

A STUDY OF THE WIJAYA KUSUMA KERATON MOTIF IN CILACAP BATIK

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Abstract. The *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* is an endemic plant that grows on Majeti Island, located near Nusakambangan Island, along the southern coast of Cilacap Regency. The island is managed by the local Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA). The term “*Keraton*” (Royal Palace) is closely linked to a ritualistic flower-picking ceremony that once took place on this island, which served as a requirement for the coronation of Javanese kings centuries ago. The myth of *Wijaya Kusuma* symbolizes glory, fortune, and the granting of royal divine authority (wahyu keprabon)—representing power and sovereignty in all aspects of life. However, there are two different types of *Wijaya Kusuma* that have sparked debate among the public. The more popular variety is the decorative bokowali type (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum* var *silvestris* Sp.), widely cultivated by the general public. Meanwhile, the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* (*Pisonia grandis* var *silvestris* Sp.), has largely been forgotten, as it is difficult to propagate, let alone to flower. These are clearly two distinct plant species, both in terms of taxonomy and appearance. As a result, many local residents, including the local government more readily recognize the bokowali type—as seen in monuments, logos, symbols, and even local batik motifs—primarily due to its popularity. Based on observations of dozens of local batik artisans, only one artisan dares to use the name *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* for their batik motif. Even so, the design still carried away by the *Wijaya Kusuma Bokowali* flow because of the pursuit of the market share. Located closest to Majeti Island and driven by concern, this research aims to study and promote alternative batik motifs inspired by the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton*, with stylizations that remain true to the original plant. This is supported by market segmentation analysis and an evaluation of its economic value. The research method uses a qualitative approach with a cultural anthropology perspective. Data were obtained through field observations, interviews with relevant sources, and supporting valid documentation. This study reflects a concern for environmental preservation and straightening out visual motifs that are full of traditional values, aesthetic, philosophical, and symbolic values. It is hoped that through this effort, the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* can gain greater recognition and its existence can be sustainably preserved.

Keywords: Study, *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton*, Cilacap Batik

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian batik is a cultural heritage in the form of cloth produced through a dyeing technique that employs wax (*malam*) to create patterned motifs. The tools commonly used in the process are the *canting* (a traditional wax pen) and copper stamp (*cap*). The distinctive and diverse motifs, each containing symbolic and philosophical meanings, have led UNESCO to designate batik as a *Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* in October 2009 (Musman & Ambar, 2011:1). Generally, batik patterns are influenced by the geographical characteristics of the production area, the local way of life, beliefs and customs, environmental conditions, and interregional interactions among batik-producing communities (Wulandari, 2011:104).

Cilacap Regency, located in Central Java Province, is one of the regions in Indonesia that has distinctive batik motifs representing its local potential and geographic characteristics, particularly its proximity to the southern coast (the Indian Ocean). These motifs depict the richness of marine life and vegetation, such as trees and the *Wijaya Kusuma* flower. *Wijaya Kusuma* is a unique plant that has long been associated with human livelihood and the harmony of nature. Etymologically, the term consists of two words: “*Wijaya*”, meaning victory or success, and “*Kusuma*”, meaning flower (P.J. Zoetmulder & S.O. Robson, 2011:1433). In local narratives, there are two types of *Wijaya Kusuma* known to Indonesian communities: *Wijaya Kusuma Bokowali* (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum* var *silvestris* Sp.), which resembles a cactus, and *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* (*Pisonia grandis* var *silvestris* Sp.), which visually resembles a bougainvillea. These two flowers differ significantly in appearance.

Wijaya Kusuma Bokowali, which is more widely recognized by the public as the ornamental *Wijaya Kusuma*, originates from the American continent, particularly the southern regions. This variety is easy to cultivate and has frequently been researched, observed, and adopted as a symbol, logo, icon, and source of artistic inspiration. There are many batik patterns inspired by the *Wijaya Kusuma* motif, both in Cilacap and in other regions.



Figure 01. *Wijaya Kusuma Bokowali* (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum* sp.)
(Source: <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/684828687124800513/>)

The *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* species originates from regions around Central Asia, Australia, and the Pacific Islands. This type of *Wijaya Kusuma* has been widely utilized by local communities – used as food in the Maldives, as wrapping material in Indonesia, and as medicine in India. However, this species is relatively difficult to cultivate, resulting in its limited recognition among the public. This lack of familiarity presents a research opportunity, which has attracted the author's interest to study it further, as there exists a notable gap in knowledge regarding this species.



