

THIRD SPACE CRITICAL REVIEWS OF THE INTERPRETATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LATOHAN MOTIF WITHIN BATIK LASEM, CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA

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Abstract. *Latohan* is one of the typical Lasem batik motifs whose shape was inspired by the *Caulerpa lentillifera* plant or sea grapes, which is known as *Latoh*, locally. The plant is spread across Indonesian waters, but it is only used by Lasem to produce cultural products. Written batik has been recognized by UNESCO since 2009 as an intangible cultural heritage of Indonesia. This shows that the *Latohan* motif is a special, relevant, and important art, which needs to be studied. Therefore, this study aims to provide a different perspective on *Latohan's* motifs. Assisted by the concept of Third Space and the symbolic interaction approach, the facts of the *Latoh* plant, the art, the interpretation of the meaning contained in the art, the relationship between them, and the implementation were studied. An analysis of the literature review was carried out, followed by observations of Lasem, exploration of the motifs on the batik, in-depth interviews, evaluation, and interpretation. The results show the wealth of tangible and intangible *latohan* motifs, which can contribute to strengthening the nation's identity, as well as serve as a source of reference for similar studies.

Keywords: Batik canting, Lasem, interaction-interpretation, Latohan motif, Third Space.

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1. Introduction

The discussion of the third space is often applied to three-dimensional objects, but this article discusses two-dimensional materials that were explored with a Third Space theory approach, namely the *isen-isen* motif on Lasem batik. The space was not built from massive boundaries but was created from experiences shaped by facts, interpretations, and implementations as actions of ideas (Darmayanti & Bahauddin, 2019). This study was based on Lefebvre-Soja's theoretical view of the production of the third space as a social experience. Based on this description, this theory can be used on any object that is tangible or has physical perceived value components, intangible or has mental conceived values, as well as a combination of both known as lived (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996).

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When viewed from an architectural point of view, perception is identified from anything that can be seen in the form of buildings or spaces and is private (spatial practice), while conception is about ideas. The lived values are related to function, meaning, and socials (spaces of representations). Meanwhile, when viewed from the social context, the Third or lived space is considered a transformative space, namely the occurrence of social and cultural dynamics. For example, individuals can experience a transformative sense of self, identity, and relationships with others, thereby leading to the birth of a new “self”. The sentence “to give birth to a new one” can be an approach to the study of the *Latohan* as the *isen-isen* motif.

Based on the description above, the Third Space is a way of thinking and interpreting identity space that is socially generated, transformative, and dynamic. In summary, the concept in this study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Lefebvre-Soja Space Terminology & Its Application to Batik Lasem

Space Terminology	Meaning	Applications on Case Studies
First Space (Perceived Space)	Tangible in nature; Spatial practice; physical	The <i>Latohan</i> motif on batik is an object that can be seen, as well as the <i>Latohan</i> plant as a fact and inspiration for <i>Latohan</i> . Both are characteristic of Lasem batik.
Second Space (Conceived Space)	Intangible in nature; Representations of space; mental	The <i>Latohan</i> motif in Lasem batik was obtained from ideas and has meaning, both of which are seen as part of the culture.
Third Space (Lived Space)	Tangible & intangible; Spaces of representations; function & social	The <i>Latohan</i> motif in Lasem batik is seen as a space that gives a cultural message through its physical existence, meaning, and function. It also provides a cultural experience to the creator, owner, or wearer.

The technique of making batik is very common in the world and has been in existence for hundreds of years. However, the use of *canting* in the production process is a characteristic of Indonesian batik, and it is used to produce different traditional motifs. The batik motif in this study is known as *Latohan* from the Lasem area, Central Java, Indonesia. Why Lasem? In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the area had the third-largest Chinese community after Batavia (now Jakarta) and Cirebon in West Java. Chinatown in Lasem is the largest and most complete city with iconic gates along the road. It is also the most beautiful compared to others in the country. This was supported by Pigeaud (1983), who stated that it was undoubtedly a trading area, with the presence of the Indo-Chinese bourgeoisie. During this period, Lasem still maintained its status as an important port city. In the 19th century, it became the center of the legally traded opium at the time, and the Chinese were entrusted with its distribution. People who lived in Lasem during the 19th century grew very wealthy as traders and they had large houses (Suroyo *et al.*, 1994). Apart from opium, Batik Tulis is one of the businesses in the city, which has also survived until today. According to Serat Badra Santi, an ancient manuscript from the Majapahit Kingdom (1432-1527), the influx of Chinese influenced the existence of this clothing industry in Lasem and still persists now. (Darmayanti & Bahaiddin, 2020).

Before further discussing *Latohan*, the meaning of batik *canting* must be explained. Batik is a term used to describe a piece of cloth with hot wax, which was produced with the *canting* technique, namely a copper pen with a bamboo handle. The wax is used as a

barrier in the process of dyeing. The cloth was selected for this study due to its beauty as well as the creativity of the maker. It was also chosen because it covers human life and the surrounding nature, as well as the spiritual values contained in it through motifs and colors. This was why it was designated by UNESCO as Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage in 2009.

