous with metal music. Calligraphy motifs are part of his visual experience as a student and a santri. In this case, the calligrafitti motif is a combination of his musical experience and his experience as a santri.

Basically, the principle of the Calligrafitti motif on this sarong cloth is a Calligraphy that has properties like a Graffiti artwork. Artists treat calligrafitti like graffiti works in the form of writing creations that are difficult to read. The artist formed the concept with the aim of avoiding readability or intersecting with the trust of the community who uses sarong and the surrounding public. Therefore, the creation of calligrafitti motifs is applied by reducing the calligraphy part so that it cannot be interpreted as something sacred in Islam. In addition, the artist also added shapes outside of Arabic calligraphy that made him resistant to readability that was assumed to be a sacred symbol.

5. Discussions

Islamic values are so inherent in the philosophy of community life in Madura. These values are symbolized in daily life. This is indicated in their traditional clothes of samper kebaya, and burgo' for women, and sarong and songko' for men, which have become symbols of Islam, especially in rural areas (Rifai, 2007). As one of the education centers in Sumenep, Pragaan District has a culture that is heavily influenced by the existence of Islamic boarding schools.

Pondok Pesantren has an influence on public perception which is considered that students who graduated from the boarding school are more qualified and ready to use in society (Najah, 2021). It influences people to make the concept of living, including ethics applied in Islamic boarding schools, popular in the society. Men in Pragaan wear sarongs for their daily activities. Sarong is not only an outfit for worship, but also a daily outfit for work and relaxation.

This treatment does not change the public's perception that sarong is also basically used for worship. This can be seen in the fact of the researcher's observations, that people wear the same sarongs in their daily activities and worship. This finding is based on a number of residents who came to the Tabun Educulture Art studio to hang out and worship using the same sarong.



Figure 11: Visitors to Tabun Educulture Art are Worshipping (Source: Taufiqur'anam, 2024)

The multifunctional character of sarong does not eliminate the ethical side in its use. Especially in the sarong motif which is felt to have sacred symbols, the user feels uncomfortable and restless. Because sarong is also used in daily activities and is located on the lower part of the body. This position allows parts or symbol that are considered sacred to be vulnerable to sitting or other things that make the user feel sorry for the use of the sarong. This is a challenge for artists to respond to the perception of people who use sarong with calligraphy motifs.

Bernard C. Heyl in the concept of art symbols, the formation of art symbols is presented based on the concept and reference of the artist. The position of the reference has an influence on reality such as experience, while the concept is a form of creativity in that reality (Sumardjo, 2006). Artists use calligraphy as a motif basically based on their references. It does not suddenly come up with the concept. Rather, the artist is an alumnus of the student who is currently a student of Qur'an Tafsir at IAIN Madura. This shows that the artist's experience with calligraphy symbols becomes closer to him.

Artists' references related to the visual experience gave rise to calligraphy as an idea for contemporary batik motifs. These experiences are related to the daily life experienced in the pesantren or in the process of studying. Judith Becker in her statement, the habitus of art in this case there is a deposition of cultural experience that occurs in human life (Becker, 2001). The existence of calligraphy in daily experience is one of the habits that precipitates as a cultural experience. This cultural experience is part of shaping the concept of calligraphy as a batik motif. The deposition of artists' cultural experiences with Islamic boarding schools also encourages the creation of works in the form of sarongs.

A case study on calligraphy motifs on sarong shows the artist's referential encounter with the environment in which he lives. In this case, the situation when an artist creates a contemporary batik artwork after graduating from boarding school. Thus, artists interact directly with the culture of the society around their residence.

There was an addition of a reference as a comparison in the creation of the concept of calligraphy as a batik motif on sarong. Calligraphy, which is a branch of fine art, has undergone a change in concept after becoming a batik motif. Julian Steward argues that core culture is adaptive and secondary culture is non-adaptive (Helms, 1978). Based on identification, the Calligrafitti motif is a form of adaptation of calligraphy which is included in the secondary cultural product, namely sarong. Viewed from an anthropological perspective, artists processing calligrafitti motifs are a form of adaptation of batik motifs on sarong, a concept that can well received by the culture of the surrounding community.



Figure 12: Calligrafitti Motif on Sarong (Source: Farazdaq, 2024)

The artist does show caution in using calligraphy motifs as batik motifs. Artists use the basic elements of calligraphy, not a whole of Hijaiyyah letters that can be read and interpreted. Artists utilize basic techniques in painting calligraphy. But in its application, the creation process is principled on the concept of filling spaces or emptying spaces.

Hokky Situngkir stated that batik is drawing, its integrity is the aesthetic propriety of painting, but batik does not have the propriety in modern geometry of conventional painting (Situngkir, 2016). We reflect this statement as the change in the concept of calligraphy to calligrafitti motifs is an extension of the adaptation of calligraphy as a batik motif. The art of calligraphy conventionally will be formed from pieces of sacred verses or symbols and placed as pure works of art to enjoy their aesthetic only. When calligraphy becomes a calligraphy batik motif, its nature adjusts as a batik motif that has a functional value. This means that the calligrafitti motif is a form of artist's adjustment to the challenges of the cultural situation that makes the sarong as a daily wear.