Figure 02. *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* (*Pisonia grandis var silvestris. Sp*)

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pisonia_grandis#/media/File:Starr_990611-0869_Pisonia_grandis.jpg)

Details of the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* tree species.

Kingdom	Plantae (Plants)
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Subkingdom	Tracheobionta (Vascular Plants)
Division	Magnoliophyta
Class	Magnoliopsida
Order	Caryophyllales
Family	Nyctaginaceae
Genus	Pisonia
Species	Pisonia grandis
Synonyms	Pisonia viscosa, Pisonia silvestris

When mature, the Wijaya Kusuma Keraton tree can reach a height of approximately 20–25 meters. Due to its natural habitat along coastal areas and rocky shores, this species often serves as a preferred site for seabirds to perch and nest. *Pisonia grandis* produces compound inflorescences, with flowering stalks that extend outward. Each stalk typically bears around ten panicles, and each panicle may contain up to twenty individual flowers – resulting in hundreds of blossoms on a single stalk. When the flowers bloom, they measure about 2 to 4 millimeters in diameter and 5 to 6 millimeters in length, forming a trumpet-like shape with green sepals and white petals.

In Indonesia, the Wijaya Kusuma Keraton can be found in the Nusakambangan Islands, the Seribu Islands, the Karimunjawa Islands, Madura, and Bali. However, flowering individuals are quite rare. Currently, flowering *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* trees are found only on Majethi Island and Jayakesuma Island – two small coral islands located to the east of Nusakambangan Island, Cilacap Regency, Central Java Province, directly bordering the Indian Ocean. The species is now considered endemic and classified as a rare flora, leading to its habitat being designated as a local nature reserve.

Over time, the Wijaya Kusuma Keraton plant has faced near extinction due to factors such as aging, harsh weather conditions, earthquakes, strong winds, and large ocean waves. Conservation efforts are currently being carried out through propagation by seedlings and stem cuttings. These initiatives are undertaken by the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam, BKSDA) of Cilacap Regency in collaboration with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program of PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional (KPI) Refinery Unit IV Cilacap. (Source: <https://youtu.be/HEYmlSilCv8?si=U1j4E3TzQkVTdCcK>)



Figure 03. Majethi Island, Jayakusuma Island and Nusakambangan Island in Cilacap Regency, Central Java.

(Source: <https://youtu.be/HEYmlSilCv8?si=U1j4E3TzQkVTdCcK>)

In accordance with its naming tradition in the Javanese region, *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* is indeed a very unique flower. In addition to being rare and difficult to find, it also blooms infrequently and is deeply intertwined with the history and mythology of Javanese palaces (*keraton*), as well as the chronicles of Java itself. This connection explains the addition of the term *Keraton* (palace) in its name. *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* is believed to possess profound symbolic meaning and exceptional significance. It represents good fortune, victory, glory, authority, prosperity, and the legitimacy of Javanese kings—from the era of the Mataram Kingdom to the courts of the Kasunanan Surakarta and the Kesultanan Yogyakarta. This belief is rooted in mythological narratives that have become legendary and have been passed down through generations within Javanese society (Cilacap Archives, 1975).

Cilacap was once a region under the dominion of several kingdoms, including the Majapahit Kingdom, the Pasir Luhur Kingdom, the Galuh Pakuan Pajajaran Kingdom, the Pajang Sultanate, and later the Islamic Mataram Sultanate in the late 16th century. In 1705, the area was transferred under the control of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and subsequently became part of the Banyumas Residency, an administrative structure that has evolved into the present-day Cilacap Regency (Cilacap Archives, 1975).

Observing the current phenomenon, the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* possesses a uniquely captivating legend and an intriguing ritual function that constitutes a form of local wisdom. Nevertheless, it remains largely unknown to the general public due to its difficulty in cultivation and near extinction. This has motivated the researcher, who is a native of Cilacap, to study and take responsibility for reintroducing this flower. This effort aims to prevent the widespread misconceptions that have persisted, particularly the tendency of the Cilacap community to be more familiar with the *Wijaya Kusuma Bokowali*, which is comparatively easier to cultivate in various regions. The researcher's efforts to physically locate the authentic *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* on Majeti Island and Jayakesuma have been significantly constrained despite several explorations in the surrounding areas. These challenges are partly due to the restricted nature of the conservation area, as well as the fact that the ritual occurs only once a year, at the beginning of Bulan Sura (the Javanese New Year). The ritual involves a sea-offering ceremony at Teluk Penyus Beach in Cilacap, followed by a pilgrimage limited to Karangbandung Beach near Majeti Island and Jayakesuma Island. However, the researcher has received some assistance from the local historical community, cultural experts, and citizens attentive to Cilacap's cultural development.