Batik reached the pinnacle of aesthetic expression in Java during the nineteenth century. Easily identifiable themes, patterns, and colors often indicate family, social position, and geographic origin. Traditional batik colors in the interior of Central Java are dominated by blue, brown, broken-white or cream, and black. However, the typical colors used are brighter, such as red, blue, or green because Lasem is located on the coast. Etymologically, batik consists of the prefix “*amba*” and the suffix “*tik*” – the dot, which in Javanese is called “*mbatik*”, namely the act of making intricate dots of hot wax called *malam* dripping from the *canting*. It also involves writing or drawing intricately using wax on *mori* cloth (Agustin, 2014; Trixie, 2020). Furthermore, batik is a cloth made traditionally with certain decorative motifs called *wastra* using various techniques based on its origin (Doellah, 2002).

The development of Lasem's batik and motifs cannot be separated from the role of Bi Nang Un, one of the ship's captains from Admiral Cheng Ho's entourage who was interested in settling in the city around 1413 because of its natural beauty. Bi Nang Un lives with his wife Na Li Ni who has expertise in making batik. The man then taught his daughter named Bi Nang Ti as well as indigenous girls in the area. The story is in the History of Lasem (*Babad Lasem*), which was written by Empu Santhi Badra around 1479 and was composed by Raden Panji Kamzah in 1858. A fragment of the manuscript was written in Javanese with a question, namely – “*Neng Taman Banjar Mlathi kono Putri Na Li Ni mulang nggawe slepi lar merak, mbathik, lan mulang njoged maring bocahbocah wedok Kemandhung, lan uga mulang marang putra putrine dhewe*”. Bi Nang Ti improved his abilities as he got older and passed them on to his friends, which led to the emergence of Lasem batik artisans and merchants who employed locals (Unjiya, 2014; Maghfiroh, 2020) until now. This situation also enriches the motifs in the art and the acculturation of several cultures in it. According to this concept, batik is a distinct Indonesian cultural code (Hall, 1997), and the *Latohan* motif in Lasem's hand-written batik is used as a case study in this study. As its cultural code, this traditional Lasem batik motif will convey both tangible and intangible messages.

Latohan is from the word *Latoh* which is known as *Caulerpa lentilifera* or a type of seaweed. In English, it is known as sea grapes because its shape resembles a collection of grapes (Astuti *et al.*, 2021). Meanwhile, the suffix “an” is a closing word that forms a new word in the local language. This indicates that the overall meaning of *Latohan* is a batik motif inspired by the *Latoh* plant. Why is this motif important to be studied in-depth? This is because this motif only can find in batik Lasem and it is only used to fill batik cloth or is called *isen-isen*, which is considered to have no meaning. It also has two parts, namely the main and filler motifs or the *isen-isen*, which comes from the Javanese language and is a combination of the initial word “content” and the suffix “an,” meaning stuffing. This local word is generally referred to as a background that can support the main motive and it often carries local wisdom. In Lasem batik, there are various forms of *isen-isen*, including pebbles (*watu kricak*), fish scales (*sisik melik*), pangolin scales (*sisik trenggiling*), mountain of ringgit (*gunung ringgit*), and *latohan*, which are often combined with *isen-isen* three-dots (*cecek tilu*). They can also be combined with seven dots (*cecek pitu*), which resemble the shape of a flower. The smaller and more detailed the *isen-isen*

made, the more difficult and longer the time required. Batik designs that show the richness of *isen-isen* become more important because they can enrich the meaning (Bambang As, 2014).

Nearly all of the seas in Indonesia are home to the *Latoh* plant, which is also known by other names in Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. It is also referred to as *umi budo* in Japan. However, *Latoh* is exclusively used as a food ingredient in that nation and does not serve as an inspiration for traditional products. Although *Latoh* is widespread in Indonesia, it is only used in the Lasem area for the production of written batik motifs, apart from being used as food ingredients. This shows that it is unique and has become an idea in the creative process of Lasem batik motifs.

The scope and attention of this study are the compositions of the *latohan* motif influenced by the *latoh* plant, which is then applied to Lasem's written batik with ideas and philosophies connected to Lasem's history and culture. This article examines four explorations of *latohan* motifs by different individuals, namely authors who are not from Lasem, but created with the touch of local Lasem batik artisans with decades of experience. This is significant because it will result in Lasem batik patterns that are different from the usual design while still retaining Lasem's breath and character. According to this description, this study is important to conduct because, in the age of globalization, batik needs the growth of creativity in order to stay pertinent and fresh, so that it can continue to be accepted by the community both within and outside of Lasem. The *latoh* plant and the *latohan* motif become more significant than just fillers (*isen-isen*) for Lasem batik using the Third Space method. It can also provide new insights into batik art and design, as well as serve as inspiration for future batik development. The study of creating *latohan* motifs on Lasem batik using Lasem's distinctive colors also tangentially gives information about the Lasem people's ideology, history, and culture.

The purpose of this study is to provide a different perspective in viewing the *Latohan* motif by critically reviewing it through the Third Space theory about the facts of the *Latoh* plant, the interpretation of the *Latohan* motif, and the relationship between the two. The facts and meanings of the motif, which was inspired by the *Latoh* plant were also explored. Furthermore, a critical study of Lasem batik motifs can provide an explanation as well as a reference in recognizing the presence of historical space, tradition, and culture in batik motifs. This can indirectly enhance knowledge and comprehension, and contribute value to Lasem's local traditional art in particular, as well as Indonesia in general. Therefore, the research questions are structured as follows: What are the facts about the *Latoh* plant that inspired the Lasem batik motif?, what is the meaning contained in it, so that this motif becomes the attraction and distinguishing feature of Lasem batik, as seen through the spatial component of the Third Space theory, namely perceived, conceived, and lived space? and what is the meaning derived from the creative process of making Lasem batik with *latohan* motifs through the perspective of symbolic interaction?

