

**THE AESTHETIC MEANINGS OF GAJAH OLING BATIK WORN
FOR SEBLANG DANCE RITUAL PERFORMED BY OSING TRIBE IN BANYUWANGI**

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ABSTRACT

Gajah Oling is a special batik from Banyuwangi district which is still believed by the *Using* tribe in Banyuwangi as a distinctive and sacred motif used in various existing custom rituals and dances. One of the traditional rituals that still uses the batik motif is Seblang dance ritual performed in two places; Olehsari and Bakungan village. In Olehsari village, Seblang is performed by young girls, meanwhile in Bakungan village Seblang is performed by elderly women. *Gajah Oling* batik is used in traditional Seblang ritual as along cloth (or *sewek*) and used as scarf for the dancers, on *panekeb* for the singers and the handler; even on headbands or *udengas* used by the inviting handler and *gamelan* musicians. The aesthetic meanings here will be analyzed based on their meanings on the motif used by Seblang dancers in both Bakungan or Olehsari village on its long clothes, scarfs, and headbands. This article aims at describing the meaning of aesthetic interpretation on the elaboration of the shape, color, line, position, and size on the motif of Gajah Oling batik based on its main motifs, fringe motifs and *isen-isen* (ornaments). The results related to the aesthetic meanings of the traditional Seblang ritual will also be described in depth.

Keywords: Gajah Oling Batik, Seblang, Aesthetic Meanings, Banyuwangi

INTRODUCTION

Seblang dance ritual comes from pre-Hindu culture; where the form of the dance requires the dancers to be unconscious (into a trance). Seblang, a customary dance ritual, is performed once a year in two villages in Banyuwangi regency, East Java province. Seblang ritual is classified into two which is based on the location it is performed. They are Seblang Bakungan, located in Bakungan Village, and Seblang Olehsari located in the Olehsari village. Both villages are located in Glagah district. Seblang Bakungan is performed during the *surup* (twilight) until the *rantak* or before the sun rises. But in the Olehsari village, the performance lasted half a day for seven days straight in the late afternoon until the twilight comes (around 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.). This dance ritual is performed by a pre-menstruating girl at Seblang Olehsari and an older woman having reached menopause at Seblang Bakungan. This is a paradoxical requirement in pre-modern art. A girl who has not reached menstruation is woman who is not yet a woman, while the menopausal woman is a woman who is no longer "woman" (not giving birth) (Sumardjo, 2006: 100).

Seblang dance customary ritual is believed by the inhabitants of the *Using* tribe as the oldest ritual and the strongest ritual in Banyuwangi. In the process, villagers are in contact with ancestral rings and escort spirits with the goal of community welfare. Seblang ritual is held with the intention to keep a *khaul* (a promise to do something), to hold "Bersih Desa" ritual, and so forth. The Bersih Desa ritual is held with the aim of hoping for the safety of the village as well as its citizens, therefore the Bersih Desa

ritual is also called "Selamatan Desa" in Bahasa (Singodimajan, 2009: 25). The local residents believe, if the ritual is neglected, then their village will be overwhelmed by difficulties and distress such as *pageblug* (disease epidemic attacking a village), natural disaster, many thieves, crop failure because of pests, and many others. The Seblang ceremony is held during Sura (Muharram) or Syawal month in Islamic calendar.

In this ritual, besides the Seblang dancers, the performers include a handler consisting of a handler / shaman and a *panekep* handler, a maker of *omprog* (headdress), nine *sinden* (singers) and *pengrawit* as well as several drummers. Seblang traditional ceremonial equipments are quite diverse, not just "*umbo rampe*" as a symbol, but it is a spiritual value that must be fully completed. The equipments used for the ritual are *omprog*, *genjot*, musical instruments, offerings and *perapen* as well as costumes of dancers, handlers, sinngers, and so forth.

