

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Batik is Indonesia's traditional cloth. It is a piece of cloth with a picture made by writing or applying wax to a cloth (Widiastuti et al., 2019, p. 126). Batik is also a work of art with various patterns that adapt to various forms of nature and culture in Indonesia. Since October 2, 2009, UNESCO, one of the UN agencies in charge of education and culture, has confirmed that batik is an intangible world cultural heritage originating from Indonesia (Handayani et al., 2017, p. 108). It is included as an intangible world cultural heritage because what is inherited is not the batik object but the knowledge.

Although batik has been traditionally produced and passed down by many generations in Indonesia, it has received a number of modifications by new generations. The modifications are having the batik cloth combined with cloth from other countries. Motif-wise, there are also non-Indonesian designs inserted in what are usually known as only those used by Indonesian batik artisans. The modifications have made batik considered by some people as popular cultural product in Indonesia, that young also people enjoy wearing batik clothing daily. Starting from men, women, and young people to the elderly (Hananto et al., 2018, p. 2), not only is batik cloth made to wear as *kain jarik* for the Indonesian kebaya, but young people wear batik as a school

uniform, a formal work uniform, or just basic daily wear. This may be the reason why batik has a wide variety of motifs.

There are a lot of motifs that can be found in batik, starting from buildings to living creatures. One of the beautiful birds, the peacock, is used as a motif in several batik clothes. The peacock is a bird with beautiful long blue and green tail feathers that can spread out like a fan (Restari, 2019, p. 1). Many people believe that the peacock symbolizes beauty and immortality. Compared to female peacocks, male peacocks are the ones people usually love because of their magnificent tail feathers (Restari, 2019, p. 2). The tail feathers of male peacocks are usually broader and brighter. However, the population of the peacock is very rare. According to the Department of Tourism and Culture (2022), there are only 800 peacocks left in Indonesia. Peacocks are considered endangered as a whole, both in population and habitat. Fortunately, the batik sellers who are talented in being batik conceptors at *Kampung Batik Semarang* are excellently making peacock one of the batik motifs to eternalize its existence.

Most of the time, people only wear batik with the peacock motif for their excellent experience. However, the batik conceptors at *Kampung Batik Semarang* use different colors and symbols to express particular meanings. The peacock motif selection in batik cloth is also believed to reflect the idea of ecocriticism. According to Glotfelty & Fromm (1996), ecocriticism is a modern theory that studies the relationship between literature and the environment (as cited in Fenn, 2015, p. 107). There are three waves of ecocriticism, but the writer will use the third wave in analyzing the topic. The third wave of ecocriticism began shortly after the year of 2000 but was not labeled as

the third wave until 2009 (Slovic, 2010, p. 6). Slovic explains that third wave of ecocriticism aims at a more comparative, cultural approach to ecocritical studies and often likes to explore culture through the study of environmental literature (Mohammad, 2017, p. 12). Because of this, the research about the peacock motif in batik will look into the cultural matters that become the basis for the choice of the motif used. Because some religious beliefs require peacocks to be designed with other natural elements such as flowers, plants, and other animals in batik motifs, the research will also focus on religious backgrounds. This is why the title of this thesis is 'Peacock Motif Batik in Cultural and Religious Contexts: An Ecocritical Reading.'

The writer's study object, the batik with peacock motif, has been discussed by other scholars. The first article is written by Muhammad Faiz Rahmadi & Tantra Sakre (2020) and entitled *Analisis Bentuk Motif Merak Pada Batik Jetis Kabupaten Sidoarjo Melalui Pendekatan Estetika*. They explain that Batik Jetis Kabupaten Sidoarjo, with the peacock motif, uses fine arts elements. Through the lens of aesthetic elements, the cloth also has a good arrangement or composition of motifs and colors, so it looks beautiful (Rahmadi & Sakre, 2020, p. 7). Another research comes from Darmanto & Rahmawati (2017) entitled *Memaknai Motif Batik Merak Semawis Khas Semarang Sebagai Nilai-nilai Karakter Dalam Pendidikan Berbasis Kearifan Lokal*. Their article analyzes the philosophical values of Batik Merak Semawis and uses them as an educational foundation. For example, the philosophy of the bamboo motif in Batik Merak Semawis is a symbol of prayer requests. Its relevance in education is that education must prioritize the spiritual character of students. However, as learned above,

the research works have not discussed the cultural and religious meanings of using the peacock motif in batik cloth and touched upon the idea of ecocriticism. That is why the writer proposes this work for her research. It will be a unique and excellent addition to those interested in researching batik with the peacock motif.