2. Research Method

This study used qualitative methods to achieve objectives with a comprehensive literature review and observation approach assisted by Soja-Lefebvre's Third Space theory. The concept of the Third Space was chosen as an analytical investigative technique with the aim of understanding the complexity of various possible thoughts from the cultural and traditional aspects of the *Latohan* motif on Lasem batik. It was also used

to provide a new interpretation of the existence/embodiment of the motif. The application of the concept is based on the meaning of each component of the Third Space, namely perceived, conceived, and lived. The methods, approaches, and theories are in line with previous studies related to culture and can explore the nature of the study's object more optimally. Literature reviews were more focused on *latoh* plants and *latohan* batik motifs. Direct surveys were carried out consecutively in the study location, namely Lasem, in 2018, stopped in 2019-2020 due to the pandemic, and continued in 2022. In Lasem, several batik craftsmen were visited and some hand-drawn batik samples with *Latohan* motifs were collected. Interviews with craftsmen and artisans were also conducted to enrich the research discussion.

Symbolic interaction theory, which stresses the connection between symbols and interactions, reinforces the idea of third space. This theory emphasizes three essential concepts, namely mind, self, and society (Morissan, 2013). This theory stresses three essential concepts, namely mind, self, and society, which are the primary topics of this study, namely the idea of *latohan*, which is prominent in Lasem's written batik. As a result, the importance of this symbolic interaction theory can enhance its essence. According to the theory of symbolic interaction, the human mind can interpret and analyze objects and events that are experienced, explain their origins, and even broaden their meaning (Nurdin, 2020), such as the idea of the *latohan* motif in batik Lasem. According to George Herbert Mead (2018), what can assist in the study of symbolic interaction is (1) focusing on the interplay between “characters” and societal conditions. The character is the *latoh* plant, which influenced the local motif of Lasem batik, namely *latohan*, and the societal condition is portrayed by batik creators and batik makers. (2) Pay heed to ideas from “figures” and social circumstances in order to create dynamic and appropriate works. (3) the ability to interpret something, in this instance, the *latohan* motifs in Lasem batik.

The findings gained in the substance of the topics to be studied are supported by visual material provided from the archives of batik craftsmen, and the data is analyzed using descriptive analysis. Information collected from scientific sources was correlated with data obtained from observations and interviews. The answers to the study questions were presented with the interpretation of the findings. This interpretation is critical in order to comprehend the meaning and importance of the exchanges that take place between the makers, owners, and users of Lasem batik with *latohan* motifs.

3. A Brief Knowledge of *Latoh* and A Third Space Approach

Lasem is located on the north coast of Java Island, which is three hours by road from Semarang, the capital city of Central Java, and 30 minutes from Rembang. This geographical location causes the inhabitants to be very close and familiar with foods obtained from the sea, one of which is *Latoh* plants. There are two types of *Latoh* in the area, namely *Caulerpa lentillifera* and *Caulerpa racemosa*. These two species are very identical and can only be distinguished by the shape of the rounded ends. This seaweed has a distinctive shape consisting of three parts, namely rhizoids, including roots as well as assimilator or stem parts, and ramuli, which are neatly arranged with rounded stem ends, narrowed base, and transparent green color (Estrada *et al.*, 2020).



Figure 1. Latoh Plant Anatomy and Forms of *Caulerpa lentillifera* (A) & *Caulerpa racemosa* (B) (Estrada, 2020)

According to Syamsurijal (2015) on the website of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia, *Latoh* is a type of seaweed that lives attached to the bottom of shallow waters. This was supported by interviews with people in Lasem who revealed that it is usually found attached to the edge of coral reefs on the beaches of Lasem. However, it is frequently observed growing on sandy bottoms in the intertidal zone. *Latoh* can be found in coral reefs with a depth of up to 200 meters. The plant lives attached to the bottom substrate of marine waters, such as dead coral, coral fragments, sand, and mud. The growth is epiphytic or saprophytic and it is sometimes associated with other marine plants (Atmadja *et al.*, 1996). This shows that *Latoh* is a friendly plant because it can coexist without harming its host. Furthermore, it lives by obtaining nutrients from dead organic matter, which indicates that it is beneficial to the ecosystem. It can also convert these dead materials into energy, thereby recycling nutrients in the environment.

A previous study revealed that *Latoh* is a biofilter plant that absorbs pollutants produced by human activities, such as industrial, agricultural, or household processes (Delan *et al.*, 2015). This shows that its existence is beneficial to the surrounding environment. For the Lasem people, *Latoh* is a fresh food ingredient with good nutritional value. This is supported by a study, which stated that it is a source of vegetable protein, minerals, and vitamins, as well as fiber (de Gaillande *et al.*, 2017; Tapotubun, 2018). It can also ward off free radicals, which helps to prevent premature aging. Based on interviews with local residents, *Latoh* is a favorite food that must be eaten fresh and directly obtained from the beach because it does not last long. However, a drying method has been developed for its preservation. *Latoh* in Lasem is not available every time because there is a harvest period, namely during the rainy season and before summer around September - February. During direct observations in Lasem, a food menu from the plant called *urap latoh* was tried, namely raw *Latoh* that had been washed clean and then mixed with grated coconut and sliced young mango. The crunchy texture and distinctive taste were the main attraction of this food. It also has a combination of salty taste that comes from spheres similar to the grape-shape filled with water. The food was savory due to the coconut and sour from young mango, which neutralizes the typical “fishy” sensation of seafood, as shown in Figure 2. *Urap Latoh* mixture can also use other vegetables, such as beans, long beans, or carrots.