The research problem in this study is :1) How to promote the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* so that it becomes widely recognized, particularly among the people of Cilacap, 2) This includes examining the efforts that have been undertaken by relevant parties and stakeholders. One of the approaches involves batik artisans: what initiatives and creations have local Cilacap batik craftsmen developed to raise awareness of the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton*?

This study aims to: 1) Describe the visual form of the original *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* flower, which is endemic to Majeti Island in Cilacap Regency, and explain its differences from the more commonly known ornamental *Wijaya Kusuma*; and 2) Compare the extent to which both the ornamental *Wijaya Kusuma* and the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* motifs are applied by batik entrepreneurs in Cilacap Regency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Biodiversity conservation increasingly recognizes the importance of integrating ecological and socio-cultural approaches to achieve sustainability (Waqi'ah & Sarjan, 2025). There are several historical records that serve as evidence of the ritual's existence, although they are limited in number:

1. During the era of Adipati Anom, upon his coronation as Sunan Amangkurat II, the *Jumenengan* ceremony took place in the Ajibarang region on July 7, 1677. During his journey to Batavia while being pursued by Trunojoyo (as noted by H. J. de Graaf, Netherlands).
2. The coronation of Paku Buwana XII (reported in a Dutch newspaper, 1939), documented by R.M.Ng. Tiknopranoto, *Sekar Wijaya Kusuma*, 1975.
3. Information from KGPH Puger (Kraton Kasunanan Surakarta) (Source: [DetikNews](#)).
4. During the administration of Indonesia's second president, Soeharto, the ritual was reportedly performed in 1970 (Source: [YouTube](#)).
5. During the era of the Islamic Sultanate of Demak, it was recorded that the ritual was temporarily discontinued.

The stages of the ritual procession are as follows:

1. The king dispatches forty representatives from the royal palace (*keraton*).
2. A sea-offering ritual (*sedekah laut*) is performed.
3. A pilgrimage to ancestral graves (*pesarean*) is conducted around the Cilacap area, including the tombs of Adipati Banjarsari (Karangsuci), Adipati Wiling (Donan), Adipati Purbasari (Dhaun Lumbung), Ki Singaledira (Kebonbaru), and others.
4. Stop at Sela Mosque (*Masjid Sela*) on Nusakambangan Island.
5. The ritual of picking the Wijaya Kusuma flower takes place, followed by a visit to Majeti Island or Karangbandung. A period of meditation (*semedi*) is observed, after which the flower is placed in a ceremonial bowl (*bokor*) and wrapped in silk cloth (*cinde*) (Cilacap Archives, 1975).

Mohammad, Ghamal Satya (2014), The tradition of picking the Wijaya Kusuma flower represents a significant cultural practice that can be traced back to Javanese mythology since the 12th century. By the 19th century, both the flower and the ritual were required to establish the legitimacy of the Surakarta kings. Challenges to the myth and ritual emerged when Dutch scientists in the 19th century attempted to uncover the sacred basis of the flower by collecting and subsequently classifying it according to Linnaean taxonomy. Gamal argued that the Surakarta court's discreet rejection of Dutch findings, alongside the continued observance of the ritual, demonstrates the resilience of Javanese culture, ensuring that the cultural authority of legitimate kings remained intact even under Dutch colonial political domination.

The Wijaya Kusuma Keraton flower (*Pisonia grandis var silveltris Sp.*) on Majeti Island, Cilacap, represents a unique case in which the conservation of endemic flora intersects strongly with the narrative of the Javanese royal palace (*keraton*) (DetikNews, 2021; Kompasiana, 2021). This narrative positions the flower as a sacred floral emblem, closely linked to royal legitimacy and coronation rituals of the Mataram kings (DetikNews, 2021). The symbolic context creates a layer of cultural protection that differs from formal conservation mechanisms, as exemplified in the Narawandira exhibition at the Yogyakarta Keraton, which has inspired indigenous plant conservation (*Forest Digest*, 2023).

Nevertheless, research remains limited on how the symbolic authority of the Keraton can be translated into effective participatory conservation actions by the coastal communities around Majeti Island. This reinforces the argument that physical protection and regulatory measures alone are insufficient; community involvement and the strengthening of social institutions rooted

in local beliefs are necessary to address the threats of ecosystem degradation (Ditjen KSDAE, 2020).