1.2 Field of the Study

The field of the study is within Cultural Studies, especially in the area of Popular Culture.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on an ecocriticism study on the peacock motif in several batik clothes that are sold at *Kampung Batik Semarang*.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the cultural and religious meanings of using the peacock motif in batik cloth?
2. How does flora and fauna motifs found in batik cloth deliver the idea of bringing awareness to people about taking care of the environment?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the cultural and religious meanings of using the peacock motif in batik cloth.
2. To analyze how batik with the peacock motif delivers the idea of bringing awareness to people about taking care of the environment.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study on batik is significant as it helps readers understand the meaning of using the peacock motif in batik cloth and how the peacock motif delivers the idea of bringing awareness to people about taking care of the environment. In addition, this research is significant as it can be a reference for those interested in applying ecocriticism to a widespread or popular cultural product such as batik.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1. Batik

The word batik is derived from the Javanese language, specifically, *tik*, which means *titik* or *matik* (a verb that involves creating dots), and later developed into the phrase batik (Amanah, 2014, p. 539). Batik is a painting or drawing on *mori* cloth done with a tool called *canting*.

2. Batik Conceptor

According to Collins Online Dictionary (2023), a conceptor is a person who generates ideas or plans. Therefore, a batik conceptor is a person who has ideas about batik, such as the motifs selection, colors selection, and more. Then, the ideas are given to the batik makers.

3. Motif

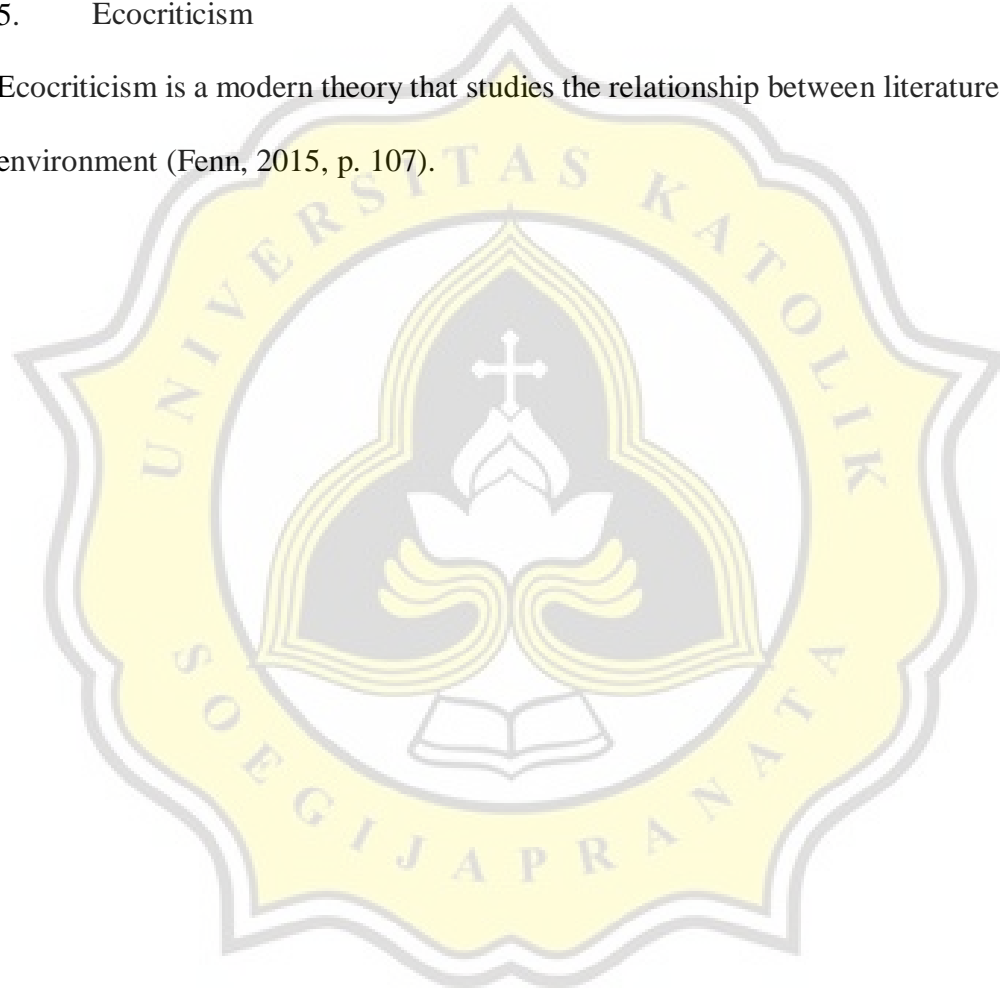
A motif is derived from the word *motive*, which means to move, to make reasons, or variety (Aprilliani, 2016, p. 10).