Figure 2. Lasem Traditional Food – Urap Latoh (Authors, 2018)

Based on the facts about *Latoh*, its elastic shape, and character can be created or described into dynamic forms to produce more varied and beautiful curves. Its beauty also becomes more meaningful when people know that it is “friendly” as well as useful. This gives *Latoh* plants an important role in the Lasem culture, apart from its benefit as a food source. Through the Third Space theory, *Latoh* is part of the perceived or first space because it has the appropriate category, namely physical. Therefore, it is a space that can be directly seen through the senses and can be observed for growth. It can also provide life through food as well as facilitate the sustainability of arts and culture, especially in Lasem. This is in line with Lefebvre (1991) that perceived space is local, and can be observed, analyzed, and occurs repeatedly. When viewed from the architectural analysis, these recurring events are related to the daily activities carried out by individuals in certain buildings or areas. Activities that occur consistently and are the same indirectly give character and habits. Meskell-Brocken (2020) makes it clear that perceived term is a process of producing material forms that are the result of daily activities and behavior, which later leads to a social-spatial perspective (Meskell-Brocken, 2020). Social space is formed when there is interaction with a wider scope. For example, involving the wider community, namely the Lasem community.

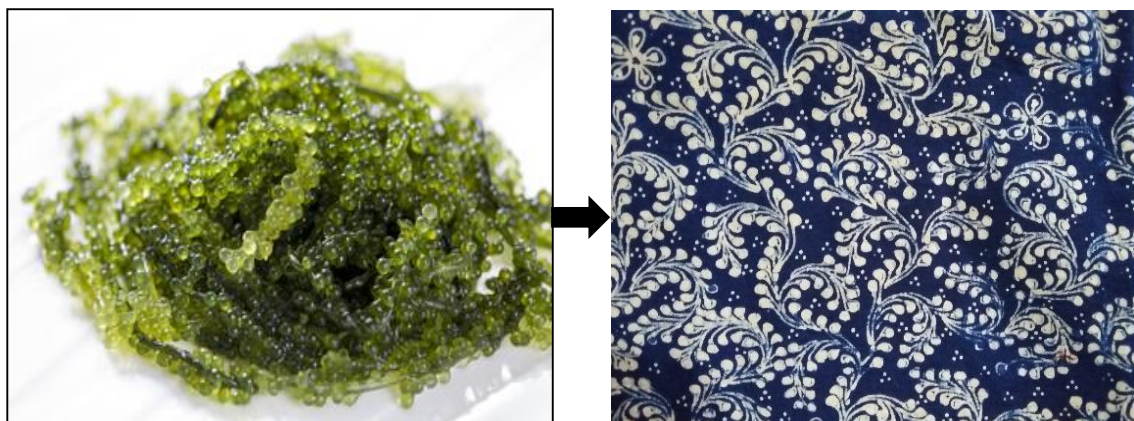


Figure 3. Transformation of Forms Based on Ideas from Latoh to Latohan Motifs – Second Space (Authors, 2018)

A second or conceived space is then created, which refers to “spatial representation”, and it gives rise to the birth of imagination. This is the virtual, representational, or symbolic world that is filled with ideas. When it involves humans as “creators”, it is related to creativity as well as thinking about creating something new and finding sources of ideas, such as *Latoh* being the *Latohan* motif on Lasem batik, as shown in Figure 3. This is in line with Soja (1996) that the second room was identified as a space for designers, planners, and artists. It was also conceptualized to contain knowledge, signs, and thoughts. The existence of the conceived space was also evident in the interviews with local people who revealed that *Latoh* is a seasonal food ingredient. Therefore, the local community waits for its harvest, and it is often received happily upon its arrival. This happiness is part of the character of the *Latohan* motif on the waiting individual and indirectly on the plant. Other typical Lasem batik motifs, such as *watu kricak* or broken stone, which symbolize sadness show the suffering of the inhabitants as stone-breakers during the construction of the Pos Highway in the Dutch colonial era led by General Daendels. This is consistent with the results of interviews that those who live in Lasem, known as the coastal community, are hardworking people who can face challenges and turn problems or sadness into positive things. They are also patient and creative by changing the shape of the *Latoh* plant into a *Latohan* motif. This indicates that the conceived space or Second Room is for ideas, designers, artists, or planners (Soja, 1996).

The first (perceived) and second (conceived) spaces have been described, while the third space has been reported to be used as a space for interaction and creativity. The *Latohan* motif is produced from creativity and forms of expression. It is also obtained from the interaction between the *Latoh* plant and human creative ideas as the first and second spaces. Edward Soja (1996) revealed that the production of the third space comes from the successful communication between the first and second. It is also ultimately seen as a social space that transcends the two previous spaces. Furthermore, it allows the opening of new potentials that go beyond the physical and representational space and it is a place where new designs are created. One of the examples of the third (lived) space creativity is the production of various compositions of *latohan* motifs painted using hot wax and *canting* on *mori* cloth, which enriches Lasem Batik’s designs with their respective beauty. The creation of these arts by several craftsmen in Lasem is evidence of the existence of the Third Space, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. The Embodiment of the Third Space – *Latohan* Motifs in Lasem Hand Batik (Authors, 2018-2022)

The figure above shows the communication between motifs in one Lasem batik cloth, which contains a philosophical message and provides “experience space” to creators, enthusiasts, buyers, and users. It also reveals the flexibility of *Latoh* to adapt to other objects, including those that do not come from “water”, such as flowers (A&B) from “earth” and birds identical to “air” (C). Apart from the ability to coexist, *Latohan* can fill the empty space in the batik cloth. It can also serve as the main motif on a piece of batik, which indicates that the cloth only contains the *Latohan* motif.