The elements of calligrafitti presented by the artist are a form of refractive complexity which is a symbol of the artist's creativity. Artists create calligrafitti motifs by considering ethics and aesthetics in sarongs. This challenge makes calligrafitti motifs a form of adaptation of artworks to their culture. Artists' awareness of the value of sarong's function in the culture of community santri makes creativity in batik also need to consider the ethical side and the feelings of its users. The culture of the santri society illustrates that people are aware of the boundary between something sacred and profane. Sarong is a cultural product, and calligraphy has elements that can have sacred symbols. Through calligrafitti motifs, sarong users can have a greater affinity with the sarong they wear.

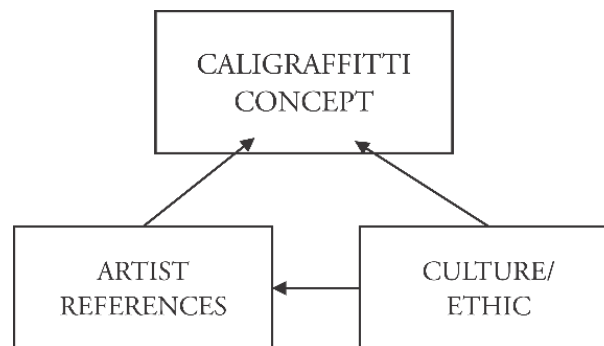


Figure 13: The concept of Calligrafitti motif formation (Source: Taufiqur'anam, 2024)

The position of the artist's referent is influenced by the culture brought by the sarong user, which means that the user referent carries culture and ethics that affect the aesthetics of the concept formed in the Caligrafitti motif. We explored one of the graffiti artists from Iran, named A1one, who creates graffiti works using Arabic calligraphy. The artist presents graffiti works that make them difficult to read. How this concept came about, is based on the regional culture of Iran that uses Persian as a common language using the same typeface as Arabic. The artist's reference as a graffiti artist with visual experience influenced by Arabic writing makes his graffiti work have a combination of characters that carry his culture. However, in this work, the artist criticizes the identity of Iranians who are not Arabs. Persian writing has 32 letters, while Arabic writing has only 29 letters (A1one, 2012). His criticism is one of the references in the concept presented in his work.



Figure 14: Iranian graffiti in Tehran by A1one using arabic letters (Source: A1one, 2012)

Abyan Farazdaq as a contemporary batik artist, he has a complex reference. Processing calligraphy into calligraphy is a cultural influence as well as a feedback from the culture that forms the concept of batik whose aesthetics combine the expression of the artist with the reference of its users who have culture and knowledge as students. There is a referent battle between artists and sarong-user referents. Artists offer calligraphy, there is a culture that maintains its ethics. Then the artist offers Caligrafitti, adding visual patterns that artists get from music art and graffiti so that the aesthetic is easily accepted by sarong wearers. Kaligrafitti is also a symbol of how contemporary batik artworks have conceptual complexity that gathers all critical aspects of the artist and the culture in which he lives.

Calligrafitti motifs are a form of contemporary batik creation that responds expressive-pragmatism to the santri culture. This shows the existence of contemporary batik as if it provides an overview of cultural situations. Calligraphy, which is synonymous with Islamic art and has value in the reference of santri, becomes calligraphy so that the value that is already possessed in the mindset of the santri, can eliminate the anxiety of the wearer. As well as giving space for creativity in contemporary batik art as part of the artwork of a santri. This paradigm adds to the opportunity for Pragaan District, which is known for its Islamic Boarding School, to have a batik culture with the nuances of santri as a gateway to classic batik tourism in Pakandangan.

6. Conclusions

The Calligraphy as a contemporary batik motif in sarong has undergone a change in formation due to the function of sarong in the culture of the Pragaan community. The function of sarong, which is worn on the lower part of the body and used in various community activities, presents a challenge for artists to pay attention to the user's references. Calligraphy is then developed by taking a part or adding other forms that are neutral from sacred symbols. Therefore, calligrafitti is a way for an artist's creative process using calligraphy motifs to be able to adapt the cultural conditions of the santri culture in Pragaan. Calligrafitti is a representation of individual expressions of santri who still respect the collective values of their community. These findings reinforce that contemporary batik art can be a space for negotiation between personal expression, traditional symbols, and cultural sensitivities.

Calligrafitti processes calligraphy that uses Arabic writing into a random order whose aesthetics are similar to graffiti works. The existence of this motif as a concept is how there are challenges between the artist reference and the culture of sarong wearers. The challenge is to form symbols on how a motif is formed from aesthetics with ethics.

From this research, we recommend some specifically research like how the society's respond as ethnographic method, cross-regional comparison with other santri's batik communities, implications of digitalization on the spread of contemporary calligraphy motifs, Semiotic study of student batik based on profan-sacred values.

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