4. Peacock

Peacock is a bird with beautiful long blue and green tail feathers that can spread out like a fan (Restari, 2019, p. 1).

5. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a modern theory that studies the relationship between literature and the environment (Fenn, 2015, p. 107).



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Peacock

The peacock or *Pavo muticus Linnaeus* is a rare species of bird whose natural area in Indonesia is found on the island of Java (Takandjandji & Sawitri, 2010, p. 13). The peacock has beautiful long blue and green tail feathers that can spread out like a fan (Restari, 2019, p. 1). With a large wingspan of around 1.5 meters and large tail feathers, the peacock is one of the largest flying birds on earth. Although the peacock can fly, they cannot swim like other birds due to their unwebbed feet. The peacock is also one of the animals protected by law; this is contained in the attachment to PP No. 7 of 1999 concerning the Preservation and Types of Plants and Animals (Fadlila, 2017, p. 113). The status of peacocks based on IUCN (2007) is categorized as vulnerable. Furthermore, according to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife, Fauna, and Flora) in the Ministry of Forestry (2006), the green peacock is categorized into Appendix II, meaning that trade in this bird species must be controlled, such as through a quota system and supervision (Takandjandji & Sawitri, 2010, p. 14). The distribution of peacocks is mainly in East Asia and South Asia, namely from Bangladesh to Indochina and Java Island (Indonesia). Setio & Muchtar (2005) state that the distribution of peacocks in Indonesia is in Ujung Kulon National

Park, Meru Betiri National Park, Alas Purwo National Park, and Baluran National Park (as cited in Takandjandji & Sawitri, 2010, p. 13).

The existence of this bird species is very rare or almost extinct. It is rare in Indonesia because of its charming character. The total number of peacocks is at most 800 peacocks. The leading cause of the decline in the population of peacocks is free catching by the community; others are land conversion and habitat destruction. The free catching of peacocks is driven by its potentials, such as the beauty of their feathers, unique shape, and unique behavior; therefore, this bird species is classified as rare and has high economic value (Takandjandji & Sawitri, 2010, p. 13). Moreover, the population of peacocks is decreasing due to the increasing number of forest areas being used as agricultural land, cultivation, and human settlements.

The peacock or *Pavo muticus Linnaeus* belongs to the family Phasianidae (Fitrianti, 2020, p. 1). The word *peacock* does not apply to male and female birds. Only the males are called peacocks, while the females are called peahens. However, people differentiate them by saying male and female birds to make it easier. The male peacock has a body height of about 90–130 cm and a metallic green tail covering about 150 cm in length (Fitrianti, 2020, p. 1). Each tail feather has a feather tip that shines like an eye. The colorful eye-shaped markings can vary from blue, red, gold, and more. The male peacock has a crest like a crown on its head. The female peacock has brownish-green feathers without tail-covering feathers and is smaller than the male peacock. Female peacocks are more petite, slender, and quieter (Mardiati, 2018, p. 10). The

average running speed for the peacock is 10 miles per hour. Like an owl's talons, the peacock has three toes pointing forward and one pointing backwards. This unique structure helps the peacock grip into branches as they roost in trees. Their diet consists of various plants, insects, and certain reptiles and amphibians. The female peacock can lay up to six eggs at a time. They have to nurture these eggs for around a month before they hatch into peachicks. The high time for their clutch-laying run from January to March. Male peacocks are not known for having just one partner in the wild. Instead, there will be a minimum of two and can comfortably have as many as five female partners.

The male peacock will lift its bright and beautiful tail to attract the female peacock's attention, mainly during the spring breeding season (Fitrianti, 2020, p. 2). When the tail is formed like a fan, the male peacock gives a signal to the female peacocks for breeding. The male peacock will guard his territory and make a loud noise to ward off other males. Another function of the male peacock's tail is to trick predators (Liandry et al., 2021, p. 2). When the peacock's tail expands, they emit dotted motifs like dozens of eyeballs. Predators that will prey on peacocks will be fooled into thinking that these predators are facing tens of pairs of animal eyes, looking like they are about to be attacked by a flock of prey. The tail also signifies authority or power for the male peacocks (Mardiati, 2018, p. 4). The wider and prettier the male peacock's tail, the more graceful it will look. Therefore, the peacock is usually carefully depicted so that one can see how beautiful this animal is.