Coastal communities in Lasem explore the rich resources of the marine waters in their area, especially the Dasun region, which produces a lot of *Latoh* (interview with source: fishermen in Dasun, Saturday 30 July 2022). Furthermore, the Lasem region cosmologically consists of hills, the sky (rain), the sea, and the human world itself. These four cosmic pairs are the driving force of life in the area (Sumardjo, 2010). In this case, Sumardjo strongly emphasized that perfect things consist of four basic components, namely four patterns (*pola empat*). What is meant by pattern four is that the upstream (*hulu*) part is more sacred than the downstream (*hilir*) part which is more profane. Upstream and downstream are a perfect match, to complete this also known as the pair of hill and coast, mountain and sea, inside and outside, native and foreigner, and others (Sumardjo, 2000, 2010). It is also a unity of perfection consisting of four pairs, which can be observed through the myths of coastal communities.

The *latohan* motif can easily blend with any object on a piece of batik cloth because members of the marine community always move, change, and adapt to everything that comes from outside. This is what underlies the active attitude derived from the four patterns and in line with the local proverb “*dimana bumi di pijak disitu langit dijunjung*” – translation is where the earth is stepped on, the sky is upheld (Sumardjo, 2010) meaning, where our feet stand, then that's where we have to respect that place by adapting and moving to join the environment. It also causes the basic pattern of Lasem batik to always blend beautifully with the basic form of the *latoh motif* which was initiated from marine plants. Furthermore, the art seems to experience acculturation and always blends with new objects. After China came, the art was combined with *hong* birds, *kilin*, and Chinese calligraphy letters. Lasem batik also experienced acculturation through a combination of *latohan* motifs with Arabic letters after the introduction of Islam.

The Lasem people were included in the Javanese society, where land, water, and air are part of their life (Hartono & Sattar, 2017). The Lasem community, which consists of two very strong cultures, namely Javanese and Chinese, found similarities in terms of philosophy related to the four natural elements with their influence on nature and human nature, namely the earth, fire, water, and air. This can be explained further by examining the four philosophies of human character (Musbikin, 2010). The earthly element as a representation of Earth is black, greedy, and means lust. Meanwhile, the fire element means anger, but it is red and has a bold character. Water indicates *Sufiyah* lust, which always desires and represents by yellow. The philosophy of these four elements ends with air, which means *mutmainah* lust, represent by white as well as symbolizes the nature of calmness and peace. Supadi (1961) also agreed with the perspective of the four elements, but there is a slight difference in the earth element, which describes patience. Despite these differences, there is a highlight between the two, hence, the lives of the Lasem people cannot be separated from these elements.

Based on the philosophical description above, these various statements are included in the lived space or the Third Space. This point of view has given an identity or characteristic to Lasem's motifs, especially *Latohan*. Philosophy was birthed based on

the interaction between facts about *Latoh*, ideas, and meanings about *Latohan* as well as the Lasem people as part of the Javanese society. Therefore, the Third Space is often referred to as a gathering space due to the successful interaction between the contents of the first and second spaces. It also symbolizes the existence of life and human thoughts that process these sources into concepts and describe them according to what is seen. This is supported by imagination and realized with creativity, as shown in Figure 5.