Batik Gajah Oling in the Seblang custom ritual

The costumes worn by the Seblang dancers, invited handler, *panekep* handler, singers, *pengrawit*, and drummers are all different. For the Seblang Bakungan dancers, the costumes worn include *kemben*, silk *goyor* fabric, scarves, ankle bracelets, and crown/ *omprok*. This dance costume is worn by Seblang dancers except *omprok* that should be stored at the shaman's house (Heriyawati, 2016: 155). While the Seblang Olehsari dancers wear *kemben* with belt tied on their waist, a tied shawl on the waist to beautify the dance. They also wear *sinjang* / a long cloth / *sewek* in Gajah Oling batik motif, white socks, and jingling ankle bracelets. The costume has been prepared, made specially, kept in the home of the makeup artist, and has been given a spell by him (Heriyati, 2016: 168).

However, there is a batik motif which is always worn by some of Seblang performers to carry out the ritual, namely Gajah Oling batik, which has both white background and red-green background. The costumes of the Seblang dancers consist of *kemben*, scarf, *sewek* (long cloth), and belt. For the Seblang dancers, Gajah Oling batik motif is worn as shawls and long cloth and for the inviting handler worn as *udeng* (a headband),. While for the *panekep* handler, it is worn as as a long cloth and scarf, and for *sinden* and *pengrawit* it is worn only as a long cloth. Actually, the motif that must be used for Gajah Oling batik is the white background (as a base color) and the color of the motif is black, but sometimes there are some other colors. The *panekep* handlers, *pengrawit* and *sinden* also wear the white one, and for the inviting handlers and dancers, they usually wear a variety of colors including black and white, yellowish green, and reddish brown.

Seblang Bakungan


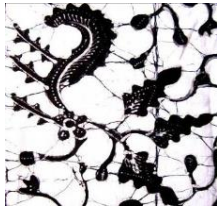


The costumes worn by Seblang Bakungan dancers is *omprog* made of leather and its tassels are made of white *mori* cloth cut into lengths resembling the long hair, and long cloth having Gajah Oling batik motif with a brownish red background and the main Gajah Oling motif lies in the edge of the fabric (the edge motif) in brownish yellow. Gajah Oling batik motif is worn as a long cloth and scarf

by *panekep* handler, *pengrawit* and *sinden* with the white background and a black Gajah Oling motif, while the handler wear an *udeng* with a black and white batik motif.

The following is table showing the performers of Seblang Bakungan and their batik costumes:

Table 1 The performers and their batik worn during the Seblang Bakungan ritual with the description of the color, line, and shape (ornament)

(Source: The Author's Documentation, 2018)

Performers	Seblang Bakungan	Batik worn during the performance	Color	Line	Shape (Ornament)
Singer	1 menopausal woman		yellow batik motif with red background	curve	one Gajah Oling ornament with S letter shape, and three <i>dilem</i> leaves
Invited Handler	Male		Black motif with white background	curve	one Gajah Oling ornament with S letter shape, and three <i>dilem</i> leaves, three pieces of <i>manggar</i> flower and one piece of jasmine with five petals.
<i>Panekep</i> handler	1 female		Black motif with white background	curve	one Gajah Oling ornament with S letter shape, and three <i>dilem</i> leaves, three pieces of <i>manggar</i> flower and one piece of jasmine with five petals.
<i>Sinden</i> (singer), <i>pengrawit</i>	Male and female		Black motif with white background	curve	one Gajah Oling ornament with S letter shape, and three <i>dilem</i> leaves, three pieces of <i>manggar</i> flower and one piece of jasmine with five petals.

The following are the images of the traditional Seblang Bakungan ritual and the performers wearing Gajah Oling batik.