One initiative to promote the *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* is through regional potential that inspired the creation of a distinctive Cilacap batik motif, named the *Wijaya Kusuma batik motif*. There are numerous batik artisans across Cilacap Regency, including: Batik Nata Wijaya, Leksana Batik Jaya, Batik Rajasa Mas, Batik Canting Mas, Batik Wiringin Putih, Batik Damar Layansari, Rumah Batik Noor, Batik Kroya, Batik Sekarwaru, Batik Seloka, Batik Subama, Batik Balasikh, Hendy's Batik, Batik Gunung Padang, Batik Karanggitung, Batik Sodagaran, Batik Triana, Batik Sidamukti, Batik Wringin Harjo, Batik Canting Gading, Rana Batik, Batik Lestari Dondongan, Batik Pasobaja, and Batik Klaces. These batik workshops are spread across various subdistricts within Cilacap Regency, namely Adipala, Maos, Binangun, Kroya, Central Cilacap, Nusawungu, Majenang, Gandrungmangu, Pattimuan, Sidarja, and Kampung Laut. (Vahrina, Aina, Et al., 2020: 73).

Method

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach. Given the large population of business actors involved, a sampling technique was necessary for this research. Sampling is a specific method or process for concentrating data sources in research, aimed at selecting relevant subjects. It involves the selection and limitation of the number and types of data sources to be used in the study (Sutopo, 2006:62-63). The data analysis technique employed in this research is qualitative, using an interactive analysis model divided into several components: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and the drawing of conclusions along with their verification. The research that has been conducted includes: 1) Direct observation around Majeti Island in collaboration with the Cilacap BKSDA team, 2) Discussions with historians, archivists, and the Cilacap History Community, 3) Interviews and visits to workshops of several batik entrepreneurs and artisans in Cilacap, and 4) Discussions with several local fashion designers in Cilacap.

Examples of visual representations of the *Wijaya Kusuma* batik motifs found in existing Cilacap batik include:

- a. Tirtotejo Ceplok Wijaya Kusuma Motif in the Cilacap Batik Official Uniform



Figure 04. Tirtotejo Ceplok Wijaya Kusuma Batik Motif (Personal Photo)

The adopted Wijaya Kusuma motif is based on the *Bokowali ornamental type* (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum var silvestris* Sp.).

- b. Kawung Wijaya Kusuma Motif



Figure 05. Kawung Wijaya Kusuma Motif (Vahrina, Aina, Et al.,2020 : 76)

In this motif, the adopted Wijaya Kusuma pattern is the *Bokowali ornamental type* (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum var silvestris Sp.*).

c.Motif Batik Truntum Wijaya Kusuma



Figure 06. Truntum Wijaya Kusuma Batik Motif (Vahrina, Aina, Et al.,2020 : 78)

In this motif, the adopted Wijaya Kusuma pattern is the ornamental bokowali type (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum var silvestris Sp.*).

d. Motif Batik Wijaya Kusuma Collection of Subama Batik Artisans



Figure 07. Wijaya Kusuma Motif Created by Batik Subama for the
First Time in 2013 (Vahrina, Aina, Et al., 2020: 81)

In the motifs described above, the adopted Wijaya Kusuma pattern is the *Bokowali ornamental type* (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum var silvestris* Sp.).

e. Wijaya Kusuma Batik Motif Collection of Batik Artisans



Figure 08. Wijaya Kusuma Batik Motif from Natawijaya Batik (Personal Photo)

The adopted Wijaya Kusuma motif is the *Bokowali ornamental type* (*Epiphyllum Oxypetalum*).

f. Motif Batik Wijaya Kusuma pada Perajin Batik Rajamas Cilacap
1)



Figure 09. Wijaya Kusuma Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by
Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

2)



Figure 10. *Wijaya Kusuma* Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

3)



Figure 11. *Wijaya Kusuma* Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

4)



Figure 12. *Wijaya Kusuma* Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

5)



Figure 13. *Wijaya Kusuma* Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

6)



Figure 14. *Wijaya Kusuma* Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

7)



Figure 15. *Wijaya Kusuma* Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

8)



Figure 16. *Wijaya Kusuma* Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

9)



Figure 17. *Wijaya Kusuma* Batik Motif, Batik Rajamas Cilacap Collection by Cilacap Batik Artisans (Personal Photo)

f. Bhumi Wijaya Kusuma Batik Motif Collection of Leksana Batik Jaya Batik Artisans



Figure 18. Bhumi Wijaya Kusuma Batik Motif from Leksana Batik Jaya (Personal Photo)

In the motif described above, the adopted Wijaya Kusuma pattern is a combination of the *Bokowali* ornamental type (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum*) and the *Keraton Wijaya Kusuma* (*Pisonia grandis*).

g. The Wijaya Kusuma Keraton Batik Motif of Cilacap Batik Artisans



Figure 19. *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* Motif Design by Heri Wahyono from the Tjilatjap History Community (Personal Photo)



Figure 20. *Wijaya Kusuma Keraton* Motif Design by Heri Wahyono from the Tjilatjap History Community (Personal Photo)

RESULTS

The results of the study indicate that the majority of batik artisans primarily draw inspiration from the *Bokowali ornamental Wijaya Kusuma* for their motifs. The intention to use the *Keraton Wijaya Kusuma* as a source of batik motif inspiration remains limited and needs to be addressed promptly.