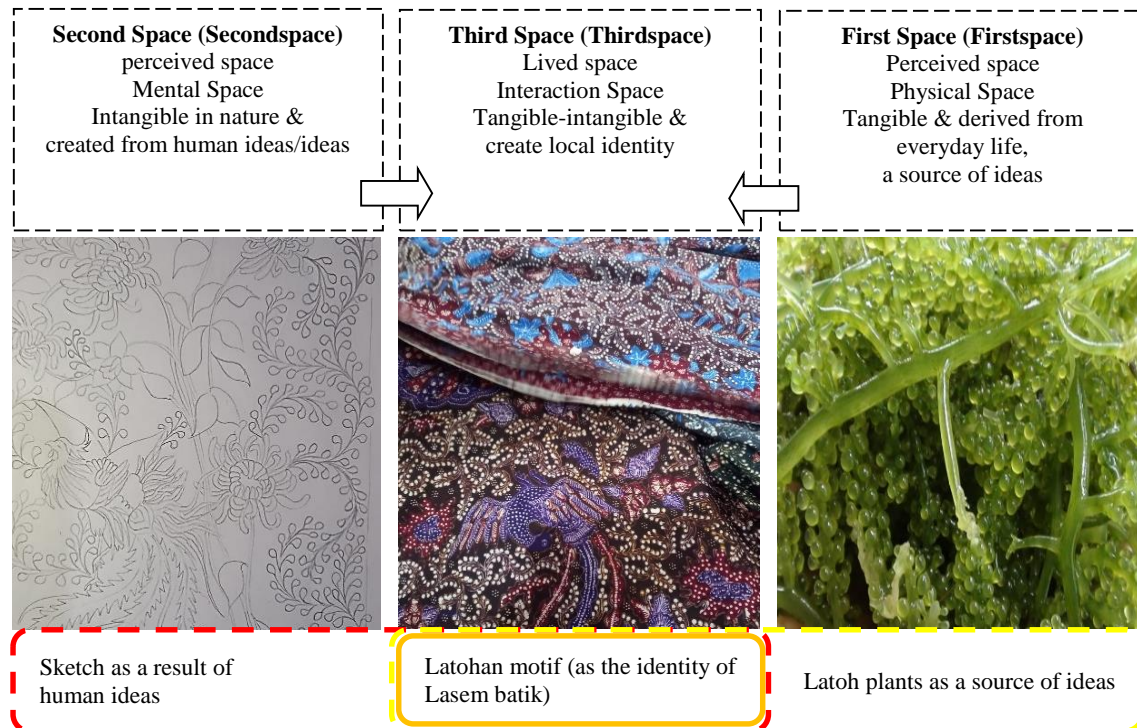


Figure 5. Illustration of the Forming of the Third Space: Latohan Motif on Lasem Batik Fabric (Authors, 2022)

4. The potential of Third Space with Symbolic Interaction approach: The Implementation of Latohan Motif Within Batik Lasem

The Third Space theory is basically used to explore and understand the spaces between two conceptualizations. Furthermore, Soja (1996) revealed that it is where everything is united, namely the First and Second Spaces refer to the material and mental spaces (Danaher *et al.*, 2003; Soja, 1996). The meeting of these two and their “activities” creates the character of the third space, which is local and distinctive based on the form of creativity, artistic expression, and interaction in Lasem batik cloth. Interaction through the application of *Latohan* motifs in this study uses cultural, historical, and traditional approaches related to Lasem. Meanwhile, representation of the symbolic interaction is shown within the process of batik-making, starting from the ideas turning into sketches, and passing into the gifted hand of the artisan or batik maker that involves the mind, self, and society. The three basics of interaction are closely connected to the embodiment of the third space.

4.1. *Latohan Motif: Fact, History, Culture and Tradition on Batik Tulis Lasem*

The creation of batik motifs begins with ideas extracted from marine plants, which are considered local wisdom. Based on the perspective of the Third Space, the presence of the *Latohan* motif, which is simplified from its original form is a creative process that has gone through the creativity of the creator. In Lasem batik, it includes a collection of dots, lines, as well as various objects that complement each other with prominent regional characteristics (Hu *et al.*, 2021). *Latoh*'s simplified shape is represented by curving lines to the right or left as stalks, as well as little grape-like dots on each short branch that emerges from the stalk. The convoluted pattern is made repeatedly and continuously as a background on the written batik cloth (Maghfiroh & Kurniadi, 2010; Utomo *et al.*, 2018). *Latohan* motifs can be made in the form of small groups based on the composition that was initiated or arranged as a whole to fill the batik cloth, which is usually 2 meters x 1.2 meters wide.

The process of creating written batik is also influenced by the point of view of craftsmen and artisans as local people who provide value. For example, they can create companion motifs, such as *Hong* birds, as well as *krisan* flower (*Chrysanthemum* flowers), dragons, and other typical variants, such as *beras wutah*, *ringgit* mountain, or *watu kricak*. Among the compositions of these motifs, batik craftsmen usually add *isen-isen* in the form of filler within the batik cloth, such as dots (*cecek*) with a shape of a flower, which is often three with another dot in the middle known as *cecek telu* (three dots) and *cecek pitu* (seven dots). The dialogue or interaction between *latohan* and other companion motifs as well as *isen-isen* as a complement has created a “symbolic-cultural space” with a beautiful composition.

The development of the *Latohan* motif on Lasem batik serves as a representation of the lived space of Lasem's tradition and culture. This can be carried out when the *Latohan* motif is combined with various distinctive objects. After the art has been drawn on the cloth, it is completed with a typical Lasem color, namely *merah lasem* (Lasem's red), which is also called *getih pitik* (red chicken blood). The use of only one type of red in Lasem batik is also known as batik *abangan* (*abang* means red in the local language). These colors were chosen because they cannot be produced in other areas due to the difference in the type of groundwater and red is often the first color produced before others in the dyeing process (Rahayu, 2014; Mandaka *et al.*, 2018). The color was chosen based on the batik maker's suggestion that red *getih pitik* is more than just a color but gives the local Lasem “soul” to batik, which has become the character of Lasem batik. According to the theory of symbolic interaction, which consists of three components, namely mind, self, and society, the opinion of batik makers as people involved in batik works affirms the local cultural context, which includes the three components, namely mind, which reflects one's thoughts, self, which represents the experience of batik makers, and society, that is, batik makers are part of Lasem's social construction.

In this study, there are four batik Lasem with *abangan* colors, namely *Pagi and Sore Latohan*, *Krisan* and *Hong*, *Latohan* and *Cheng Ho* boat, *Hong-Liong* in harmony, as well as *Latohan* *Hong* bird and *Dragon*. Furthermore, they were all inspired by the *Latoh* plant and combined with other typical Lasem motifs based on the background of the story and their respective meanings.