The peacock has a different meaning for each country, culture, and religion. Moreover, it is also for the Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Romans, and Persians. The peacock is the national bird of India, and in many countries, it is considered a sacred bird (Mardiati, 2018, p. 11). In India, the peacock is made the national bird and is treated very well. The peacock is native to India and other parts of Asia but has a long history in the Middle East and may have been introduced there by early Indian traders who visited ancient Babylon. In general, the peacock is a symbol of acceptance and openness. Aside from that, the bird also holds a significant meaning in Hinduism (Choskyi, 1988, p. 5). It symbolizes knowledge, benevolence, and compassion. Hindus also regard the peacock as sacred because they perceive the spots on the birds' tails as the eyes of the Gods. Lord Krishna is one of the significant Gods in the Hindu religion. People said that he is fond of putting feathers of the peacock all over his head and would even decorate it on his flue. Because of that, Hindus believe that the peacocks have intentionally given him their feathers as a gift.

In Buddhism, the peacock symbolizes wisdom (Choskyi, 1988, p. 5). According to legend, peacocks may consume deadly plants without experiencing any negative effects. They are hence comparable to the great bodhisattvas. The poisoned mind of ignorance, desire, and hatred (*moha, raga, dvesa*) can be changed by a bodhisattva into the concept of enlightenment or bodhicitta, which unfolds colorfully like a peacock's tail. By eating poison, the color of the peacock's feathers becomes bright, and the body becomes healthy. Similarly, by taking all problems and suffering upon themselves, the

bodhisattvas quickly purify the mental obscurations and develop their mind quickly. The peacock is also adorned with five feathers on the head, which symbolize the attainment of the five Buddha families (Choskyi, 1988, p. 6). The five Buddha families are Aksobhya, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhawa, and Vairocana. Buddha Amitabha use the peacock, which symbolizes openness, as his vehicle. It is related to Amitabha's essence about freedom.

Chinese culture believes the peacock has a very good philosophical value in life. According to *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*, the peacock symbolizes majesty, beauty, protector of offspring from all dangers, and can ward off evil influences (Yuliati, 2010, p. 11). It makes the peacock often used as a motif for the royal's attires (Darmanto & Rahmawati, 2017, p. 165). The Chinese regard the peacock as the friendliest, most brilliant, and most representative bird of peace and freedom. The peacock also symbolizes high ranking. When it comes to peacock painting, it is very suitable to be given as a gift. People believe if someone hangs a peacock painting in their house, they are in a high caste of life. In Feng Shui theory, the peacock symbolizes *yang*, which represents positive energy. At the same time, the peacock's feathers safeguard people from threats and disasters. The peacock also has significant meanings to Korean people. They believe the bird brings good luck and successful life (Kang, 2013, p. 39). If the peacock painting is displayed on the office's wall, people will always be given success. In the Joseon dynasty, the peacock feathers symbolize different statuses (Baihui, 2019, p. 292).

Werness (2006) states that the peacock symbolizes immortality in Greek culture (Kumoratih, 2020, p. 80). The ancients believe the peacocks have flesh that does not decompose after death. It remains tough and sturdy. The Romans were very fond of peacocks. Not only because of the peacock's beautiful tail, but the meat is also delicious. This has been going on since the Middle Ages in Europe. The Romans also use peacocks as decorations in their mosaics, frescoes, tombs, and funeral lamps (Green, 2006, p. 33). In Persian belief, the peacock is a symbol of safety (Green, 2006, p. 61). The bird is used as a motif in royal palaces. The Persians believe they will be safe if the bird's motif is around. While in Egypt, the peacock is associated with the all-seeing eye of Horus. Egyptian people believe the all-seeing eye of Horus exists to protect the universe from bad things.

Christian culture believes that the peacock symbolizes renewal and resurrection because it replaces its feathers yearly (Liandry et al., 2021, p. 3). Early Christian mosaics and tomb paintings often use the image of a peacock, especially in depictions of the resurrection. However, the peacock also has a rich symbolism in Islam. It symbolizes beauty and renewal (Green, 2006, p. 56). There is one of the famous tales from Turkey about the peacock. A long time ago, God created a peacock which sits and prays for 70.000 years using prayer beads. Then, God put a mirror in front of the peacock, which is amused by its beauty. The peacock then prostrates itself to God five times, so the tradition of five prayers a day arose among the Muslims. The peacock is