Figure 1. (left) Seblang Bakungan dancers and *panekeb* handler dance wearing Gajah Oling batik as a long cloth in black-and- white and red background. (right) The invited handler also wears headband / *udeng* with batik motif Gajah Oling batik motif in black and white background



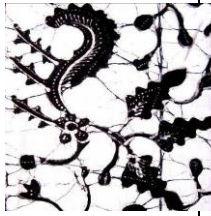
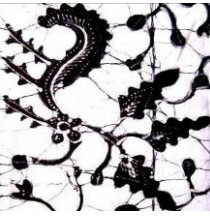




(Source: Private Documentation, 2017)

Seblang Olehsari

The costume worn by Seblang Olehsari dancers is almost the same as the dancers' costume Seblang Bakungan. This *Omprog* which is worn as a head cover for Seblang Olehsari dancers is made of flowers that are arranged together with *janur* leaves (the young leaves of a coconut tree with a light yellowish green color) made as fringe. The Gajah Oling batik motif worn by Seblang Olehsari dancers has a white background in black motifs, and sometimes also has a green base with yellow and red motifs. When wearing a long cloth with white base color and Gajah Oling motif in black, then the dancers also wear a scarf with the same motif, but when wearing Gajah Oling motif in green base, the scarf is worn in light green. Similar to Seblang Bakungan, the singers and handlers in Seblang Olehsari also wear Gajah Oling batik motif. For the singers, *pengrawit*, and *panekep* handlers, they wear Gajah Oling batik motif with white background and black motif for a long cloth and scarves. Whereas for the invited handler, Gajah Oling batik motif is worn as *udeng* (headband). For Seblang Olehsari dance, there are two *panekep* handlers on the right and left of the dancers, in contrast to the Seblang Bakungan which only consists of one *panekep* handler. The following is table showing the performers of Seblang Olehsari and their batik costumes:

Table 1. The performers and their batik worn during the Seblang Olehsari ritual with the description of the color, line, and shape (ornament).

(Source: The Author's Documentation, 2018)

Performers		Batik worn during Seblang dance ritual	Batik worn during other Seblang rituals	Color	Line	Shape (Ornament)
Dancers	1 pramenstrual girl			White background with black motif, and sometimes dancers wear Gajah Oling batik with green background	curve	one Gajah Oling ornament in S letter shape, three dilem leaves, three pieces of manggar flower, and one jasmine with five petals
Invited Handler	Male			White background and black motif	curve	one Gajah Oling ornament in S letter shape, three dilem leaves, three pieces of manggar flower, and one jasmine with five petals
Panekep Handler	Female			Sekar Jagat and Gajah Oling Motif with white background and black motif	curve	one Gajah Oling ornament in S letter shape, three dilem leaves, three pieces of manggar flower, and one jasmine with five petals
Singer & Pengrawit	Male and Female			White background with black motif	curve	one Gajah Oling ornament in S letter shape, three dilem leaves, three pieces of manggar flower, and one jasmine with five petals

If we look at the table above, it can be concluded that the dancer wears the Gajah Oling batik motif with a white background and on a black motif, the *panekep* handler wears batik that is not Gajah Oling motif. If the dancer wears other motifs or wears Gajah Oling motif that is not in a white background, the *panekep* handler wears Gajah Oling batik motif with a white background and a black

motif. This means that in a traditional Seblang ceremony, there must be a completeness as a form of sacredness. In every Seblang ceremony, the Gajah Oling batik motif with white background must always exist as a means of bringing the transcendent.



Figure 2. Seblang olehsari dancer is wearing Gajah Oling motif with white and black background
(Source: Private Documentation, 2018)



Figure 3. Seblang dancers were flanked by *Panekep* handlers, during the opening procession conducted by the Leader of the ceremony. *Panekep* Handler wore Gajah Oling batik motif with white background and Seblang dancers wore Gajah Oling batik motif with green background (left), the motif in detail (right)

(Source: The Author's Documentation, 2009)



Figure 4. A Seblang dancer was with *panekep* handler. The Seblang dancer wore Gajah Oling batik motif with white background while the *panekep* handler did not wear Gajah Oling batik motif (left), the motif in detail (right)

(Source: Author Documentation, 2018)

The Visual Motifs of Gajah Oling Batik from Banyuwangi

Of the several variations of Gajah Oling batik motif in Banyuwangi, the most popular principal ornament always include Gajah Oling, three *dilem* leaves, three manggar flowers and one jasmine flower with five petals. The motif identified with those criteria is the original motif of Gajah Oling batik, which is still often worn in the Seblang dance ritual.