Figure 6 shows a Lasem-written batik called *Pagi-Sore*, which means Morning (*pagi*) and Afternoon (*sore*), hence, it is divided into two different motifs and tone. Based on history, batik *Pagi-Sore* was created when the economy was struggling, but batik became a necessity because it was used daily to reduce costs. However, most of them had

different motifs, hence, two patterns were made on one cloth. This means that one batik can be used twice and two motifs can be used in one day (Ni'mah *et al.*, 2021; Vina, interview 2022). The written batik in Figure 6 is called *Pagi-Sore Latohan, Krisan* and *Hong Pagi Sore Latohan, Krisan* and Fenghuang bird. The left side of the batik uses the *Latohan* motif, which fills the cloth as a background. The Hong bird on the left side faces the right and it is decorated with *krisan* flowers. Meanwhile, small *krisan* spreading as a background are depicted on the right side, and on the far right, there are Hong birds facing left. The *Pagi and Sore* sides region are separated by a bouquet of *krisan* flowers, which is locally called *buketan krisan*.



Figure 6. Implementation of the Latohan Facts and Traditions-Cultural Approach: *Pagi-Sore Latohan, Krisan & Hong* (Authors, 2022)

The hong birds, *krisan* flower, and *latohan* were placed together on a piece of batik cloth as a cultural space to ensure the art is a representation of the meeting of local Lasem and Chinese cultures. The local culture is represented by the *Latohan* motif, which is also described as binding *krisan* and *Hong*. This bond is a reflection that the Latoh plant is friendly to the surrounding environment and can coexist with anything. Through the lens of symbolic interaction, the successful interaction between the *latohan* motif as the main character, the *krisan* flower, and *Hong* as the supporting actor not only creates beautiful batik motif compositions, but also provides an overview of the batik motifs that are fluid and dynamic, due to the cultural backgrounds of the sketchers and different batik makers, as well as the different cultural backgrounds of *latoh*, *chrysanthemum*, and *Hong*. According to Chinese culture, *krisan* flower symbolizes elegance, and are believed to bring positive energy to the environment. From a health perspective, this flower is known as the queen of the east in traditional Chinese medicine with healing powers. It can be used to treat digestion and soothe the stomach by drying the flowers and brewing them with hot water to drink *krisan* tea (Shahrajabian *et al.*, 2019). Meanwhile, the *Hong* bird in Chinese culture is seen as a symbol of virtue and good luck. It also represent male and female in one species (Rahmawati, 2021), which indicates that the batik can be worn by both genders.

The figures of *Hong* and *Latohan* birds are also used in the Lasem batik motif through a historical approach, as described in Figure 7. The motif originates from historical values, namely the arrival of people from China who came to Lasem using General Cheng-Ho ship. The story was adapted from the *Badra Santi* Book, which explains that there was Bi Nang Un, or skipper on the ship who was a Campa in the

Indochina area as well as a Chinese who landed in Lasem (Putra, 2016; Rahayu & Alrianingrum, 2014). The wife of the captain, named Puteri Na Li Ni, brought batik art to the region and taught the locals (Wulanningrum, 2017; Nurhajarini *et al.*, 2015).

The visual form of the idea was processed into an object of a ship sailing across the ocean with a repeating pattern. The Chinese influence was seen in the presence of Hong birds with the *latohan* background. This can also strengthen the identity of lasem batik, which can help to improve socio-economic conditions (Darmayanti *et al.*, 2022). The visualization composition of art consists of several objects with mirror patterns of ships and *Hong* birds. Furthermore, the bird in the middle is a meeting between the left and right batik patterns, bound by the sky which is depicted with the *latohan* motif meeting the waves of the high seas. The batik has the same red color with the previous motif, namely *getih pitik*. The overall visualization is the implementation of the influence of Chinese culture brought by the wife of Bi Nang Un, which has been previously described. Based on the preceding description, it offers a novel perspective that the significance of batik works can be seen not only from the backgrounds and space of the people engaged but also from the background and space of the batik motif objects. The significance of the batik patterns in Figure 7 explains the Lasem people's tolerance and friendliness, the ease with which they tolerate other cultures, even if they are distinct, but are embraced rather than alienated. This demonstrates the progression of perception of things that span backgrounds and spaces. The *latohan* that should be in the "space" of water, as well as the hong gongs that should be in the sky, are instead in the aquatic environment encircled by the *latohan* motif. Nurdin's (2020) assertion that the symbolic interaction of certain objects can describe the origins of something and allow for the development of interpretations of an object supports this fact.



Figure 7. Implementation of the Historical and Tradition-Cultural Approach: *Latohan* and the Cheng-Ho Boat (Authors, 2022)

Another story on batik involving the *Latohan* motif can be seen in Figure 8. The art consists of diagonal lines filled with flower tendrils and *Latohan* strands.



Figure 8. Implementasi Latohan Pendekatan Tradisi-Budaya: Hong Liong in Harmony
(Authors, 2022)

In the center of the diagonal motif as the main elements are the *Hong* bird and the Dragon in a circle. Their visualization is depicted in a way, where they seems to form a Yin and Yang symbol, which is a picture of natural harmony in the philosophy of Chinese society (Dwitari, 2017). There is no good unless it is followed by bad, and there is no darkness if it is not accompanied by light, and human existence is even comprises of two sexes, male and female. The meaning of Yin-Yang dualism is also found in the Hong bird, which symbolizes the two elements of nature, namely fire and air as well as the symbol of the upper world. Meanwhile, the dragon represents the other two elements of nature, namely water, and earth as well as a symbol of the underworld. This interpretation is in line with the beliefs held by the Chinese and Javanese communities, which involve the Lasem people. To unravel the meaning of dualism, the Latohan motif is juxtaposed with Lasem's identity. This can be seen from the basic character of Latoh who brings dynamics into its environment with positive benefits and then represents the presence of a third space.