Besides being an endemic flower in the Cilacap region, the preservation of the *Wijaya Kusuma* (*Pisonia grandis var silveltris.sp*) on Majeti Island is significantly influenced by Javanese Keraton narratives, particularly those originating from the legitimacy traditions of the Kasunanan Surakarta. These narratives establish *Wijaya Kusuma* as a sacred flower (*puspa keramat*), whose existence is associated with coronation rituals and the grandeur of Mataram kings' authority (DetikNews, 2021; Kompasiana, 2021).

This narrative functions in a top-down manner, creating what can be described as cultural immunity, which *de facto* hinders mass commercial exploitation and provides spiritual intrinsic value far exceeding its economic value (Forest Digest, 2023; Lubis, 2022). The symbolic authority of the Keraton transforms *Wijaya Kusuma* from merely a botanical object into an invaluable cultural asset (Waqi'ah & Sarjan, 2025). This condition effectively supports the formal conservation goals of BKSDA, as evidenced by the minimal cases of poaching by major collectors, reflecting a collective respect for the Keraton's heritage.

Observations of dozens of local artisans revealed that only a few attempt to use the visual of Keraton Wijaya Kusuma as a motif inspiration. Even then, their designs still largely follow the *Bokowali ornamental style* to appeal to market demands. Artisans are aware that the *Bokowali ornamental Wijaya Kusuma (Epiphyllum oxypetalum)* has already been widely used and patented in other regions, such as Sumedang Regency in West Java. Some Cilacap batik artisans reported that efforts to develop Keraton Wijaya Kusuma motifs were attempted in 2022, but numerous challenges forced the initiative to stop, with only a few artisans continuing independently without collective coordination.

Support from local authorities or regional government is essential to promote, supervise, and provide creative opportunities through local historical knowledge, traditional wisdom, local vegetation studies, workshops on Keraton Wijaya Kusuma batik motifs, fashion design competitions, and themed exhibitions, so that the Keraton Wijaya Kusuma can gain proper recognition and appreciation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there are several challenges, including mythical prohibitions and a lack of initiative among the local community, including Cilacap batik artisans, to promote the *Keraton Wijaya Kusuma*, a flower endemic to the region, as a potential commodity. It is regrettable that the *Keraton Wijaya Kusuma*, which represents local vegetative potential, is at risk of disappearing under the shadow of the more commonly cultivated *Bokowali ornamental Wijaya Kusuma*. Utilizing batik motifs serves as an effective means to educate the public, particularly in Cilacap, fostering greater awareness and appreciation of this regional pride flower.

When managed properly, the *Keraton Wijaya Kusuma batik motif* has significant economic potential. Market opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can increase family incomes and serve as a source of employment for the local community. In marketing strategies, the role of organizations is crucial, providing facilities and support for SMEs through fashion training, workshops, competitions, or coverage in newspapers, radio, television, and various digital and social media platforms. An example is the annual Cilacap In Fashion event, which includes fashion shows and competitions to promote local textiles and showcase community design potential. Through these marketing strategies, Cilacap batik gains greater recognition and commercial value, evidenced by increasing production and international purchases, with returning customers placing repeat orders due to the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the motifs.

In conclusion, this research contributes scientifically by modeling the interaction between two distinct cultural narratives in the context of conservation. The main policy recommendation is the revitalization of conservation ethics through ethnobiopedagogical education programs in Cilacap, explicitly teaching the values of the Keraton and local prohibitions (*pamali*) to instill a sense of belonging and ecological responsibility among younger generations (Fatritya & Sarjan, 2024; Armanda et al., 2020). Furthermore, comparative studies and validation of this Dual Protection Model are needed at other conservation sites in Java that are connected to Keraton narratives, to test the generalizability of this approach as a cultural-based strategy for endemic flora preservation. This model demonstrates that biodiversity conservation can be effectively achieved when cultural values are respected and empowered as the primary framework for environmental management.

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