Gajah Oling batik motif is essentially derived from the basic variant of the letter S, which is an ancient letter pattern in Indonesia. Gajah Oling motif is sacred because of its dual antagonistic nature, which is also found in Kerinci vessels, Asmat tribe's shield, and so on. The S is apparently in some places transformed into $\frac{1}{2}$ S, and it is developed into 3 spirals ($1 = 3$). *Dwitunggal* (duumvirate) is the equivalent of *tritunggal* (triumvirate). The triumvirate's symptoms are commonly found in primordial farms in hilly areas (Pattern of Three).

The color worn by Seblang Bakungan dancers' costumes is red, while for Seblang Olehsari dancers, invited handlers, *panekep* handlers, *sinden* and *pengrawit* wear black motif with white background, and sometimes the dancers wear Gajah Oling batik in green background. The four colors including black, white, red, and green, are colors for ritual and the ancient ones. White is a symbol of heaven (the world above), black as a symbol of the earth (underworld), red as a symbol of the human world (middle world), and green as the center of the transcendent placed in the middle of *papat kalimo pancer*, as the highest cosmic because of the mixture of various colors .

The shape of the motif worn by dancers and for the rituals is larger than the motifs worn by the citizens. The larger the shape, the more sacred and greater the transcendent power than the smaller shape.

The Philosophical Meanings of Gajah Oling Batik from Banyuwangi

In Gajah Oling batik motif, there is a principal ornament consisting of Gajah Oling ornaments, *dilem* leaves, jasmine flowers and *manggar* flowers; the edge / filler ornament consisting of butterfly ornaments and *katu* leaf ornaments; whereas in the edge motif there is *pucuk rebung* motif. The edge motif on Gajah Oling batik motif are *pucuk rebung* with the same meaning as *gunungan* in *wayang* (puppet show) and the Tree of Life. *Pucuk rebung* motif is positioned upside down which is usually called the *waringin sungsang* or a flipped banyan tree.

The pattern of batik on a long cloth, *udeng* and *selendang* worn for the rituals and dancers follows the pattern of the *mandala* or *papat kalimo pancer*. *Mandala* is a sacred space, which carries a paradoxical symbol. Its presence is transcendent (circular) in the immanent (square) space. The name of the *mandala* image is *yantra*, and *mandala* words are called spells (mantra).

The position of Gajah Oling batik motif worn by Seblang Bakungan dancer, handler, *sinden*, is facing left and the movement is clockwise which means picking up 7 goddesses. This shows the movement from immanent to transcendent. The position of Seblang Olehsari dancer is facing to the right, and the movement is counterclockwise which means to welcome the 7 goddesses. The movement is from transcendent to immanent.

CONCLUSION

The use of Gajah Oling batik motif is a sacred activity that exists at the Seblang ritual. This motif is found in the Seblang ritual worn as a long cloth by dancers, *sinden* and *pengrawit*; scarves by the *panekep* handler; and *udeng* by the invited handler or shaman. The major color used for Seblang ritual is white background. Gajah Oling motif with white background and black motif is the most sacred color, that is why this color must always be present in every Seblang Bakungan and Seblang Olehsari rituals. On Gajah Oling batik motif, colorful fabric is more worldly, human, and profane.

The main shape of Gajah Oling batik motif consists of Gajah Oling with the letter S ornaments, *dilem* leaves, jasmine flowers, and *manggar* flowers. Almost all of the lines use curved-soft ones which represent something soft, flexible, feminist, female figure, but dynamic. Besides, its position follows the 3 components of beauty, namely unity, orderliness, and diversity in an aesthetic arrangement.

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