The *Pagi-Sore batik* motif was re-applied, as shown in Figure 9, and it is often found in Lasem's hand-drawn batik. The difference with Figure 6 is that the left side is white, and there is a Hong bird in the lower left corner, while a dragon figure in the middle of the art. The right side is dominated by red color and *Latohan*, and the position of the *Krisan* Flower as well as the dragon are similar to that of the side part. The two animals used in batik are mythological creatures from the Chinese culture, but they give another side of the character of Hong and Dragon in this batik. Hong is depicted as a symbol of the sun, which gives warmth and brings blessings, while the Dragon is the most powerful creature that lives in the sky, as well as a symbol of fertility and strength. The philosophy of the two animals gives a formal impression, while the character of Lasem batik, which was included in Pesisir batik focuses more on non-formal impressions as well as things that are cheerful and light. This is in line with the existence of the *krisan* flower with a cheerful and friendly character, hence, it can provide a balance of life (William, 2012). It can also portray the dynamic character of *Latohan*, that providing a comfortable life.

The combination of local and Chinese motifs in this batik is rich in meaning and very distinctive from the Third Space theory, which contains interpretation based on a combination of materials in the first space as well as meaning, ideas, and symbols in the second space. The Third Space is also a communal point for the previous two spaces. This shows that after the Latoh plant becomes part of Lasem batik, it undergoes a transformation caused by human creative ideas, then engages in social dynamics

interacting with other motifs. The plant also has a history, cultural relationship and social tradition with many individuals hence, it has a deep meaning and identity.



Figure 9. Implementation of the Latohan Tradition-Cultural Approach: Dragon, Hong and Latohan (Authors, 2022)

Based on several implementations in the patterns above, a simple but deep essence can be obtained, namely *Latohan* is the identity of Lasem batik. It is also a multicultural representation of Lasem, as well as the illustration of the core of the society and the inhabitants who are friendly and uphold tolerance. Neli Triana (2022) wrote in an online newspaper, namely *kompas online*, that the form of the Third Space is the heart of the city's vitality. This indicates that the *latohan* motif is the heart of Lasem batik, which is able to associate with other motifs with friendly.

5. Conclusion

The *Latohan* motif is often only considered as *isen-isen* or a filler for the background of batik. It is also assumed to be only inspired by the shape of the Latoh plant. Additionally, given that Lasem is situated near the coast, it is extremely likely that whoever designed the *latohan* motif was inspired by the nearest natural shape. However, the discussion in this study shows that the *Latohan* motif has a deeper meaning than just “inspired by marine plants” which is a complement to Lasem batik as the Third Space. Although, *latohan* only an *isen-isen*, it still gives a deep message on how powerful the natural elements can penetrate human beings. This is because humans must be able to balance the motif with a sense of sincerity as well as accept its differences in the elements of the environment.

Facts about *Latoh* that have positive benefits for the environment and humans are often seen when it is in water. Furthermore, it is an independent plant with a friendly character, and does not affect other plants or nearby objects. *Latoh* can also produce its own nutrients by processing materials that are useless or dead. Previous studies showed that it is known as a pollutant filter in the water, which indirectly contributes positively to the surrounding environment. After the harvest period, *Latoh* is still beneficial as a source of food with high nutrition. Based on these characters, it is appropriate to be a source of inspiration for cultural tradition arts, namely the *Latohan* motif on Lasem's batik.

The fact that *Latoh* has become the perceived space or First Space, and the involvement of human ideas as the creator of *Latohan* motifs with various compositions from one source of inspiration proves the existence of the conceived space or Second Space in the creation process. The production process has become a part of the infinite human experience that combines physical and imaginative forms. It is also not limited to rules and gives birth to a philosophy called living or Third Space. Furthermore, the Third Space, which brings the *Latoh* plant to life in its transformation of form, is also a part of Lasem's history, tradition and culture. It also makes *Latohan* more beautiful as well as builds the memory and experience of the maker, the buyer, and the wearer and even the individual who sees it. The Third Space is known as an equal space, which indicates that there is no dominant content, and it also provides support and benefits through beauty. This is in line with the *latohan* motif, which is not dominant, nor is it a minority, but supports others to give dynamics to Lasem batik. The motif can be matched with others, but it can also stand-alone due to its independent nature. This is in line with the fact that *latoh* plant can grow side by side without harming others. It can also stand as an epiphytic plant that can be independent and make its own nutrition. This enables the *Latohan* motif to give the batik a more in-depth narrative.

Through the theory of symbolic interaction, the *latoh* plant which is the basis for the idea of the *latohan* motif provides an illustration that the exploration of the creation of the *latohan* motif in the four hand-drawn batik lasem shows the success of the expression of the creators and batik makers. Emphasis on the concept of mind is applied through the ability to use symbols with the same social meaning, namely the depiction of practice in every Lasem written batik. The concept of self is an exercise that can be interpreted as the ability of plants to be adaptive to the surrounding conditions. Thus, humans are considered to represent the self-concept of the *latohan* plant. The concept of society from *latohan* is a form of social construction that has been built in the Lasem community. The *Latohan* motif is a symbol of Lasem culture, only the Lasem community uses the benefits and philosophy of the *Latoh* plant in its cultural products. The resulting motif is simple, one *Latohan* motif can be repeated in numerous Lasem batiks; yet, the philosophy travels indirectly to several batiks, and its meaning evolves based on the motifs that are side by side with *Latohan*.

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